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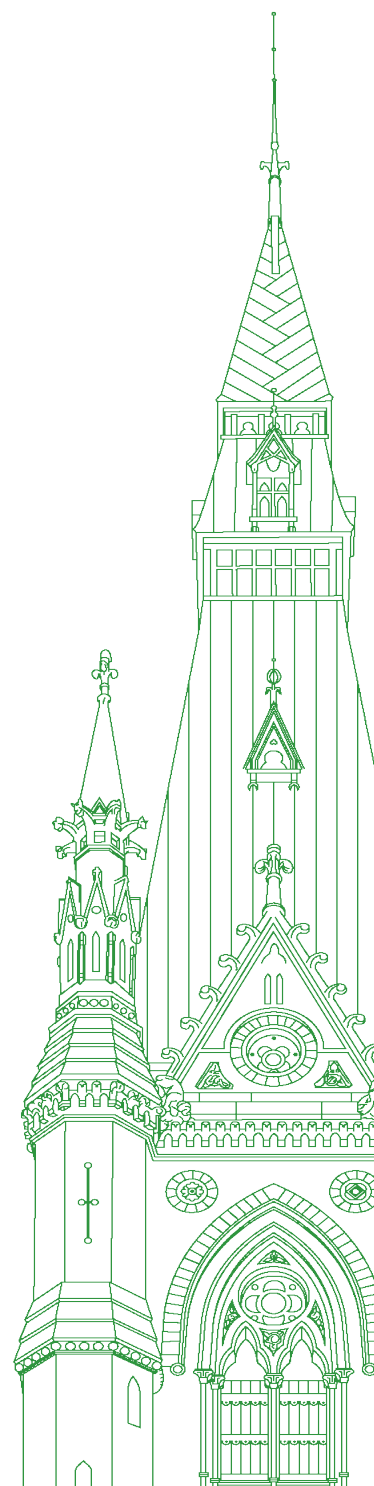
House of Commons Debates

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Wednesday, November 29, 2023

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 29, 2023

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is recognized by the United Nations as International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The horrific toll of the most recent Israel-Hamas war is yet another example of the ongoing cycle of violence and injustice that has tragically gripped the region for decades. This has highlighted the need for a comprehensive resolution that delivers a hopeful future for Palestinians and long-term stability for the region. As is Canada's long-standing position, and as the UN declared by resolution in 1947, this means the creation of a viable Palestinian state living peacefully alongside an Israeli state.

For too long, the Palestinian people have been victimized by occupation and blockades, as well as a governing regime that disregards the rights and safety of its own people. Today is a reminder of the work that Canada, as well as the entire international community, owes to the Palestinian people to ensure they have equal access to the rights and freedoms that we and so many others take for granted.

JEWISH REFUGEE DAY

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is Jewish Refugee Day,

marking the expulsion of more than 850,000 Jews from their homes in Iran and throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

In the years leading up to the birth of the State of Israel in 1948, Jews were subjected to systemic anti-Semitism and evicted from their homes. They were subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture and murder. This forced migration was marked by religious persecution and even genocide. Many Jews and their families found safe harbour in Israel and here in Canada.

During this trying time for both the State of Israel and Jews here in Canada, it is vital that we do not forget that Jewish communities had existed in these regions for millennia, contributing enormously to the culture, growth and success of Arab nations. This year, B'nai Brith will again be commemorating these refugees. A virtual gathering will be held tomorrow at 4 p.m. I invite members to take part as we commemorate this important part of Jewish history.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November 29 is International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people. Given the recent conflict in the region, which has resulted in the deaths of over 14,000 innocent Palestinian civilians, including over 6,000 children, this year's event is particularly poignant.

I continue to call for a permanent ceasefire, for a return of all hostages to their families and for badly needed humanitarian aid to reach all the people of Gaza. I pray that everyone can put their differences aside and work towards a just, equitable and peaceful two-state solution. Violence is never the answer. I yearn for the day when two peoples can live side by side in peace and prosperity.

Tonight, led by Palestinian, Arab and Muslim staffers, we will gather at the eternal flame on Parliament Hill in peace and solidarity with the Palestinian people. I hope all will join us.

[Translation]

ÈVE-MARIE LORTIE

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest cliffhangers in Quebec showbiz has finally been resolved. We now know who will take over from Gino Chouinard as host of TV's *Salut Bonjour* next year. I was very happy to hear that the new host is Ève-Marie Lortie.

Statements by Members

I am pleased because, at last, a woman will be hosting a Quebec morning show, which still does not happen often enough for my taste. There are plenty of other great people who might have been offered those big shoes to fill, but no one could be as kind, caring, generous, talented and down-to-earth as Ève-Marie.

I had the privilege of rubbing shoulders with her from time to time in another life. I even cooked with her when she appeared as my guest on *Qu'est-ce qui mijote?*, the cooking show I used to host. I had so much fun each time we met, and that is how everyone feels when they are lucky enough to cross paths with her.

Ève-Marie Lortie was the natural choice to helm *Salut Bonjour*. Once again, Quebecers will have a warm and friendly presence to help them start their day, a bit like having a friend over for coffee. On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to congratulate Ève-Marie. I never thought I would be looking forward to Gino's retirement.

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● (1410)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is recognized by the United Nations as International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

For over 70 years, Palestinians have been living under occupation, robbed of their fundamental rights, with no regard for human dignity. This is the most terrible year, with thousands of Palestinians, including thousands of children, killed in front of our eyes. Western democracies have not taken any measures to prevent this.

Today, I and millions of Canadians are angry, frustrated and feeling helpless with our unsuccessful advocacy to get Canada to change its position and do what is just and right.

I call on Canada to ask for a permanent ceasefire and take the right step forward, starting with the recognition of the sovereign state of Palestine, for a two-state solution.

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CARSON CLELAND

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am heartbroken and angry. I am angry that yet another family has lost a loved one to suicide. Carson Cleland was just like any other 12-year-old boy from Prince George. He was involved in sports; he was active in his community. However, he felt prey to a sadistic predator whose only motivation was to do harm.

Ryan, Carson's dad, has urged us all to do better, to be better and to make sure parents talk to their kids, check their Internet history and have those tough conversations. From the predator's first point of contact with Carson to Carson's death, it took 12 hours. That is an hour for each year of Carson's life.

Carson's dad told me, "It happened so fast. Parents need to know just how fast this can happen." His mom, Nicola, told me, "We need to have a safe place for children to grow and actually be chil-

dren. We need to find these predators faster. When do we get closure?"

We need to be more vigilant when we are protecting our kids. Since 2015, there has been an 825% increase in the making and distribution of child pornography. We have laws in place, and we need to enforce them. We need to provide law enforcement with the tools and resources they need to bring these bastards to justice and to provide justice for the victims.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for that statement. I would encourage all members to reflect on the language we use in this place, despite how heartfelt and sincere we feel about that issue.

The hon. member from Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

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NO. 2 CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, I was pleased to join the Minister of Veterans Affairs, the Minister of National Defence and our host, Russell Grosse, the executive director of the Black Cultural Centre in my riding in order to announce dedicated funding to commemorate the legacy of the No. 2 Construction Battalion. The event included a presentation of the first-ever No. 2 Construction Battalion camp flag to the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia for commemoration. The \$2.25-million investment over five years will fund commemorative activities, educational materials and community war memorials.

The announcement follows up on last year's historic apology by the Prime Minister to the descendants of the battalion for the systemic anti-Black racism that those in the battalion experienced throughout and after the war. This fund will ensure that the legacy of the battalion lives on for future generations.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mr. Rob Morrison (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years under the Prime Minister, housing costs have doubled, Canadians are close to a paycheque away from going broke and there has been a 52% increase in monthly visits to the food banks in Kootenay—Columbia alone.

I will address a pressing issue impacting the hard-working farmers in my riding. The individuals who work tirelessly, cultivating crops and raising herds, are facing huge challenges with the rise of the carbon tax. The current fixed market rate at which they sell their products is not providing them with the flexibility to absorb the escalating costs imposed by this tax. It is imperative that we recognize the plight of these farmers and work toward finding solutions that ensure their success. It is our duty to address the concerns of the hard-working people who toil day in and day out to put food on our tables. More taxes, fees and half measures are continually introduced by the NDP-Liberal government, but no issues are being solved.

We all need to support our farmers and ranchers by supporting Bill C-234.

* * *

• (1415)

[Translation]

SHERBROOKE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in July, I had the opportunity to visit Chocolat Lamontagne's factory. This company has been in business for 45 years, and its chocolates are a must-try. I am never more proud than when I have the opportunity to acknowledge the success of a company that has been part of Sherbrooke's business landscape for so many years.

Today, Chocolat Lamontagne is enjoying tremendous success, and the sky is the limit for its chocolates. With \$1.2 million in support from Canada Economic Development, this family business will be able to ramp up productivity and continue conquering new markets and taking on new challenges.

Once again, congratulations to Danny Lamontagne and his entire team. I urge everyone to try their delicious chocolates.

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[English]

UKRAINE

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is said that one truly realizes who one's friends are when one needs them most. The Conservatives made it abundantly clear last week that they cannot be trusted to support Ukraine, our friend and ally, when the chips are down.

Last week, every Conservative voted against the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. It is a shocking new low for the Conservative Party of Canada. The leader of the Conservative Party is importing MAGA-brand, American-style politics into Canada, something that is not welcome in our country. Now Conservatives are tying themselves into knots in a feeble attempt to try to justify their shameful vote against a bill that would help support the rebuilding of our friend and ally, Ukraine.

Canada's support for Ukraine should have been unanimous in this House, but, just like Donald Trump, the leader of the Conservatives is cozying up to Russian dictator Vladimir Putin. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress and President Zelensky asked Canadian MPs to support—

Statements by Members

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: This week there have been a number of statements in which some members have called into question the allegiances of other members, which is, frankly, not acceptable.

I will ask the hon. member to rise, do the honourable thing and withdraw that part of his statement. Then I will allow him to finish his statement.

The hon. member for Milton.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that remark.

The Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement represents Canada's opportunity to assist in the rebuilding of Ukraine, and it is utterly disappointing to see the Conservatives stand opposed to that. Ukraine can continue to count on Canada on this side of the House.

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• (1420)

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, his billion-dollar green slush fund is engulfed in corruption. His hand-picked board chair was caught funnelling \$220,000 to her own company and then paid herself \$120,000. Then she and the CEO both resigned in disgrace. We learned yesterday that another board member funnelled millions of taxpayer dollars to not one, not two, not three, but four companies that she personally had an interest in. The Liberals knew about the corruption and ineligible payments and they did absolutely nothing. One senior government official called it an ad scam-level payout.

Meanwhile, whistle-blowers are afraid of professional and legal reprisals because the Liberals refused to offer them any protection. At every level of the Prime Minister's green slush fund, there is corruption and more insiders getting paid. With an Auditor General investigation and an Ethics Commissioner investigation, it is clear that the Prime Minister just is not worth the cost.

Conservatives will keep fighting to expose Liberal corruption and find out who got rich.

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ROOT CELLAR FOOD & WELLNESS HUB

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, he is not worth the cost as life has become so expensive that Canadians are having to choose between eating and other necessities. So far in 2023, more Canadians have gone to food banks than at any time in our recent history.

Statements by Members

Locally, in Medicine Hat, the Root Cellar Food & Wellness Hub, which is our food bank, has a brown bag lunch program that feeds 1,500 children every single day who come to school without lunch. The Root Cellar is feeding a total of 4% of our community and reports a 33% increase in food bank usage over the last two years alone. These numbers continue to grow, with an average of 200 new clients each and every month, mostly two-income families, seniors and students. Food bank clients overwhelmingly state the reason for needing to access emergency food is the inflationary rise in the cost of living.

These are real-life consequences to the economic crisis the government has inflicted on Canadians. It is time for the Prime Minister to do Canadians a favour and take a walk in the snow.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, confident countries invest in their workers. Confident countries invest in their future. We are confident in Canada. We are not only investing in Canadians, but we also continue to attract transformational investments. These include more than \$40 billion in less than three years, and thousands of good-paying jobs now and for years to come with Volkswagen, Stellantis, Northvolt, GM and Umicore. The world is looking to Canada and choosing Canada.

Conservatives have given up on Canada's auto industry. They are putting their partisan games and misinformation ahead of good middle-class jobs for Canadians.

[Translation]

Today, Canada is the only country in the western hemisphere with an end-to-end supply chain for electric vehicles. On this side of the House, we recognize that Canada has vast reserves of critical minerals, clean energy and the expertise to continue making the vehicles that Canadians want and that are better for the environment.

[English]

We will always stand by, and with, Canadian workers and our roaring Canadian auto industry.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more than two million innocent lives remain trapped in Israel's siege of Gaza, trying to survive amid the most horrific and inhumane conditions. Thousands of children have been killed. As a mother, my heart aches for those families.

Survivors are being deprived of clean drinking water, food, medicine, sanitation, fuel and electricity. More than 1.7 million Palestinians are displaced from their homes in their ancestral homeland. Among them are people with disabilities, women, children, seniors and beloved family members of hundreds of people in Canada.

The Australian government has enacted special immigration measures, including a special visa program to prioritize visa assessment for those seeking to depart Gaza. Canada must do the same.

I am calling on the Liberals to immediately enact special immigration measures to facilitate the evacuation of extended family members of Canadians and permanent residents of Gaza, and I renew my call for a permanent ceasefire.

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[Translation]

MARC-ANDRÉ FLEURY

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, goaltender Marc-André Fleury has won the Stanley Cup and the Vezina trophy, but he has just given us another reason to be proud of him.

It was first nations heritage night at Friday's game in Minnesota. Since his wife Véronique is indigenous, this goalie from Sorel was planning to wear a special mask designed by Dakota artist Cole Redhorse Taylor. It was covered in a traditional Dakota floral motif, in honour of Fleury's name, and was to be sold to raise money for a project in support of indigenous families.

However, the National Hockey League threatened Fleury with a hefty fine if he wore the mask, since Commissioner Bettman does not allow players to show support for special causes. Nevertheless, when Marc-André Fleury took to the ice that night, he proudly wore the mask.

Knowing when to stand up is an important skill for a goaltender, but knowing when to stand up as a human is even more impressive.

Bravo to Marc-André Fleury.

* * *

● (1425)

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are increasingly frustrated as they watch Liberal-appointed senators stall and delay our common-sense Conservative bill that would carve out a much needed carbon tax exemption for our Canadian farmers.

Farm businesses are seeing their carbon taxes totalling over \$100,000 per year just to use propane and natural gas to dry their crops.

The worst part is that the worst is yet to come, because the NDP-Liberal coalition will quadruple the carbon tax. That is enough with the delay and games. Canadian farmers are facing a \$1 billion carbon tax bill from the Prime Minister that no one can afford.

Food banks are at record use, with two million people per month.

After eight years, Canadians know the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost, because as farmers feed cities, Canadians know the Prime Minister just wants to tax them all even more.

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MÉTIS NATION BRITISH COLUMBIA

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Métis Nation British Columbia, MNBC, represents the section 35 rights of over 24,000 Métis citizens, advocates for over 98,000 self-identified Métis and represents 39 Métis chartered communities across British Columbia.

MNBC strives to promote a strong future for the Métis people in British Columbia, where the rich Métis culture, heritage and languages thrive. Métis communities achieve strong socio-economic outcomes and Métis rights as an indigenous people are recognized.

On April 13, 2017, the Prime Minister, Métis Nation president Chartier and the president of the MNBC governing members signed the Canada-Métis Nation Accord during the first Crown-Métis Nation Summit in Ottawa, marking a significant step toward a renewed government-to-government relationship based on the recognition of rights, respect and partnership.

I am pleased to have an organization like MNBC headquartered in my beautiful riding of Surrey Centre. Today, its members are here in this gallery advocating for their people.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, never has a Prime Minister been so ashamed to defend his own economic update, and we know why. Years after he said that there would be no consequences for doubling the national debt, we have learned that this Prime Minister is going to spend more next year on interest on the debt than he does on health care.

Once again, why does the Prime Minister want to give more to bankers than to nurses?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be more credible if the Leader of the Opposition had not spoken out against our historic \$200-billion health care agreements with the provinces over the next 10 years.

We are there to invest in the health care system. We are there to invest so that we can deliver results for Canadians. The Conservative Party is only there for austerity and budget cuts.

With respect to our economic statement, we have invested in housing and in making sure there is more competition to stabilize grocery prices. We are there to invest in good careers for years to come in industries across Canada. We will continue to be there in a responsible way for Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians' fridges are empty and they are being forced to

turn to food banks. After eight years of this Prime Minister, they are already living with austerity in their daily lives. The Prime Minister wants to make their situation even worse by creating another deficit with \$20 billion in inflationary spending and by increasing interest and inflation at Canadians' expense.

Will he reverse his inflationary policies so that Canadians can put food on the table?

● (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition leader is not being completely logical. He is right that Canadians are struggling because of high grocery prices, but he is proposing government austerity as a solution to help those families. It is completely ridiculous.

We are here to help families with investments in housing and investments to lower and stabilize grocery prices. We are here to invest in careers and jobs for the future.

Meanwhile, the Conservative Party is against dental care for seniors and against help for businesses that will increase the employment rate.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, never has a prime minister been so ashamed of his own economic update that he wants to avoid talking about it for the week that follows, and we can understand why. Next year, the Prime Minister wants to spend \$53 billion on debt interest, a record-smashing amount that is higher than the amount we spend on health care. It works out to \$3,000 for every Canadian family. According to the Bank of Nova Scotia, this is going to increase interest rates by two full percentage points, or \$700 a year, directly attributable to the government's deficit spending.

Will the Prime Minister get control of himself and his spending so Canadians can get control of their mortgage costs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will admit openly to you and to others in the House that the media did not cover our fall economic statement as much as we would have liked last week because they were so busy talking about what a terrible week the Conservative Party had on Ukraine, on allegations of terrorism, and on attacking Stellantis and jobs in southern Ontario. Yes, the media were totally wrapped up in the Leader of the Opposition's terrible week.

Oral Questions

We stay focused on investing in housing for Canadians, on stepping up, on more competition to help with grocery prices, and on moving forward and creating great jobs and careers for Canadians for decades to come.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe he should just give the media even more money to cover the news how he would like it, because we know he is so desperate to debate me on the carbon tax, a debate he has been losing badly. Canadians overwhelmingly want him to axe the tax. That is why he panicked and flip-flopped to take the tax off for a short time, and only for those people who are in a region where he is plummeting in the polls and his caucus is revolting.

With two million Canadians forced to go to a food bank, will he stop thinking about buying himself better news coverage and start thinking about the Canadians who have to buy themselves better food?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the Conservative leader again attacking the media, particularly on a day when we stood up and arranged a deal with Google to make sure that local journalism, independent journalism and the work that our news media is going to do will be able to stand the test of time through the transforming times we live in.

The Leader of the Opposition continues to want to stand with big data and with internet giants, and to sidle up to his billionaire buddies down south. We are going to continue to stand up for local journalism, for the work that professionals do to support our democracy in small towns and communities right across the country.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he does not want to debate on the carbon tax because he knows that Canadians know they cannot afford the cost of food as he intends to continue raising taxes, so instead, he tries to distract with media buyouts and by censoring views with which he disagrees.

Will he have the courage to actually defend his carbon tax as two million people line up in breadlines like those we have not seen since the Great Depression, and will he support our common-sense bill to axe the tax on the farmers who feed us?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians right across the country, including and especially our hard-working farm families, are seeing the impacts of climate change increasingly, every single year. It has become glaringly obvious to everyone, except for certain MAGA Conservatives, that the fight against climate change is a fight for the future of our economy. We cannot separate fighting climate change from growing good jobs in a strong economy into the future, yet that is exactly what Conservatives continue to say.

We put a price on pollution. We are putting more money back into the pockets of Canadians, and we are creating great jobs for the long term.

• (1435)

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to media reports, the government is still refusing to launch a competition for the replacement of the surveillance aircraft fleet. What is worse, it has no interest in finding out what the results of a competition would be. Instead, it is taking on that role itself and, based on its own analysis, it has chosen an American company. We have nothing against the Americans, but we want the process to be fair and equitable.

Has the government actually ruled out a competition? Has it actually ruled out Bombardier? Has it actually ruled out Quebec?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in these uncertain times, we have two main priorities. First, we must ensure that our military and armed forces have the equipment they need to do their jobs. We also need to ensure that there are good jobs in the aerospace industry for Canadians across the country. Those are our two goals, and that is what we are going to continue working on. The ministers involved will make an announcement in due course.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we agree with something, it is always important to say so. We need security for military members and good jobs. However, why rule out Bombardier? The people at Bombardier are capable of doing this. They are capable of providing this. We could at least check with them. The government is ruling out a modern Quebec and Canadian company in favour of the American dinosaur, Boeing. We are not asking for special treatment. We are just asking for a fair and equitable competition process.

Can the Prime Minister show some statesmanship, bring in a real competition process and tell us that what we read this morning is not true?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Canadian Armed Forces need the right equipment to keep us safe and to fulfill the responsibility that we share with our allies to keep the world more prosperous and safe. At the same time, we need investments that will generate good jobs and a bright future for our aerospace industry in Quebec and across Canada. We share those priorities, and we will stay on this path.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the last election, the Prime Minister promised to pass legislation within the first 100 days to protect Canadians from toxic online content and to hold platforms accountable. Last month, a 12-year-old boy in Prince George took his own life in response to online sextortion. It has been 764 days since the government was sworn in, and more of these incidents have been happening every year.

When will the government introduce the online harm bill to protect kids?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to protecting our kids, I think we all agree that we have to do everything we possibly can.

That is why we have spent such a significant amount of time working with communities, including racialized communities, and working with experts, moving forward in the right way to keep our kids safe from online harms and to keep them safe in the virtual world, where more and more of us spend increasing amounts of time.

We need to make sure we get it right, both for the grand principles of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly that are so important in our democracies and also for communities that are all too often subject to discrimination and marginalization. That is what we are going to do.

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, government delay is causing harm to kids. We need action.

[Translation]

The COP28 president is looking to secure development agreements in Canada. The minister said they only talked about climate change, but his department is refusing to disclose who will be part of the Canadian delegation until the end of COP28.

Is the Prime Minister sending the Minister of Environment to Dubai to eliminate fossil fuels or to sign new development deals?

• (1440)

[English]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to be careful about associating a tragedy that happened in Prince George with the actions or inactions of any particular government.

We understand how horrific this is for the family and for the community. We will continue to work to make sure that kids across this country are protected. That is why we are serious about moving forward in protecting them from online harms.

[Translation]

This is an extremely serious issue that we will always handle with the respect and responsibility it deserves. This issue should not

Oral Questions

serve as an excuse to lob veiled accusations. It is a tragedy that we all need to work on together.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to avoid responsibility for having doubled the cost of housing over the past eight years. He is not worth the cost of rent.

According to the United States' Realtor.com website, October 2023 was the sixth consecutive month of rent decreases over a one-year period. According to the Rentals.ca website, "Canada's rents continued to reach new heights" for the sixth consecutive month.

Why is the cost of rent falling in the United States and rising faster in Canada than at any other time in its history?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we launched our housing accelerator this fall precisely to create more housing in Canada and lower rents for all Canadians. That is part of the actions we have taken since 2017, and even before that, to invest in housing in Canada.

We know how much we have left to do. Our population is growing faster than that of the U.S., but I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition is not speaking out against immigration.

We will continue to be there to build more housing and to grow our economy and our population at the same time.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister loves to blame others for the fact that he has doubled housing costs in eight years. He is not worth the price of rent.

Let me quote the organization realtor.com in the United States: "October 2023 marks the sixth month in a row of year-over-year rent decline". Rentals.ca in Canada says, "For the sixth month in a row, asking rents in Canada hit a new high".

Why, after eight years of the Prime Minister, is rent going down in the States and up in Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 2015, we have been investing in housing in this country to make up for the 10 years of lost time when the member, as the minister of housing in a previous government, got out of the business of building and supporting housing across this country.

Oral Questions

We have done an awful lot, and we recognize there is more to do, which is why part of our fall economic statement was about investing even more in creating homes and unlocking the potential of this country.

As for the difference between Canada and the United States, one of the differences is that our population is growing much faster than the population in the United States. I am certain the leader of the opposition was not about to suggest he was anti-immigration, because we all know immigration creates jobs and prosperity, and that is what we are all for.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the Prime Minister who brought up immigration. I was about to point out that in Canada, according to his housing agency, home construction is down 32% year over year and in the United States it is up 5%.

It is true that the Prime Minister has much more expensive federal government programs to build more government bureaucracy and fewer homes. Will he adopt our common-sense plan to build homes, not just bureaucracy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know the mistrust and distaste the Leader of the Opposition has for expert analysis and expert advice, particularly because the experts have roundly panned his approach on housing, as it is not going to create the housing that Canada needs.

What are we doing? For example, concretely, we talked about 9,000 housing units in Hamilton, 7,000 housing units in London, 44,000 housing units in Vaughan, 9,000 housing units in Halifax and more to be created over the next few years. These are investments we are making that are delivering for Canadians right across the country, while he continues to propose cuts and austerity instead of the investments Canadians need.

• (1445)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every time the Prime Minister gives homebuilding numbers, he is talking about promises that have not been realized. For example, he promised in 2015, eight years ago, that he would sell federal lands to build homes. Now, today, Radio-Canada reports that it takes 23 years for the government to dispose of lands and turn them into new homes. In fact, one project will not be done until 2038.

How many generations of Canadians would have to survive long enough for the Prime Minister to realize any of the promises he makes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that underscores the importance of being able to work constructively with municipalities to build housing. Those numbers from the City of Ottawa are something we are concerned with, and we are going to be working to make sure they accelerate the construction of housing on federal lands.

We are there for investing in more housing. We are there to release federal lands for the construction of housing. However, instead of doing what the Leader of the Opposition says and picking fights with municipalities, we will work with them to ensure they are building faster. That is what our housing accelerator is all about:

unlocking hundreds of thousands of new homes over the coming years.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what he has actually done is unlocked hundreds of new photo ops at the expense of Canadian taxpayers. For example, he has now given \$15 billion to the renamed and recycled construction loan program. This is a program that has built fewer than half of its targeted promises, and the new money that he says will build homes will arrive in 2025 and the new homes in 2028.

How many times would the Prime Minister have to be re-elected on his promises for housing for a new home to actually get built?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the irony is that the Leader of the Opposition is attacking us for making announcements of thousands upon thousands of new units built across the country when he does not make any announcements at all because he has no plan. He is not sharing a plan to build more homes. He is not sharing a plan to invest in the economy. He is not sharing his approach on how to create more opportunities for Canadians while fighting climate change and while responding to the climate crisis. He just stands there and makes personal attacks, and sneers at everything and says that it is all broken, instead of doing the hard work, rolling up his sleeves and delivering a real plan for the future of Canada.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the problem with the Prime Minister is that the future never comes. It is a promise that is always just around the corner. For example, his \$4-billion housing accelerator has completed exactly zero homes two years after it was announced, and here is why. The other day he announced a bunch of money in Halifax, and where did the money go according to the city? It went to hire 29 new bureaucrats, the same bureaucrats who are blocking housing construction in the first place.

Why does he not accept my common-sense plan to require cities to boost housing completions by 15% in order to get federal money so that we build homes, not bureaucracy?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hate to break it to the Leader of the Opposition, but a TikTok video is not a plan.

We are going to continue to work, roll up our sleeves and deliver for Canadians every step of the way. While the Conservatives are flip-flopping all over the place, refusing to stand with workers, refusing to stand with Ukraine and watching too much far right American TV, we are going to stay focused on delivering concretely for Canadians, with the lowest deficit in the G7, the best debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 and the best AAA credit rating of all countries around the world except for the top three, of which we are a part. We are going to continue delivering for Canadians.

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[Translation]

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, the cover of *Croc* magazine stated, “Just because people laugh does not mean it is funny”. According to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the simple act of celebrating Christmas with a tree, family, music and gifts is systemic racism. I wonder if good old Santa Claus is racist. I wonder if snow has become racist. Does the Prime Minister think that Christmas is racist?

• (1450)

The Speaker: I have to say that I am not convinced that this has anything to do with government administration, but I see that the right hon. Prime Minister is on his feet.

The hon. leader of the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Human Rights Commission falls under the federal government's jurisdiction. I am therefore asking the Prime Minister of Canada to show some backbone and respond.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to try to answer such a ridiculous question. Obviously, Christmas is not racist. Canada is a country of diversity, a country where we celebrate our personal and individual beliefs and where we also share and celebrate our neighbours' milestones and special occasions. That is a strength that enriches our country. Sharing our celebrations makes us a rich and diverse country, and we always will be. The Bloc Québécois is trying to pick a fight and is being ridiculous. It is unbelievable.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): That was not so hard, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps we can almost agree. The creation of a national culture involves bringing people in and being welcoming. It does not involve excluding people or undermining the host society. A few dozen immigrant Quebecers will be attending a Christmas celebration that I am hosting in my riding in a few days. Do I have to cancel that event because the Canadian Human Rights Commission thinks that celebrating Christmas is racist? That is my question for the Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker. We should all celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah and all of the different festivals, holidays and celebrations that take place in our ridings and across the country. Our diversity is an incredible strength, and we will always celebrate it. I know that there are a lot of problems in the world today, but I think it is a good thing for us to take a moment to celebrate each other in the House.

Oral Questions

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, allow me to be the first of the season to wish everybody a merry Christmas. What a beautiful celebration. We love our great Canadian traditions, including Christmas.

Unfortunately, after eight years, the Prime Minister promises nothing but a carbon tax lump of coal for Canadians. Will he get off the backs of Canadians so they can enjoy beautiful gifts and maybe even a turkey and warm meal around the Christmas table this season?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to point out that we are the government phasing out coal, over the opposition of the Leader of the Opposition.

We are going to continue to build a better and brighter future for all Canadians, and that includes fighting against climate change so we can ensure that we keep a stronger future for Canadian children to go sledding, but also so we can make sure they have better jobs in the future. The climate denialism of the Conservative Party of Canada is putting future white Christmases at risk. That is why, on this side of the House, we stand for Christmas.

• (1455)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that has to be the angriest and most caustic Christmas message I have ever seen.

This is a guy who has not phased out coal, despite his theatrics over there. What he is doing is phasing out food because Canadians cannot afford it now as he raises carbon taxes on the wonderful farmers who bring it to our table. Why will he not axe the tax on farmers so that Canadians can eat, heat and house themselves. Why does he not be a little less like Scrooge and a little more like Santa Claus?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues we have is that, when the Leader of the Opposition talks about the impact of our price on pollution on farmers, he includes farmers in Ukraine and he includes farmers who are busy feeding us and feeding people around the world. He stood against the free trade deal that Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people want us to have because he pretends we are imposing a price on pollution on them, which of course we are not. That is the extent to which the Leader of the Opposition will spin to make a political attack when it is completely unfounded. We will be there to stand with Ukraine and with Christmas.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we cannot even have a bit of fun in this place because, of course, once the Prime Minister is off script, he starts rambling all over the map, unable to stay on any subject.

Oral Questions

The question was about the cost of food. After he has forced Canadians to line up in breadlines that we have not seen since the Great Depression, with a record-smashing two million visits to a food bank, he now sees it as the time to quadruple the tax on the farmers who feed us. Will he stop blocking common-sense Conservative Bill C-234 to take the tax off the farmers so that Canadians can afford Christmas dinner?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 97% of farm fuel emissions are already exempt from our price on pollution. That is what the Leader of the Opposition refuses to accept.

There are many factors that go into the rise in food prices not just in Canada but around the world, and the war in Ukraine is certainly one factor. The fact that the Conservatives have not chosen to stand with Ukraine against Russia in this difficult time is very much relevant. No matter how much they try to dodge and spin out of it, they are not standing with Ukraine at this difficult time.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister would like Canadians to think about anything other than their hungry stomachs, after eight years in office. He would like Canadians to forget that he has doubled the cost of rent, that he wants to quadruple the carbon tax and that he has given us the worst interest rate hikes in Canadian history. The least he could do is back off on his plan to quadruple the tax on our farmers.

Will he stop blocking Bill C-234, the common-sense Conservative bill to take the tax off our farmers, so that our Canadian people can afford to eat?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that might have been a more credible question if it had not been for the fact that the Conservative Party delayed the implementation of our affordability act, which would bring in more competition on groceries. It is moving forward to stabilize grocery prices and support Canadians through this difficult time.

The Conservatives have also stood against other initiatives we are supporting Canadians with, like dental care for young Canadians and for seniors, which is coming in the coming months. They have stood against supports like our grocery rebate. They have stood against the investments we are busy making to support Canadians right across the country because they stand for austerity and cuts.

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HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this summer, Canadians saw refugees rendered homeless in the city of Toronto. With pressure, the federal government finally agreed to provide some support, but it is not enough. Tonight, another refugee family will be turned away from a shelter because it is full. As the nights get colder, things will only get worse. Mayor Olivia Chow negotiated a historic new deal with the Province of Ontario that calls on the federal government to deliver for refugees.

Will the Prime Minister do his part so that refugees do not have to sleep on the streets and be rendered homeless this winter?

● (1500)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past number of years, we have transferred hundreds of millions of dollars to cities across the country, including Toronto, to support them with the challenges they are facing with overburdened shelters, and with people seeking solace and places to sleep. We are going to continue to be there as partners to the City of Toronto.

We are glad to see the Province of Ontario finally stepping up to do its part, but we need to continue to all work together. The province needs to do more to take on its responsibilities, and we will continue to be there as a partner in keeping Canadians, and all who come to this country, safe and warm.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has given billions for EV battery plants, but he has no plan for supplying Canadian critical minerals to make these EV battery operations a Canadian success. There are metal deposits in Sudbury, Thompson and Timmins that are ready to go into operation, but they need a federal partner. Without a tax credit strategy, the auto industry is going to be getting its metal from China, Indonesia or Congo, all places with much lower standards in environmental rights, human rights and wages.

Why is the Prime Minister continuing to botch a made-in-Canada solution that would allow us to be a true, clean energy leader?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was extremely pleased to welcome the presidents of the European Union and of the European Commission to Newfoundland and Labrador last week to talk about everything we are doing to invest in critical minerals across the country as a part of the supply chain the world needs. Canadian clean aluminum, Canadian clean steel and Canadian responsibly extracted and developed critical minerals are going to be an essential part of the supply chains of the future for our allies around the world.

That is why we are stepping up with a critical mineral strategy. That is why we are investing in a strong and green mining future for Canada. We will be there for the future of jobs in Canada.

[Translation]

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the vitality of rural media is of paramount importance, particularly in minority-language communities.

Through its online news bill, the government has signalled its support for Canadian media.

Can the Prime Minister inform the House of the progress made in implementing this bill?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Sudbury for her question and hard work.

I am pleased to say that we have reached an agreement with Google to ensure that this web giant pays its fair share for online news. In fact, Google will invest \$100 million a year in our newsrooms. This landmark agreement demonstrates that our online news legislation is working.

Despite the Conservative Party's ideological opposition, we have secured a sustainable, independent future for local news in Canada.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything the Prime Minister has said about his carbon tax has been proven to be false. Most recently, he said that farmers only pay a teeny carbon tax. Well, it turns out that that tax adds up to well over \$100,000 a year for just one mushroom farm in my riding. The Prime Minister now wants to quadruple the carbon tax on those farmers.

I have a very simple question from Carleton Mushroom Farms: How should it pay for the \$400,000 in new taxes? Should it raise prices on consumers, or should it cut production, so we import more of our food from dirty, foreign economies?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, farmers across the country, including those in the member opposite's riding, know how important it is to fight climate change as well as protect their investments and future generations of farmers in this country. That is why we are stepping up with significant investments to support innovation in farming and agriculture and support direct investments to change the way we are doing things. It is so we can do them cleaner and greener, in ways that continue to support Canadians and build a stronger future for everyone.

We know that farmers care deeply about the land and its future. We are working with them, not denying the reality they are facing.

• (1505)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is denying the reality they are facing. I was asking specifically about Carleton Mushroom Farms. Let us do the math. It is paying over \$100,000 today for the Prime Minister's carbon tax. He wants to quadruple that to \$400,000 a year.

How will it pay for that \$400,000? Will it raise prices on consumers who already cannot afford food, or will it just cut produc-

Oral Questions

tion so Canadians buy more expensive, foreign food from polluting countries? Which one will it be?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are the questions that producers and families right across the country are asking. They are facing an uncertain future with increased climate change and with increased challenges from global supply chains, including those related to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, which the Conservatives seem to be on the wrong side of.

We are going to continue to work with farmers and with agricultural producers across the country to invest and innovate while being able to continue to feed Canadians for decades to come, despite a changing climate.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after I asked the question twice, he said, yes, these are the questions that Canadian farmers are asking. Finally, he has gotten that far. The Medeiros farm is paying \$100,000 in carbon taxes. That is one farm. He wants to quadruple that to well over \$400,000.

I am asking him once again, how is that farm going to pay that tax? Is it going to raise prices on consumers or cut production so we buy more foreign food from polluting countries? Which one is it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize this reality. That is why we are working with farmers and industries across this country to adapt to the reality of climate change and the challenges of global supply chains.

I can say we will reach out to that farm community, and we will reach out to that farm, to talk to them about how they can meet the coming challenges in the coming years. We will follow up with them and ensure we are doing everything we can to support them into a changing future.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is even more progress. Now he says he is going to follow up with Carleton Mushroom Farms. This is a farm that pays \$100,000 in carbon taxes. Now he wants to quadruple it to \$400,000. It does not have any alternative sources. It either powers its operations with natural gas or propane, just like farmers have to dry their grains and heat their barns using those same fuel sources. There are no alternatives.

Oral Questions

When the Prime Minister follows up with Carleton Mushroom Farms, how is he going to advise it to pay the \$400,000 carbon tax bill he is sending them? Is it by raising prices on consumers or by cutting food production so we buy foreign food from polluting countries?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing about the sustainable practices that Carleton Mushroom Farms is already putting into place, and working with it on how we can continue to move forward on supporting it into a brighter future.

We recognize the reality of climate change on this side of the House at least, and we know that is going to bring challenges to families such as the Medeiros family. We are going to be there to support them, just like we are supporting farm families right across the country.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, \$2 billion to boost English in Quebec since 1995: That is what the federal government has done for official languages in Quebec. That is not all, however; the Prime Minister is investing another \$800 million in his action plan for official languages, and English is again reaping the benefits.

How many times do we need to say it? French is the language in decline in Quebec. The anglicization of Quebec is alive and well. Will the Prime Minister do something for Quebec and redirect our tax money to supporting the French language?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting our two official languages across the country is a major priority for this government. That is why we are investing in protecting our official languages minorities across the country. The fact is that we are doing a lot more to protect French, including sending hundreds of millions of dollars to Quebec every year to support francization.

We will always be there to protect French across the country, including in Quebec. Our government is the first federal government to recognize the precariousness of French in Quebec and we are going to be there to support and defend it.

• (1510)

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how many times do we need to say it? English is not a minority language.

We are surrounded by 360 million anglophones in North America. Even Quebecers speak English because bilingualism in Canada is a francophone thing. In Quebec, we are fighting tooth and nail to protect the French language and indigenous languages. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister is undoing everything we have done by handing out yet another \$800 million for English in Quebec.

When will he stop promoting the anglicization of Quebec?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is yet more nonsense from the Bloc Québécois, which is picking fights and trying to scare people.

The fact is, we invest hundreds of millions of dollars in Quebec every year to support francization. We are here to protect both of our official languages everywhere in this country, which means that, even though the Bloc could not care less about francophones outside Quebec, we will continue to be there for them, and we will continue to protect our two official languages in minority situations no matter where they are in this country.

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[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister announced \$15 billion for one battery plant. For context, that works out to \$1,000 in costs for every single Canadian family. When reports came out that the jobs were going to foreign replacement workers, he called it disinformation. The next day, his minister said that there was one. Then they said that there were a few, and then the company said that there would be 900.

Yesterday, his Minister of Employment said that he is going to do an investigation and get to the bottom of it. What has Sherlock Holmes been able to find?

The Speaker: I would like to remind all members to not engage, as much as possible, in using mock names for ministers.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again we see the extent to which the Leader of the Opposition will go to explain why he stands against investments that are going to create tens of thousands of great jobs across Windsor and St. Thomas, in Montérégie in Quebec with Northvolt, and right across the country in battery supply chains. He is opposed to investments that strengthen the future of our communities because he does not believe in climate change, but we know, and Canadians know, that these investments make a difference. In terms of jobs, there will be 2,300 local Canadian construction jobs and 2,500 permanent Canadian jobs just for the Stellantis investment.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we would sign contracts that ensure Canadian tax dollars only ever go to Canadian workers.

The only way to find out if anything the Prime Minister says on this \$15-billion deal is true would be for him to release the contract. Yesterday, common-sense Conservatives put forward a motion to that effect. Liberals amended the motion to say that there should be “no notes”, “no...recording devices” and that all copies would be destroyed.

What in this \$15-billion contract is the Prime Minister so determined to hide?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Leader of the Opposition has not had many jobs other than an MP for the past 19 years, but the reality is that there are commercial and competitive reasons to be careful about the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, he has had 19 years as a member of Parliament. Perhaps we need to make sure that they understand commercial sensitivities to guarantee good jobs for Canadians.

Our investments have been supported by labour unions and are supported by local leadership, which understands we are building jobs not only for right now but also for coming generations. Working hand in hand with companies to make those investments in Canada is what this government is focused on.

• (1515)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what he is focused on is diverting Canadian tax dollars away from union workers in places such as Windsor to foreign replacement workers from South Korea. Canada's Building Trades Unions said that its members could do all the work the Prime Minister has chosen to outsource to foreign workers, and they will lose \$300 million in wages as a result of the replacement workers the Prime Minister intends to bring in.

If anything the Prime Minister is saying about this \$15-billion contract is true, why is he so afraid to release the contract?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, training up an already world-class Canadian workforce in more innovative and highly specialized machinery is good for the thousands of long-term, quality jobs that Canadians are gaining with these investments.

It is obvious that the Conservative leader is yet again looking for a slogan to justify his ideological opposition to investing in Canadians' futures. His crusade against facts shows us once again that he will do anything to advance his own personal political interests, even if that means ignoring the likes of Unifor and other unions and ripping up Canadian jobs.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister with respect to Bill C-57.

This fall, as the Ukrainian people fight to defend themselves against Russia's genocidal invasion, the Canadian government has signed a historic, modernized Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement with the Government of Ukraine. It is important to remember that the Ukrainian people are not just fighting for their own freedom and survival; they are also fighting for us, and we need to be fighting for them.

Oral Questions

Most MPs voted in favour of the free trade agreement, but every single Conservative MP voted against it. They voted unanimously against supporting Ukraine.

My question for the Prime Minister is, will he share with Canadians why the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement is so important to Canada and to Ukraine?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for his long-standing commitment to the Ukrainian people.

While Ukrainians are fighting for freedom and their very right to exist, the Conservative leader is pandering to far right, Republican-style politics that are creeping into his party. By voting against a crucial bill for Ukraine, the leader is playing into the Kremlin's hands.

On this side of the House, without question, we will never back down in our support of Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister could not care less about Ukraine. He only cares about the fact that he is losing the carbon tax debate so badly that he would suggest that anyone who is against the carbon tax is against Ukraine.

The exact opposite is true. He is not bringing in a free trade agreement with Ukraine; we already have a free trade agreement with Ukraine, which Conservatives initiated and he had no part in.

Will the Prime Minister stop trying to distract from his losing debate on the carbon tax and on the suffering Canadians here at home, and finally take responsibility for all the misery he is causing?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only does the Leader of the Opposition think he knows better than everyone else in the House, but he also thinks he knows better than Volodymyr Zelenskyy what Ukraine needs right now.

President Zelenskyy and his government are asking us to pass the modernizing of the Canada-Ukraine free trade deal. The Leader of the Opposition is saying, "No, no, no. We don't support, because it would impose a carbon price on Ukrainians." Of course, the fact that the Ukrainian embassy is pointing out that it would do no such thing and, that indeed, they have had a price on pollution for years now, is proof that he is just trying to make an ideological argument.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's ideological argument is that he would block selling Canadian natural gas in order to force Europeans to buy Russian gas. He would give the money to the Kremlin rather than give it to Canadian workers. He exported a gigantic turbine to Putin to pump gas into Europe and fund the war over there. Meanwhile, he imposes a carbon tax here at home.

Oral Questions

He can try all he wants to impose the carbon tax through a trade agreement or by delaying the carbon tax election, but here are the facts: I will win the carbon tax election, and I will axe the tax. When will the Prime Minister get it through his head?

● (1520)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we recognize that even as the world is in a complicated place because of multiple global factors, like Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, we need to stay focused on being there for Canadians, both now and into the future.

That is exactly what we are doing. Our recent fall economic statement delivers more housing for Canadians right across the country, delivers stability and competition in grocery prices and builds on the jobs and careers that Canadians are going to be able to benefit from in a net-zero world.

The Conservative Party's climate denialism is not building a stronger economy for Canadians.

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THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that got him to back down real quick, did it not?

We know that the Prime Minister is ashamed of the hideous record he has of sending two million people to a food bank, of doubling the rent, of making it so that nine out of 10 young people cannot afford home, and of a massive increase in the number of people who have jobs who have to resort to breadlines in order to eat. He does not talk anymore about the middle class and those working hard to join it.

The Prime Minister is trying to distract Canadians every day and in every way from the misery he has caused at home. Why does he not take responsibility for that misery and finally do his job?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives look at Canadians who are struggling right now, who are hurting right now, and they have made the choice to amplify their fears, to exaggerate them and to gin them up; to make people angry about everything; and to point out that everything is broken in this country. I disagree both with the substance of the Conservative leader's argument and the way he is going about it.

I know what Canadians are doing. They are rolling up their sleeves, leaning on each other and building a better future by fighting climate change, investing in their neighbours and being there to support each other.

The Conservative leader might want to run on anger in a couple of years; we are going to run on a positive, ambitious vision for this country, which Canadians—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Surrey—Newton.

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LABOUR

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, workers have built this country and they will build the Canada of tomorrow. Our government recently introduced important legisla-

tion that would ban replacement workers. While the opposition pretends to be for workers, it has stalled the passing of the legislation.

Can the Prime Minister tell workers across the country why we have their backs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Surrey—Newton for his hard work.

Members of the Canadian Labour Congress were in Ottawa this week to express their frustration with the Conservative leader's silence on our government's replacement worker legislation. The last time that party stayed silent on a piece of legislation, it voted against Ukraine. For the 19 years the leader has been elected to the House, he has always voted against unions, including with Stephen Harper's Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, and it is increasingly obvious he will always stand against workers.

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HOUSING

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the federal housing advocate has reported that the government fails to protect Inuit's right to housing. Inuit have to take shifts to sleep because of overcrowding. In the fall economic statement, the government is spending more to settle historic injustices than it is to help indigenous peoples in housing. Liberals have to get this right: Invest in indigenous housing and end these injustices.

When will the Prime Minister finally invest in what is needed? Will he wait until he is forced to by the courts?

● (1525)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know how important it is to continue to work with the governments of the territories and with indigenous partners, like ITK, to build more housing. We have made significant announcements and significant investments in creating more housing, but there is, as my hon. colleague has said, much more to do.

We will continue to be there as partners for the north as we invest in housing and as we create more opportunities.

HEALTH

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, 35 doctors and addiction experts recently wrote to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, recommending significant reform or outright abolishment of the safe-supply strategy. Harm reduction without treatment does not break the cycle of addiction. In Toronto and across Canada, the strategy is not working and is wreaking havoc on communities. Without a federal exemption, injection sites would be illegal.

Will the Prime Minister listen to the experts and either reform safe supply and provide funding to keep host neighbourhoods safe, or eliminate injection sites altogether?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a scientific and proven evidentiary fact that safe supply and harm reduction save lives.

We know that there is much more to do, and we will continue to do it, working with partners across the country, investing in more supports for communities and moving forward in a way that is grounded in science, to save lives and support people.

Part of our \$200-billion investment in health over the next 10 years is aimed at support for mental health and addictions. We are there, but we will remain grounded in science, not ideology.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Jill Balser, Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration for the great province of Nova Scotia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, you have previously stated in the House that questions must be related to government administration, that they must be relevant in order to be recognized by the House. Earlier, the leader of the Bloc Québécois put a question to the Prime Minister, and you were initially of the opinion that it was not related to government administration.

I want to share what was said by the Canadian Human Rights Commission, which is part of the federal administration. The Commission states that statutory holidays related to Christianity, including Christmas and Easter, are an obvious example of systemic religious discrimination and that this discrimination against religious minorities in Canada is “grounded in Canada’s history of colonialism”.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking that you proceed more carefully in the future rulings you make on the relevance of questions because, in the case involving the leader of the Bloc Québécois, I do not think your decision was the correct one.

Points of Order

The Speaker: I thank the member for La Prairie for his comments. From what the Chair heard during the first question, no reference was made to that document. I will review the blues. If that did in fact happen, then I would like to apologize to the member for Beloeil—Chambly. I will get back to the House with an answer for the member if needed.

The hon. member for Sarnia-Lambton on a point of order.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think it is important that we are consistent in the way that we apply the rules in the House. During Statements by Members, one of the members opposite accused all of the Conservatives of being complicit with the Russians, which we know is not factual since we have all been banned from Russia.

When one of our members had to withdraw a comment, he also had to apologize. I respect that you asked the member to withdraw the comment, but I did not hear the apology, and I would give the member opposite the chance to do it now.

● (1530)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising this point of order. The Chair did ask the member to withdraw the comment. It was important to the Chair on a prima facie look at it to see a distinction between the two situations.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the statement made by the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills was making a number of very clearly unparliamentary statements. One of them is audible on the video at the 14:20:30 mark. I would prefer not to offer specifics if it is not necessary, provided the member is prepared to apologize and withdraw it, but I am happy to provide more specifics if necessary.

The Speaker: I thank the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

I am going to review Hansard to take a look at that and will come back to this chamber if necessary.

Orders of the Day

ORDERS OF THE DAY

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed from November 22 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:32 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of the member Dufferin—Caledon to the motion for concurrence in the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: The question is as follows.

May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of amendment to House*]

• (1545)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 457*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Davidson
Deltell	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Ferreri
Findlay	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Glada	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Hallan
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Khanna
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Maguire	Majumdar
Martel	Mazier

McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 113

McLean
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Patzner
Perkins
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Uppal
Vecchio
Viersen
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bergeron	Bérubé
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gainey
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gill	Gould
Green	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland

Orders of the Day

Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lemire
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Michaud	Miller
Morrice	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	O'Regan
Paucé	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Rayes	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Sorbara
Sousa	Ste-Marie
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thompson	Trudeau
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zuberi— 205	

PAIRED

Members

Deltell	Fast
Garon	Guilbeault
Joly	Lalonde
Ng	Oliphant
Tochor	Trudel— 10

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion.

● (1555)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 458*)

YEAS

Members

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

Orders of the Day

Green	Hajdu
Hallan	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Jeneroux	Johns
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Kelly
Khalid	Khanna
Kitchen	Kmiec
Koutrakis	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lake
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauson
Lawrence	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Lemire	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lightbound
Lloyd	Lobb
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Majumdar	Maloney
Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathyssen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saamich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLean	McLeod
Melillo	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Michaud	Miller
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Muys
Nater	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
O'Regan	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Poilievre	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rood
Rota	Ruff
Sahota	Sajjan
Saks	Samson
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Seeback	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Small	Sorbara

Soroka	Sousa
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	St-Onge
Strahl	Stubbs
Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thomas
Thompson	Tolmie
Trudeau	Turnbull
Uppal	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Van Popta	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Vidal	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi— 316

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Deltell	Fast
Garon	Guilbeault
Joly	Lalonde
Ng	Oliphant
Tochor	Trudel— 10

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

● (1600)

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

The House resumed from November 27 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the third report of the Standing Committee on National Defence.

The hon. whip for the government.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the results of the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting in favour of the motion.

[*English*]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives agree to apply the vote, with Conservatives voting yea.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to apply the vote and will be voting in favour of the motion.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP also agrees to apply the vote and will be voting in favour.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply the results of the previous vote, voting in favour.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Greens agree to apply the vote and will be voting no.

Mr. Han Dong: Mr. Speaker, I agree to apply and will be voting yes.

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

(Division No. 459)

YEAS

Members

Aboultiaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Bragdon	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Caputo
Carr	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Chambers	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Cooper	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Davidson	DeBellefeuille
Deltell	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Ferreri
Fillmore	Findlay
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gainey
Gallant	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan

Orders of the Day

Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gould
Gourde	Gray
Green	Hajdu
Hallan	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Jeneroux	Johns
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Kelly
Khalid	Khanna
Kitchen	Kmiec
Koutrakis	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lake
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lawrence	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Lemire	Leslie
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lightbound
Lloyd	Lobb
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Majumdar	Maloney
Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod	Melillo
Mendès	Medicino
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Muys
Nater	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
O'Regan	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Poilievre	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rood	Rota
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schiefke
Schmale	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shipley

Business of Supply

Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Small
Sorbara	Soroka
Sousa	Steinley
Ste-Marie	Stewart
St-Onge	Strahl
Stubbs	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Thompson
Tolmie	Trudeau
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vignola
Villemure	Virani
Vis	Vuong
Wagantall	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Weiler	Wilkinson
Williams	Williamson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zimmer
Zuberi— 313	

NAYS

Members

May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Morrice— 2
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PAIRED

Members

Deltell	Fast
Garon	Guilbeault
Joly	Lalonde
Ng	Oliphant
Tochor	Trudel— 10

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PASSAGE OF BILL C-234 BY THE SENATE

The House resumed from November 28 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Carleton relating to the business of supply.

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

• (1610)

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

(Division No. 460)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Bachrach
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney	Block
Boulerice	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carrie
Chambers	Chong
Cooper	Dalton
Davidson	Deltell
Desjarlais	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Ferreri
Findlay	Gallant
Garrison	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hallan	Hoback
Hughes	Idlout
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Khanna	Kitchen
Kniec	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kwan
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
MacGregor	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
Masse	Mathysen
Mazier	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Patzner	Paul-Hus
Perkins	Poillievre
Rayes	Redekopp
Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Scheer	Schmale
Seebach	Shields
Shipley	Singh
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Thomas	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Viersen	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zarrillo
Zimmer— 135	

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Atwin
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Boissonnault	Bradford
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe
Carr	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeBellefeuille
Desbiens	Desilets
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Gaudreau
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Ien	Jaczek
Jones	Jowhari
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lemire	Lightbound
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Morrice
Murray	Naqvi
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	O'Regan
Pauzé	Perron
Petipas Taylor	Plamondon
Powlowski	Qualtrough
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks

Private Members' Business

Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Sorbara
Sousa	Ste-Marie
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thompson	Trudeau
Turnbull	Valdez
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zuberi— 178

PAIRED

Members

Deltell	Fast
Garon	Guilbeault
Joly	Lalonde
Ng	Oliphant
Tochor	Trudel— 10

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1615)

[Translation]

HEALTH OF ANIMALS ACT

The House resumed from November 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-275, An Act to amend the Health of Animals Act (biosecurity on farms), be read the third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-275, under Private Members' Business.

● (1625)

[English]

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

(Division No. 461)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Allison
Anand	Anandasangaree
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Bergeron	Berthold
Bibeau	Bezan
	Bittle

Private Members' Business

Blair	Blanchet	Melillo	Mendès
Blanchette-Joncas	Block	Mendicino	Miao
Blois	Boissonnault	Michaud	Miller
Bradford	Bragdon	Moore	Morantz
Brassard	Brière	Morrison	Morrissey
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe	Motz	Muys
Calkins	Caputo	Naqvi	Nater
Carrie	Casey	Noormohamed	Normandin
Chabot	Chahal	O'Connell	O'Regan
Chambers	Champagne	Patzner	Paul-Hus
Champoux	Chatel	Pauzé	Perkins
Chen	Chiang	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Plamondon	Poilievre
Cooper	Cormier	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Coteau	Dalton	Rayes	Redekopp
Davidson	DeBellefeuille	Reid	Rempel Garner
Deltell	Desbiens	Richards	Roberts
Desilets	Dhaliwal	Robillard	Rodriguez
Dhillon	Diab	Rogers	Romanado
Doherty	Dong	Rood	Rota
Dowdall	Dreeshen	Ruff	Sahota
Drouin	Dubourg	Sajjan	Saks
Duclos	Duguid	Samson	Sarai
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	El-Khoury	Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Ellis	Epp	Schiefke	Schmale
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)	Seebach	Serré
Ferri	Fillmore	Sgro	Shanahan
Findlay	Fisher	Sheehan	Shields
Fonseca	Fortier	Shipley	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Fortin	Fragiskatos	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Fraser	Freeland	Sinclair-Desgagné	Small
Fry	Gaheer	Sorbara	Soroka
Gainey	Gallant	Sousa	Steinley
Gaudreau	Généreux	Ste-Marie	Stewart
Genuis	Gerretsen	St-Onge	Strahl
Gill	Gladu	Stubbs	Sudds
Godin	Goodridge	Tassi	Thériault
Gould	Gourde	Therrien	Thomas
Gray	Hajdu	Thompson	Tolmie
Hallan	Hanley	Trudeau	Turnbull
Hardie	Hepfner	Uppal	Valdez
Hoback	Holland	Van Bynen	Van Popta
Housefather	Hussen	Vandal	Vecchio
Hutchings	Iacono	Vidal	Vien
Ien	Jaczek	Viersen	Vignola
Jeneroux	Jones	Villemure	Virani
Jowhari	Kayabaga	Vis	Vuong
Kelloway	Kelly	Wagantall	Warkentin
Khalid	Khanna	Waugh	Webber
Kitchen	Kmiec	Wilkinson	Williams
Koutrakis	Kram	Williamson	Yip
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek	Zimmer	Zuberi— 278
Kusie	Kusmierczyk		
Lake	Lametti		
Lamoureux	Lantsman		
Lapointe	Larouche		
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Angus	Ashton
Lawrence	LeBlanc	Atwin	Bachrach
Lebouthillier	Lehoux	Bendayan	Blaikie
Lemire	Leslie	Blaney	Boulerice
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Cannings	Carr
Liepert	Lightbound	Dabrusin	Damoff
Lloyd	Lobb	Desjarlais	Dzerowicz
Long	Longfield	Ehsassi	Erskine-Smith
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Garrison	Gazan
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Green	Hughes
Maguire	Majumdar	Idlout	Johns
Maloney	Martel	Julian	Kwan
Martinez Ferrada	May (Cambridge)	Lambropoulos	MacGregor
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)	Masse	Mathysen
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Morrice
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Scarpaleggia	Singh
McLean	McLeod	Taylor Roy	Weiler

NAYS

Members

Zahid

Zarrillo— 36

PAIRED

Members

Deltell
Garon
Joly
Ng
Tochor

Fast
Guilbeault
Lalonde
Oliphant
Trudel— 10

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 51 minutes.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

WAYS AND MEANS MOTION NO. 19—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Yesterday, the House leader of the official opposition raised a point of order regarding Ways and Means Motion No. 19, arguing that under the rule of anticipation, the ways and means motion was out of order. He quoted extensively from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, in that regard.

[Translation]

After his intervention, other members indicated that they would return to the House to offer their own observations on this complex point of order.

Given that we have seen the matter of similar bills being raised several times over the past few years, the Chair believes the current situation would benefit from a thorough explanation and a comprehensive ruling.

[English]

However, I do not believe there are sufficient grounds at the moment to prevent the House from considering the ways and means motion, the purpose of which is to allow taxation legislation to be brought in. Until such time as I can return to the House with a more detailed ruling, I will allow proceedings on Ways and Means Motion No. 19 to continue. If the motion is concurred in, I will allow the bill based thereon to subsequently be brought in and for debate to begin on it. I intend to return to the House on the matter of the similarity between bills as soon as possible.

I thank members for their attention.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to subsection 4(5) of the Public Service Employment Act and Standing Order 111.1, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a certificate of nomination and biographical notes for the proposed appointment of Marie-Chantal Girard to the

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position of president of the Public Service Commission of Canada for a term of seven years.

I request that the nomination and biographical notes be referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 14 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADA-PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA RELATIONSHIP

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth interim report of the Special Committee on the Canada-People's Republic of China Relationship, entitled "The Chinese Communist Party's Overseas Police Service Stations".

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

● (1630)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, entitled "Restoring Full Accountability for Resources and Governance of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission".

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

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans submitted our supplemental report on the study of allocation of resources to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission because we are concerned about the persisting conflicts of interest and dysfunction caused by Canada's machinery of government structure for the commission.

The conflicts of interest have resulted in the Government of Canada failing to fully deliver Canada's contributions for the commission's essential work of protecting and conserving the waters and fisheries of the Great Lakes. This debacle is a national embarrassment and could have been dealt with back in April 2022 when the Prime Minister was sent a briefing note seeking a decision that could have fixed the machinery of government misalignment and resulting conflicts of interest.

Conservatives call on the Prime Minister to fix the machinery of government, eliminate the conflicts of interest, reaffirm Canada's commitment to the commission and ensure the Great Lakes are protected for future generations.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is truly a great honour for me to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on International Trade in relation to Bill C-57, an act to implement the 2023 free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine.

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

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I move that the first report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, presented to the House on Wednesday, February 2, 2022, be concurred in.

I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

I want to concur in the report from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food on food security that looked at processing capacity in Canada with a particular focus on food security. I believe there is some very pertinent information in the report, which I would encourage all members of the House to take the opportunity to read if they have not done so.

There are a couple of things in this report that I found interesting on how things change quickly. For example, in the government response to our report, there is a line that says, “The Government recognizes that the Report focuses on ensuring that a secure supply of food will be available to Canadians”. Budget 2019 states that “one in eight Canadian households currently experience food insecurity, meaning that they are without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food.”

Now, that was in 2019, here we are in 2023, and that number is no longer one in eight, that number is now one in five. One in five Canadians are skipping meals because they cannot afford to put nutritious and healthy Canadian-produced food on their table. I think that is a statistic for all of us in the House that shows the devastating impact that Liberal government policies have had on everyday Canadians who are just trying to feed their families and make ends meet, pay their bills and carry on with their lives.

The focus of this report, and why I want to highlight it today, is about food security or, more specifically, food insecurity. I cannot help but go back to the debate we had yesterday on Bill C-234, which was a common-sense Conservative legislation that would enhance food security for Canadians. It would be making farming more affordable for Canadians, which was a critical element of this study.

However, what was not included in the study, and I want to highlight that as well, is that, at the time, we did not have definitive data on the impact the carbon tax was having on Canadian agriculture. For example, the Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that Bill C-234 would save Canadian farmers close to \$1 billion by 2030. We have a report here talking about food security. These elements would have been a very welcome part of the analysis and recommendations, as well as the impact that the carbon tax policy is having on Canadian farms and harming their ability to ensure that Canadians have nutritious and affordable food on their tables.

The report highlighted the importance of innovation and technology to ensure that modern Canadian agriculture could meet demand and meet its responsibilities. Again, with Bill C-234, we are highlighting the fact that there are no commercially available and viable alternatives for Canadian farmers across the country who are heating and cooling their barns and drying their grain, other than natural gas and propane. When I talk about the Parliamentary Budget Officer report and the fact that Bill C-234 would save Canadian farmers close to \$1 billion on a carbon tax exemption, that is only on natural gas and propane.

Ironically, gas and diesel already have an exemption and so really, with Bill C-234, what we are trying to highlight is correcting an oversight, which I believe the Liberal government inadvertently made on its initial price on pollution climate change policy when it made an exemption on gas and diesel but did not include an exemption on natural gas and propane. I believe that when the Liberals developed their price on pollution legislation, or carbon tax, they did not include natural gas and propane because I think they just did not have a clear understanding of what agriculture is and the energy sources that the agriculture sector relies on every single day.

● (1635)

This report highlighted the importance of technology and innovation. Farmers are doing that every single day by ensuring that their farm buildings and barns are as energy efficient and state of the art as possible. In fact, one of the farm families who were here last week, who met with members of Parliament and actually participated in a bit of a rally on the Hill and at the Senate, just built a new state-of-the-art chicken barn in southern Alberta, at a cost of more than \$3 million, but it is powered by natural gas because there is no other alternative in rural Alberta. Despite using a very clean-burning fuel, they paid \$180,000 this past year just to heat and cool that barn. When the Prime Minister quadruples his carbon tax, they will be paying \$480,000 a year just to heat and cool that barn.

I have that study here in my hand where the government provided its responses on the importance of food security. I guess I would ask if perhaps we should be updating this study because I am not sure how we can even talk about food security when farmers cannot remain in business.

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This particular farmer, who built a new poultry barn, told me that he could not afford these higher taxes. He really only has two choices. One choice is to somehow pass on those additional costs to the consumer. Again, the question arises about food security when Canadians are already facing record-high food inflation. That is only going to get higher as the carbon tax increases. His other choice is to shut down, to close up his farm and his agriculture operation, which again would impact food prices because that means less product on the store shelves and higher prices.

Another interesting fact about this study is that it talked about a concern of Dr. Charlebois, a professor of food and supply chains at Dalhousie University. He mentioned that we are seeing a number of Canadian agriculture and agri-food businesses stop their investments in Canada and Canadian operations. He said, “They’re now leaving the country because they can’t capitalize any projects as a result of...increasing fees. The competitive environment here in Canada is not...attractive.”

As a result of the carbon taxes, red tape and bureaucracy highlighted in this study, we are seeing Canadian farms declare bankruptcy or shut down, but also that agri-food businesses are picking up and leaving to more friendly entrepreneurial and business jurisdictions. The result of that, again, as we were talking about in Bill C-234, is that they are carbon taxing Canadian farms out of business, but then they are forcing Canadian consumers to purchase food imported from foreign jurisdictions. That causes two problems. One, it has a significant carbon footprint through moving, for example, tomatoes or mushrooms all the way from Mexico into southern Ontario, or fruit and vegetables from California into Quebec, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Two, it is a problem when we use foreign-grown products that do not have the same environmental standards we have here in Canada. There is a real significant problem when those food products are cheaper to import from Mexico, Brazil or Venezuela, when we should be able to produce them right here in Canada.

I wanted to share some of those facts that are highlighted in this report and just how much it is apropos to what is going on with our discussion yesterday about Bill C-234. When this study was published, one in eight Canadians were facing food insecurity. Four years later, it is now one in five.

● (1640)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will get the chance shortly to provide my comments with regard to the issue that the member is raising.

However, my question to him is specifically with respect to a strategy that has been developed by the Conservative Party of Canada, where it uses concurrence reports to prevent government legislation from being debated. We saw that extensively on the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement where the Conservatives ultimately ended up unanimously voting no to a Canada-Ukraine trade agreement. They used the same tactic where they would bring in concurrence reports in order to prevent government legislation from being debated and ultimately voted on unless there is time allocation. Why is the Conservative Party taking this day to once again use a stalling tactic to prevent government legislation from being debated?

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I would encourage the member opposite to see what is going on across Canada. Last week, we had rallies from farmers in just about every province in the country, asking the government to understand the impact their policies are having on Canadian farmers and their ability to ensure that Canadians have affordable food on the table.

These are pertinent issues that are front of mind for Canadian farmers across the country. As an elected representative of a very agricultural, rural riding, I am just doing my job to ensure that the voices and the concerns of my constituents are being heard here on the floor of the House of Commons.

If the member opposite, who has a majority government with a Liberal-NDP coalition, cannot manage the daily organization of the House, I think they have some concerns within their own party. They have control of the House, and they should be able to manage their affairs.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, in his speech, my colleague talked a great deal about Bill C-234 and the carbon tax.

I would like to talk about another issue, namely, the effects of climate change on farm products.

We can speak out against measures intended to mitigate climate change, but we still need to be aware of these changes. For example, I would like to draw his attention to the market gardening situation, especially in Quebec. I think the situation is the same in other parts of the country. This summer we had torrential rains that set all-time records. Last year, it was something else; it was aphids. In the past, aphids never got this far north, but with climate change, they are reaching areas further north and causing terrible damage. The year before that, there was a drought. The effects are significant.

Does my colleague agree that the government should urgently review insurance programs and the way that risk is shared for these farmers?

● (1645)

[English]

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, I enjoy working with my very respected colleague on the agriculture committee. There is no question that Canadian farmers understand the changes in climate more than just about any Canadian, as they are certainly at the front lines of that. However, my argument today, in highlighting some of the issues in this report, and yesterday with Bill C-234, is that I do not believe that a carbon tax on Canadian agriculture and Canadian farmers is going to resolve issues when we are talking about the environment and climate change.

I have talked to many farmers. Paying hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in carbon tax does not allow them to invest in the new innovation and technology that will help reduce their carbon footprint and emissions.

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I think we should be incentivizing farmers to do those things, not punishing them with a carbon tax.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, actually, it is about time that the House of Commons finally looks at an agriculture report. We do not get the amount of airtime that many other committees do. This is a really important industry in Canada.

I have been a proud member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture for almost six years now. We do some fantastic work. Most of it by far is by consensus. In this particular report, if members look at recommendations 2, 3 and 4, they specifically deal with the main thrust of this report, which is processing capacity.

If my colleague will remember, my main theme of questioning was around how we build resiliency in our local communities, especially when we have the unexpected, such as COVID-19 and whatever disasters might hit us in the future.

Could my hon. colleague share how we build that, because what we saw during the pandemic was that the supply chains are extremely vulnerable to systemic shocks?

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, it is great to have the agriculture band here and everyone here in the House today participating in this. I appreciate that.

I will just highlight one thing that I think will answer my colleague's question. During COVID, the federal government worked with the provinces to eliminate interprovincial trade barriers and allow harmonization of regulations, which allowed provincially certified processing plants to have the same standing as federally certified processing plants. It works very smoothly.

I think we can easily do that again, which would encourage those local processing plants to expand and grow and reduce our dependency on just three plants.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Public Services and Procurement; the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton, Public Services and Procurement; the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Small Business.

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am here today to debate concurrence in the report on strengthening food capacity in Canada for food security and exports.

I am a proud member of the agriculture committee. Members on the committee work very well together, and this was a study we did during COVID. We heard from a lot of people across the country about challenges that we face in our agriculture sector. I was able to travel across this country during COVID to experience what our processors were facing first-hand. I had the opportunity to visit a couple of meat processing factories, and it struck me how resilient our agriculture processing sector is. However, processors also need a helping hand sometimes. We lack capacity in this country for food processing.

I am proud to come from a region that grows an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables, and a lot of vegetables are grown for processing. As a matter of fact, there is a food processor in my riding, in Kent County, that processes field tomatoes. Until recently, there was also a pickling processing plant; unfortunately, due to circumstances, that pickling processing factory closed. It is really sad, because it was a thriving business that employed a lot of people in Wallaceburg. The owners tried to keep it open, but, unfortunately, they did not succeed. Why is this? Policies of the government impeded their ability to continue their business in Canada.

Sugar beets are another example of food produced in my riding, in southwestern Ontario, Kent County and Lambton County. However, 100% of them are shipped to Michigan to be processed. What happens then? They come back to Canada refined as sugar, and we pay a premium for that sugar, including tariffs, even though the sugar beets were grown in Ontario and are a product of Canada. I bring this up because we are seeing more and more that we are losing processing capacity in Canada, whether it is in the fresh food sector, sugar beets or oilseeds. I hear day in and day out that one of the big impediments to being able to compete in Canada is the carbon tax. The carbon tax makes it more expensive for any of the processors to do business in Canada.

Another example of food processing that we lose to the U.S. is pork. There is an abundance of pork producers in my riding. Most of the pork gets processed at Conestoga in Kitchener and, up until recently, at Olymel in Quebec. However, again, we do not process the value-added products in Canada. The pork bellies get shipped down to the States; they are made into bacon and then imported back to Canada, where we pay a premium on that product.

There is a plastics ban that has been proposed to eliminate plastics for all produce. Produce needs to be wrapped in plastic when it is shipped to maintain its quality. We rely on other countries to provide two-thirds of our fresh produce in this country. If it is not kept wrapped in plastic when it is shipped, we are going to see an exorbitant amount of food waste. Not only that, but we are also going to lose the ability to import food in this country, putting our food security at risk. That is talked about in this report.

Food security is of the utmost importance, and if we ban plastics in our produce sector in Canada, how are we going to get the imported food to feed Canadians that comes from all over the world? It is a global supply chain. We do not get to dictate the packaging on fruits and vegetables. Other countries do the packaging, and we need to make sure that ours is uniform, especially with our biggest trading partner, the United States. If this plastics ban goes forward, it will have serious consequences for our produce industry. It is going to cost our produce farmers upwards of \$6 billion to make that happen.

• (1650)

Can members imagine what we are going to face in food security if we already have Canadians who cannot feed themselves? We have two million Canadians using a food bank. There are 800,000 who use a food bank in Ontario. The prices of groceries are high right now. I cannot imagine what the price is going to be when, all of a sudden, we have to pay up to 30% more for our fresh produce at the grocery stores. Families cannot afford to eat right now. They are choosing between heating and eating. If the prices continue to go up on food, we are going to have more people lined up at food banks. That is not acceptable in this country.

The carbon tax makes everything more expensive. I am a farmer, and I hear all the time in the House from the members opposite on the government side talking about how farmers do not pay a carbon tax. That is simply not true. Yes, there are things farmers do where they do not pay taxes on their fuel that I could name off, such as driving a tractor in their field, putting fuel into their generator to be able to pump water to an irrigation system or using vehicles that do not use a roadway. These are exempt from the carbon tax and from taxes on diesel fuel. However, in reality, as I am driving through the countryside on my way to Ottawa every week, the farmers are out in their fields combining their corn. This past weekend, on Sunday, was no different; this is very late right now, because it is so wet.

A lot of farmers do not use tractors and wagons anymore to transport their grains from the field back to the farm to the elevator. They are using transport trucks, which are required to pay the carbon tax for the fuel they use. When the trucks are paying more for fuel, of course the trucking companies are going to pass that cost on to the farmer. Most farmers are price-takers, so they do not get to necessarily pass those costs on to the consumer. What does that mean? Farmers are having to eat up those costs on their farm, taking it out of money they would generate as revenue and reinvest in their farm to purchase more innovative state-of-the-art equipment to keep their business in business. Instead, they have to pay more money in order to transport their grains from the field to the elevator.

In my region, it has been a very wet fall. Our farmers have had extremely wet conditions when trying to get the crops off. Not only that, but the corn is coming off the fields with a very high moisture content. Farmers have to dry the grain in order to keep it in the bins, because it goes for animal feed and to the ethanol plant. In order to deliver that corn to the ethanol plant, it has to be at a certain percentage. Whether for corn, beans or wheat, there are no commercially viable options in Canada other than propane and natural gas. If there were, I am sure farmers would use it. What I have heard from farmers is that we do not have an electrical grid system

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that could ever handle an electric grain dryer. Therefore, right now, they are forced to use propane and natural gas. That is why Bill C-234 is so important. We need to pass the bill, because farmers desperately need this relief from the carbon tax. It will have an immediate effect on food prices in the grocery stores.

As potato farmers, we use transport trucks to transport our potatoes from the field back to the wash plant. A lot of farmers do that now. Transport trucks transport most of the crops from the field back to the farm for processing, and they have to pay the carbon tax. There is no way around it. Therefore, farmers should be exempt from paying the carbon tax on drying their grain and heating their barns. I have 23% of Ontario's chicken in my riding; I have been in those chicken barns. In order to keep the animals alive, the barn has to be kept warm in the winter. How do they heat it? They do so with natural gas or propane. There is no other commercially viable option.

I implore the Senate to pass Bill C-234 and give our farmers that much-needed tax relief. This is about food security; that is what the report is about. We need to ensure that our farmers, now and in the next generation, can stay in business, so we can produce the food Canadians need to eat. Eating is a necessity, and we need to continue to be able to feed Canadians and the world with our nutritious Canadian food.

• (1655)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague is another member of the agriculture committee. It is nice to see us bringing an agriculture report to the House for deliberation.

In my time working with my colleague, she has been very outspoken on the grocery code of conduct. We have it here in the report as part of recommendation 16, and we did hear recently that Loblaw in particular has some problems with the code.

I am wondering if she could give her thoughts to the House on why such a code is important and why it should be mandatory, considering the power imbalance that exists between grocery chains and the hard-working producers and processors, who have been dinged with all of these hidden fees. Could she explain to other members of the House, who may not be familiar with this issue, why it is important and why it is so central to really strengthening Canada's processing capacity?

• (1700)

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, I have been asking for the grocery code of conduct for over three years. Three years ago, I started talking about that. As a farmer who used to supply three of the five major grocery chains with potatoes, I know the grocery chains were imposing ridiculous fees on farmers and suppliers. They were constantly nickel-and-diming farmers and suppliers.

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Because farmers are price-takers, and because there are so few options because of the consolidation in the grocery industry, where we only have five major players in this country owning over 80% of the grocery chains, we see the need to keep them accountable. If the grocery giants and the grocery stores are kept accountable through this code of conduct, it will ultimately help to reduce prices for consumers.

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am also a member of the agriculture and agri-food committee, and I am very proud of Canadian farmers, having come from a farming family myself.

I want to ask the member opposite what she feels the impact of the increase in commodity prices has been, of oil and gas as well as grain, on food prices over the last several years. Do you feel that helping farmers to get off fossil fuels and adapt some of these new clean technologies, such as the hybrid heat pump drying system and the biomass-based heat pump systems, things being developed right to a commercial scale, would help farmers deal with these fluctuating oil and gas prices in the future?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I will remind the hon. member I will not feel anything, but I hope the hon. member Lambton—Kent—Middlesex will.

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, farmers are innovators, and they have always been innovators. Farmers are trying to save money however they can so they can put money back into their businesses, grow their business, and continue to farm and grow food for Canadians.

Unfortunately, the carbon tax makes their fuel more expensive. Again, if there were commercially viable options available for heating barns or drying grain, farmers would be using them if they were cheaper. Instead, we are penalizing farmers and making them pay a carbon tax when there is absolutely no option available for them to heat their barns or dry their grain other than natural gas and propane.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, in this study, as in pretty much every study that provides an opportunity to focus on regional transformation, we also concentrated on improving our infrastructure. As mentioned earlier, this study was done during COVID-19, which exposed the fragility of our food processing chains.

I would like my colleague to elaborate on that. What do we need to do to improve our food processing network, especially in meat processing, in regions around the country?

[English]

Ms. Lianne Rood: Madam Speaker, through this study, we saw that, during COVID, provincially inspected abattoirs were allowed to move meat across interprovincial borders because of some of the COVID protocols out there. If we removed interprovincial trade barriers, we would see a lot more movement of meat across this country, and we would see more abattoirs potentially opening up with capacity.

[Translation]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I am tabling the government's responses to Questions Nos. 1803, 1804, 1808, 1805 to 1807 and 1809 to 1813.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a lot of opinions and thoughts on farms. Members might not be necessarily surprised. After all, I come from the Prairies, and I was born and raised in the Prairies. I have lived on Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. While in Alberta, I was a member of the Canadian Forces. I have grown a great appreciation for farms. How could one live on the Prairies for 60 years and not appreciate the value of our farms? I am going to get into some details on that, relatively shortly.

I really want to focus on why this is. I put it in the form of a question to the member who brought forward the motion.

Liberals in general are open to talking about the farming community. We understand the appreciation of agriculture and the importance it has not only to Canada but also to the world. Canada, in many ways, does help to feed the entire world. The types of products we produce on the Prairies and throughout Canada are second to none. No other country in the world has the diversity of product, not to mention the quality of product. Therefore, I understand and appreciate, as my colleagues do, the importance of our agricultural communities, our rural communities and the farmer.

I say that because I wanted to focus some attention on the behaviour of the Conservative Party today and the disturbing pattern we are witnessing day after day. I suspect that most members who came into the chamber today did not want or expect the Conservatives to move yet another motion for concurrence in a committee report. That is what this is: a motion for concurrence. The motion is that we, in essence, talk about farmers, agriculture, and the industry as a whole that feeds off of it.

Let us not forget that there was another very important issue we were supposed to be debating today. It was, in fact, Bill S-9. Bill S-9 is all about weapons of mass destruction. Canada plays a very important leadership role around the world, and one of the areas in which we play that role is the area of weapons of mass destruction.

I remember the day Lloyd Axworthy brought the land mine issue to Ottawa. We had a worldwide ban and a convention came out of it. Bill S-9 deals with the chemical weapons convention, the listing of chemicals, and it would reinforce that particular aspect of Canada's role. Fortunately, it was brought in through the Senate because of the legislative agenda we are trying to get through.

Even in some of the comments I heard from across the way in the previous two speeches, the members talked about the importance of affordability. Tomorrow and the following day, we will be talking about the fall economic statement because we understand the issues that are so critically important to Canadians.

I want to tell my friends across the way that using motions for concurrence in committee reports takes away from the government's ability to get its legislation through. It is interesting. When I posed the question to the mover of the motion, his response was that it is up to the government to get things through. The government is trying to get things through. We were planning on bringing forward Bill S-9 today in the hope that we would be able to get that legislation passed because I do not think anyone will be opposing it.

Now, we are losing a day to pass that legislation, so if we want to deal with Bill S-9, we will have to call it to the chamber again. Opposition members will say, "Who cares? It's not our problem. It's the government's problem." If we cannot bring in items such time allocation, how can the government possibly pass legislation when we have an opposition party that is preventing the government from doing just that?

• (1705)

We are talking about food for the world. I have heard members on the other side talk about trade many times. Members can think about Ukraine, the trade agreement Canada has with Ukraine, and the impact that has on food supply, processing foods and so forth.

The Conservative Party, all its members, voted against that important piece of legislation, the trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine. The people of Canada understand and value the legislation, and they are not the only ones who want to see it pass. There is the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the ambassador from Ukraine to Canada, the politicians in Ukraine and members from every other political party, except the Conservative Party.

The president of Ukraine came to Canada at a time of war and signed an agreement. The legislation was brought forward, and the Conservatives filibustered. They used the same tactic they are using right now with a concurrence report. Bringing in concurrence report after concurrence report, is limiting the number of debate days the government will have. Is this an attempt by the Conservative Party to prevent the Canada-Ukraine free trade debate from taking place at third reading?

Does the Conservative Party not understand that there is legislation, such as the fall economic statement, that needs to be debated in the chamber? If they continue to bring in concurrence reports, they will continue to take time away from debating the legislative agenda. Many, including myself, want to see a number of pieces of legislation debated.

This is not to take away from the issues the member is raising today concerning farmers and our agricultural community. As I said at the beginning, I am a very strong advocate for those two communities. I have given many speeches in the House, as I know my colleagues appreciate. Every week, when we are in session and in caucus, the rural agenda is there and being talked about. We understand and appreciate the needs of our rural communities, our farmers and our smaller municipalities, as well as how vital they are to Canadian society.

Why did the Conservative Party do this? We will have another opposition day next week. We have maybe 12 more sitting days before the break. How many of those days will we be dealing with the

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fall economic statement? We have an opposition day next week. The number of days is shrinking, and if the intent of the Conservative Party is to prevent the Canada-Ukraine deal from getting to third reading and passing, I say shame on them.

That is not the only legislation, but there is a lot of focus on it. The Conservatives wonder why we bring it up time and time again, and it is because we do not trust the Conservative Party. It has gone so far to the right. We see that attitude in the leader of the official opposition taking his party to a place where it votes in ways that are very hard to understand for one reason.

We already heard two members stand up to speak to this issue, and they strictly talked about the carbon tax, as they referred to it, or the price on pollution. The Conservatives are using that as an excuse for everything they are doing in the chamber. It is reckless. That is what we are witnessing. We have a leader of the official opposition who is not in tune with what Canadians are asking legislators to do here in Ottawa.

• (1710)

It is only a question of time before Canadians actually realize the destructive behaviour of the Conservative Party today. That is why I think it is important, as a Liberal member of Parliament, to amplify it and to ensure that Canadians know and understand what is in fact taking place, and that there are important things that need to be passed here.

The report talks about infrastructure. Recommendation 1 is to associate infrastructure with trade. It highlights infrastructure and trade. No government has spent more and committed more on infrastructure in the last 50 or 60 years than the current Liberal government has, because we understand and appreciate the importance of having a healthy infrastructure so we can get our product to market, whether a local market or an international market. It is one thing to talk about it, but it is another thing to see the action. With the Liberal government, we have seen action supporting investment in Canada's infrastructure from coast to coast to coast.

The Conservatives say "access" and "making sure". Over the summer, a number of months ago, the former minister of transport was in CentrePort in Winnipeg, just outside my riding. It is a huge park, thousands of acres, strategically located near rail lines and a first-class long-haul trucking industry, the biggest in the province, possibly the biggest in the Prairies. There is an airport literally a couple of miles away. There is a great deal of focus on infrastructure and how we can get products to market. We see the agricultural community coming into CentrePort in a very real and tangible way.

It is not that we do not want to have those types of discussions. That is why we have standing committees. The New Democratic member stood up and said that it was nice we were having a debate on agriculture in the chamber today. I would like to think that we have debates and discussions on agriculture on an ongoing basis, whether they are budget debates, throne speech debates or the numerous private members' bill debates that take place.

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One of the reasons we have standing committees is so we can actually look at and take a deeper dive into an issue. That enables, I believe, reports like the one we have today. With those reports, Canadians can get a better understanding of where the House of Commons or the collective parliamentarians would like to see the government of the day take some form of direction. That is what I like about the system.

What I do not like is when reports are consistently used as a mechanism, through concurrence, to prevent debates from taking place on government legislation. That is very problematic. The Conservatives will say that it is the government's responsibility to bring forward the legislation. We are bringing forward the legislation; it is the opposition that is preventing the legislation from being debated. It is the opposition that is choosing the tools it has in order to filibuster legislation.

● (1715)

Some members across the way are laughing. Our Ukrainian heritage community is not laughing; it is upset because it sees the games the Conservative Party of Canada is playing. That needs to change. I cited just one piece of legislation, but there are numerous ones. Even during the pandemic, with regard to financial supports to Canadians, we saw the Conservatives using concurrence as a way to prevent government legislation from moving forward. They used an excessive number of concurrence reports. They have the standard line: "This is an important issue; why would we not want to be able to debate the issue?" They make it sound as if the government were not being sensitive to the issue.

I ask my Conservative friends across the way, if the issues were as important, from a Conservative perspective, as they try to imply to Canadians, why are they not using them as opposition day motions? They have plenty of opposition days when they get the entire day to be able to debate the issues they want to debate, just like yesterday, when they chose to debate the Senate and the behaviour of the Senate.

It is rooted in the price on pollution, I must say, because the Conservative Party of today is very much infiltrated by individuals who are truly climate deniers. Maybe not all members of the Conservative caucus are; I suspect not. However, I do believe there is a pre-occupation within the leader of the Conservative's party, which is, in fact, climate denial. The Conservatives are so fixated on the issue of getting rid of the price on pollution. Think about it in terms of this particular report. In the report, members are saying that the price on pollution is scaring farmers away and that they are going to shut down and go elsewhere with their produce.

During the last break week, I had the opportunity to go just north of Portage la Prairie to Roquette, a world-class pea processing facility. Did members know that the largest pea processing plant in the world is in the province of Manitoba? I can say that I am quite proud of that particular fact. The facility creates all sorts of opportunities for the farmers in the area. I am told it even has to bring in some yellow peas from other jurisdictions because it cannot keep up with the demand. The demand is going to continue to grow. The facility is actually diversifying, which is great news. It reinforces that the world is looking at Canada as a place to be able to invest in, and that includes our agricultural community. The role of the

farmer is just as real today as it was in any day in the past. The innovators in our environment are often farmers. We do not give our farmers enough credit. Quite frankly, what I do not like is when they are used as a political tool. I was in opposition when the Conservatives got rid of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Suffice to say, I really and truly believe that the Conservative Party needs to get its ship in order, whether with the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement or stopping the filibustering and the preventing of legislation from being able to pass. There is a minority government; that means there is an expectation that opposition members would also behave. There is nothing wrong with criticizing. I was in opposition for 20-plus years, so I understand that role. There is also a role in terms of being a little bit more creative in one's opposition.

● (1720)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know that there is someone watching who has been with me for 12 years. We work together in my office. It is Heather Kuntz' birthday today. I am not sure which one, but I want to say "happy birthday" to her in Regina.

I will ask my colleague from across the way a question. He said one thing that I think is very true, which is that our farmers do not get enough credit for how well and how much they have innovated in their farming techniques. Does he not think they would be able to innovate even further and bring forward new technologies? For example, in Saskatchewan, we have zero-till, rotational grazing and crop rotations that keep our soil healthy and strong. They make it very, very rich so we can grow bumper crops with less water and less fertilizer. Saskatchewan uses 75% less fertilizer than any other jurisdiction in Canada.

Does the member not think that if farmers had more money in their pockets and we moved forward with the carbon tax exemption bill, Bill C-234, that the money could go toward even more innovation? Like he said, our farmers are the ones who bring forward innovation. Why will the Liberals not get out of the way and make sure farmers can do that?

● (1725)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I wish a happy birthday, and many more, to Heather in Regina.

I believe that farmers, in many ways, lead in terms of innovations and making sure we have wonderful, successful farming in rural communities into the future. I applaud them to the nth degree for that.

The issue I have is that the Conservative Party wants to chip away here and chip away there. Ultimately, let there be no doubt, what it really wants is to get rid of the price on pollution. Conservatives have said that and have been very clear on the point. It is kind of a dumb idea, I would suggest, but they are determined to put it into place.

I have to defend the constituents I represent who actually get more money from the rebate than they pay. Eighty per cent get a larger rebate portion.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I understand my colleague's complaints about the fact that the House is not following the order of business each day. Then again, we are always happy to talk about farmers, so I would like to take this opportunity to ask him a very specific question.

Recommendation 17 in the report we are discussing today highlights the importance of providing capital to our SMEs, our small businesses in general. We are talking about food processing at the moment, but we could extend this to businesses in general. Right now, the entire Canadian business community is asking the Liberal government for a one-year reprieve on the repayment of the Canada emergency business account. This is particularly necessary and urgent in the restaurant industry, as well as in agriculture.

If my colleague has so much respect for the farming community, is he prepared to lobby within his party to give our small businesses the breathing room they need to survive and keep their doors open?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, during the worldwide pandemic, the Government of Canada literally supported small businesses in virtually every sector to ensure their survival during a very difficult time. How we ensure that we can minimize the amount of hurt to small businesses is an ongoing issue.

To pick up on what the member first spoke about in regard to how important the diversification of our agricultural community is, it is really important to the government. That is one of the reasons why we invest so much in our regional development agencies, knowing full well that they are in a great position to identify where we can expand and make sure diversification takes place. More processing is really important. I like to think of the pea processing facility just north of Portage Avenue as a good example of the diversification taking place. I think there are so many other examples that one could give, but the bottom line is that the government, virtually from day one, in 2015, until the present day with the fall economic statement, is there to support our farmers and our agricultural communities.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to narrow down a very troubling reality facing Canadians, the terrible reality facing workers. We know from recent reports, particularly reports throughout COVID, and reports before that, that temporary foreign workers often face circumstances that are simply undignified. We heard just recently that some temporary foreign workers have died. Some others have found themselves in situations where they are undocumented. There needs to be far more oversight. Ultimately, the government must implement the process that was promised to the workers: having a "status for all" commitment to ensure that a worker who toils the soil here in Canada, pays taxes and does everything right, and still finds themselves in a position where the government does not accept them, will find justice.

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When will the government ensure status for all, for all the workers who give tirelessly to this country?

● (1730)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that international workers play a critical role here in Canada in many different sectors of our society. It is also important that the federal government continue to work with provincial governments in particular and with departments of labour and other non-profit agencies to ensure the rights of these international workers and ensure they are not being exploited as much as possible moving forward.

With regard to the member's policy announcement and the position of the NDP that international foreign workers or international students would be given automatic permanent residency status, that is not what we are saying as a party.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: So you would rather have undocumented people.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. This is not a cross-debate. The hon. member had an opportunity to ask a question. He needs to listen to the answer, whether he likes the answer or not. If he has other questions or comments, he should wait until it is time for them.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I highly recommend that the member talk to the Minister of Immigration and share with him his thoughts.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadian farmers and agri-food exporters have made Canada the fifth-largest exporter of agricultural produce and agri-food products. The member mentioned the largest pea processing facility in this province. I appreciate that the manufacturing sector, including the agriculture-processing sector, has been in decline for the last 20 years. We need more manufacturing and processing, not only to be self-reliant but to export value-added products.

I would like to know whether the member accepts that we need more processing for value-added exports.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the question. At the end of the day, the more value we can add into our products, the better. It means more jobs. It means more money.

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That is one of the reasons I am a very strong advocate of trade agreements. Canada is a trading nation. No government in the history of Canada has signed off on more trade agreements than the current Prime Minister and this government. It is nice that the Conservative Party, almost for all of the trade agreements, has been supportive of us signing them. There is one exception, the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement. I am hoping we will see a somersault flip-flop and Conservatives will come back and support it at third reading. I think a number of Conservative members would like to see the leader of the Conservative Party change his mind and support that trade agreement. I hope he does.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I see the parliamentary secretary is troubled that we are not talking about the Senate's bill, Bill S-9, on weapons of mass destruction, even though that was not a Liberal campaign promise.

Would he not agree that, with two million people using a food bank every day and one in five families eating less food because they cannot afford it, it is more important for this House to be looking at solutions on how to address food insecurity, such as with this motion?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, absolutely it is an important issue. That is one of the reasons we brought forward the fall economic statement, which, by the way, we will start debating tomorrow.

Some try to minimize this particular bill, saying the chemical weapons convention is not important, but Canada does have an important role to play on this in the world, a leadership role. At the end of the day, it would have been nice to have that debate today and ultimately see that bill pass, but the agenda of the Conservatives seems to be to prevent legislation from passing and to bring in concurrence reports. They are targeting the Canada-Ukraine deal. They do not want to see that thing pass, and I say shame on them.

• (1735)

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this discussion. I want to get right to the substance of the debate because, as usual, I have a lot to say in a short period of time.

This report looked at the possibility of increasing food processing capacity. I would like to bring the debate back to the main issue in this report, which was prepared during the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when we were beginning to realize just how fragile our supply chain and our processing chain are. The purpose of the recommendations my colleagues and I made at the time was to tell the government that it needs to have a long-term vision. Let us try to take action for the next time. Let us try to improve our food resilience, our independence and our resistance to unforeseen events. First it was COVID-19. Then it was the war in Ukraine, which led to all kinds of problems. Now another conflict has broken out, and it will surely have additional repercussions. We have to be resilient domestically. That is the purpose of the recommendations. I would like to quickly go over those recommendations.

The first recommendation addressed the urgent need to invest in the network of trade infrastructure, particularly transportation, to improve access to markets and to facilitate domestic transportation.

That is fundamental. We are talking about a report from May 2021. Unfortunately, since May 2021, I have not seen much in the way of government action on trade.

The government can complain all it wants that the opposition is holding up the agenda and that we cannot move forward. However, we could also move forward more effectively if real measures were proposed. I am thinking, for example, of our port capacity, of how container prices skyrocketed when the pandemic restrictions were in place and of how much difficulty we had shipping fresh food, whether it be fresh fruit, vegetables or pork. Speaking of which, when fresh pork from Quebec or parts of central Canada, like Manitoba, has to reach the Port of Vancouver, there is a problem. If the port is blocked, then there is a wait. This is a perishable product. It has a certain lifespan. This is such a major problem that most private insurance companies are opting out. We know that the private sector is there when there is money to be made. If there is no money to be made, then it will opt out. The risk became too big, and now producers are stuck paying exorbitant amounts for insurance. I think that there might be one company left that is willing to insure them. It is therefore vital that we take action now, before this all falls apart in five or 10 years. Let us not wait until our back is up against the wall, as we did with the labour force, for example. We can take action. This is very important.

The report also contains recommendations for a targeted program. I think my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue will be very pleased to hear what I am about to say. It talks about a targeted program in collaboration with the provinces and territories, because each is protecting its jurisdiction in order to improve regional processing capacity, particularly regional abattoirs. My colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, along with me and my entire caucus, have come to the conclusion that we need permanent financial support for regional infrastructures that will ease the pressure on the large existing abattoirs. The goal here is not to shut down the large processing centres. Let us consider that three plants process 85% of Canadian beef. There is a problem there. If one gets shut down tomorrow, the other two will not be able to supply enough product. There needs to be a secondary network.

This also makes sense for our greenhouse gas reduction and climate protection targets. Does it make sense for cattle to travel all the way to Pennsylvania to be slaughtered and then come back as frozen meat? I do not think that makes sense. I am not the only one. My colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue can enlighten us even more, but I really do not understand why the government subsidizes transporting these animals instead of subsidizing a more local processing plant that would fit much more neatly into a holistic vision. That means being forward-thinking, having a vision. Unfortunately, I get the sense that this government is usually lacking in that department.

The Bloc Québécois stands ready. We have a vision. We are here to protect Quebec's interests, but we do not want to hurt the common interest. We are working for the common interest. We would like the government to listen to our ideas. This is a very sensible one. Can the government give these facilities more financial flexibility?

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● (1740)

Another recommendation in the report was about increasing regional processing capacity. There are actually two separate recommendations in the same recommendation. Another recommendation talked about the local food infrastructure fund, or LFIF, which, at the time, had a maximum envelope of \$25,000 per project. This subsidy can be given to small regional processing sites. During testimony in committee, some witnesses told us that the amount needed to be increased because it was not enough. They said they could not develop their businesses because there was not enough money in the fund. When I say that we sometimes produce reports without really knowing what they are for, this is actually a good example. With respect to this particular resolution, action has been taken and we are happy about that. The LFIF has been increased. The government announced an additional \$70 million and said that projects worth between \$15,000 and \$120,000 would be approved.

A number of my Bloc colleagues presented me with the files of people and organizations in our Quebec ridings who worked and allocated resources to submit an application under a clearly announced program that included specific benchmarks set by the federal government. However, they received a reply telling them that program uptake had been so overwhelming that the government had decided to process applications from remote and indigenous communities only, and for projects of up to \$50,000. They were told that they would get a call back if someone decided to read their document which, knowing what government forms are like, was probably 350 pages long.

Is that acceptable in a G7 country? I do not think so. People received this letter informing them about the \$50,000 limit, yet the government website still says that applications for projects worth between \$15,000 and \$120,000 are welcome. That means that other organizations may be filling out forms just for the sake of it too. The government really likes paperwork. That is my complaint and I would like the government to take note of it. I hope that the parliamentary secretary is paying attention, because he spoke earlier about the importance of processing companies. That takes money. We have to invest money there. It is urgent.

The next recommendation is on the fight against food insecurity. I just talked about northern first nations communities, which are very important, of course. It is not that they are not important, except that there are other people who have submitted a request. As far as this specific point is concerned, urgent action is truly needed. In 2015, someone promised us that every first nations community would have clean drinking water. I do not think that has happened yet and I have a hard time saying that without blowing my top because it is unacceptable in 2023.

This same government also promised us a \$1-billion fund to reduce food insecurity at schools across the country. Where is that money? We recently adopted a motion calling for action. Where is the money? Our local organizations in Quebec are ready to receive that money. The great misfortune of Quebec is that we have 80% of the responsibilities, but just half of the money, which is here. Our money is here and it is stuck because things are not moving. I am asking the government to send us that money. We will do something with that money. We will feed our children.

The recommendations also talk about more flexible regulations. That is particularly difficult in the slaughtering industry. Of course, food quality and safety must not be compromised. However, can we be flexible and diligent, dare I say intelligent, even? During this study, we heard stories of unreasonable inspections by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, or CFIA, even though the agency lacks resources. The government is incapable of ensuring decent and adequate border control, yet it is going to task three full-time inspectors with monitoring whether a drop of condensation will fall from the ceiling in four days' time. It sounds ridiculous, but it is all true. Can we improve efficiency?

There are not a lot of resources available. One of the basic principles of economics is resource allocation. Why does one item cost more than another? Because it is scarcer. At any given time, human resources are very limited. I was talking earlier about the importance of having a long-term vision and acting for the future. I have mentioned this before in the House. I get somewhat upset by the fact that the government is so focused on the current labour shortage and in a bit of a panic, wondering what to do about it. I am no great scientist. I was a high school teacher in the 1990s. That is a long time ago, and I guess that dates me.

● (1745)

In the 1990s, I was teaching my students the inversion of the population pyramid. I told them that we would have a labour shortage at some point. I cannot believe that no one in the government knew that in the 1990s. How is it that the government is only realizing today that it should have maybe done something? That is the problem with four-year mandates, which are often even shorter, and with parties being focused on elections and electioneering. Unfortunately, many political parties here are not setting a very good example right now. Many people are taking action in the very short term by repeating the same slogans that are not always true. I would ask those people to work constructively so that we can make progress.

We talked about improving that, about implementing a system of internal control at the CFIA to prevent abuse. There could be an appeal system. Some of the other recommendations had to do with the bovine spongiform encephalopathy or BSE standard and the specified risk materials for beef slaughter. Right now, when an animal is slaughtered in Canada, producers have to dispose of a large portion of the animal, including the brain and spinal column, and that costs them a lot of money. It was fine during the crisis, but that was a long time ago now. The control measures were very effective and, at the international level, Canada has now obtained its World Organisation for Animal Health negligible risk status. That means that we could perhaps sit down and review all that. I am not saying we should just do whatever we want and throw it all out tomorrow morning, but can we sit down and look at this to try to improve our beef farmers' profitability? That would be an intelligent thing to do, and it would bring about quick change.

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Let us dig into that because it is vitally important. I have been saying this for four years, and I am not the only one saying it. Things have changed. The risk is negligible now. I think we could do it. We also need to realize that we are eating beef that was slaughtered in the United States, which does not have that standard. That is a disconnect we need to address eventually. Are we holding foreign producers to the same standard as our own? I could easily launch into a half-hour tirade about reciprocity of standards, so I will stop there and get back to that at the end of my speech.

We also suggested incentives for creating industrial research and development clusters. In fact, this study is what made me realize, in a bit of a panic, the extent of our chronic underinvestment in Quebec's and Canada's agri-food processing system. The situation is appalling, frightening even. When I ask the government to try to take a long-term view of things, this is a damn good example of what I mean. Can we stop waiting for processing plants to close before implementing measures to foster investment, maintenance, balance?

We just saw it happen again in Vallée-Jonction where a pork processing plant recently shut down. The reason we were given for this site's closure is that it was the oldest and had less invested in it. It was the most outdated and the least efficient. Why not make sure that our processing plants stay efficient? That would require encouraging the private sector. A tax credit might be the answer. It does not need to cost a lot of money. However, there has to be something.

As soon as it becomes less profitable for these multinationals—in many cases, they are multinationals—to renovate the current site rather than shutting it down and opening a new one, there is no guarantee that these multinationals will reopen a site here. Let us not wait for that day. Maple Leaf is an excellent example. The company decided to open a site in the United States.

We need to anticipate costs and be visionary. We have asked the government to make agri-food processing a priority, which is not currently the case. Yet the agri-food sector is the second-largest manufacturing sector in Canada. It is not that this sector is not important, but we seem to take it for granted, a bit like agriculture. We tell ourselves that they are there, they are good, they are going to do the work and there is no problem. The result is that we support them half as much as in the United States and four times less than in Europe. These folks get up every morning and go to bed very late at night to feed our people. I very humbly think that we should have a lot more respect for these folks. We should give them support when they need it. The produce sector is one that especially needs a little breathing room right now.

I talked about it earlier. We asked for a one-year deferral of the repayment of the Canada emergency business account, or CEBA, loan. If the government does not want to take a blanket approach, that is okay. We agree on that. We asked the government to provide a help desk, a line of communication, and to look at this on a case-by-case basis.

• (1750)

I can immediately say that this affects the entire restaurant sector. Last week, I made a public statement with the owner of the café La Bezotte, which is in my riding. If people are willing to make public statements to say that the situation is ridiculous and that our busi-

nesses need room to breathe, it is because they are in a tough spot. These people are courageous and I thank them. I thank Daniel for agreeing to do this. This raises public awareness and puts pressure on the government. People are not asking for much and it does not cost much.

When I asked a question earlier I was given a nice, vague response about how the government has always been there for small businesses, that it will continue to be there and it has helped them a lot. I am told that \$8 out of the \$10 in assistance given out during the COVID-19 pandemic came from the federal government. I think it goes without saying that this is because of the fiscal imbalance, which is huge. The means are there. That is not an answer.

Many things have happened since then. There was the Ukrainian conflict, and the federal government took advantage of that to impose an additional cost on farmers by imposing a tax on Russian fertilizer. We all agree that we should take measures against the Russians, but we need to be smart about it. Perhaps if we had been smart about it, we would have avoided taking a measure that no other G7 country took and that is not even having any impact on Russia, given the size of our market. Russia is laughing at us right now.

Our farmers are the ones who always end up paying the price. The worst part of all this is that, when we finally managed to convince the government to reimburse people, because it did not make sense for our farmers to pay for nothing, the government was unable to do so. It did not know who had paid what since, for example, there were co-operatives that had split the costs evenly. Instead, the government put the money into an on-farm action fund, which is fine except that farmers are paying for this program themselves and then the government wants them to be happy that it gave them a program. Come on. Let us be serious here.

I talked about the labour shortage. We need temporary foreign worker programs that make sense. My colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean got a study going at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration about closed work permits. An NDP member talked about that earlier. Right now there are situations that do not make sense. This affects a very small minority of producers, but it does not make sense, and we cannot just let it go on. The problem is the closed work permit system, which is old and outdated. Let us switch over right away to the open, sector-specific work permits that industry is calling for so we can give farmers the flexibility they want.

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I have said a lot about long-term vision in my speech. I invite everyone here to reflect on the foreign worker mechanism. We need them when nobody else wants to do the work. This is a good solution, but can we keep operating like this for the next 50 years? Can we start creating pathways for these people? That was one of our recommendations, too. Can they bring their family members if they want to stay here and work? Can they become citizens of Quebec, or of Canada in the other provinces, so they can contribute to society and succeed?

Not so long ago, we dedicated an opposition day to the issue of successful immigration. Our proposals are the product of careful thought, and we try to avoid moving inappropriate motions. Unlike some other political parties, our motions do not combine four or five irrelevant points with one important one. We focus on substance, and if members want to vote against our motion, they really need to give a solid reason. The motion on successful immigration was adopted in the House almost unanimously. It was a serious motion.

Voting in favour of the motion is all well and good, but action must follow. That is another problem. I was talking about the local agri-food industry fund earlier. The government frequently makes big announcements, but there are often two problems. Sometimes there is not enough money, and by the time the 10th application comes in, the money is already gone. Other times, the requirements are so complex that the money goes unspent, and two years later, the government gets to announce the same money again and look very generous, when in fact it is simply recycling money it already announced. This vicious circle should be stopped.

There is also the issue of Internet access in communities and cell phones in rural areas. If we want our businesses to modernize, they have to have the tools to do so. In my riding of Berthier—Maskinongé, there are still municipalities where the mayor has to use pagers to reach his municipal councillors. Does that sound right in 2023? Come on. Then we ask our businesses to be efficient and make investments. Satellite-controlled irrigation and climate control systems are important.

I hope someone asks me a question about reciprocity of standards.

• (1755)

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have signed many free trade agreements across the world, covering about 61% of the world's GDP. If there is one Canadian sector that uses all these free trade agreements, leverages them and takes advantage of them to export, it is the Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector, which has made Canada the fifth-largest exporter in the world. I agree with the hon. member that we need more processing in the manufacturing sector than in the last 20 years across our economy. The share of our manufacturing sector is going down.

One of the problems I hear from entrepreneurs who want to set up processing facilities is that we do not have the skilled workers available to work in processing facilities, from maintenance technicians to skilled workers to production workers. Does the member agree with this assessment?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, absolutely. In fact, that is one of the recommendations that I did not have time to talk about. The report recommended that in the agri-food sector, the cap for foreign workers increase from 10% to 20%. I even proposed 30%, but the majority wanted 20%, so we put 20%. Then the government did it. That is one of the things in the 18 recommendations that was done. I say bravo, but it is likely not enough because we have to be smart and provide access to labour.

My colleague is also absolutely right about international trade. A big part of our agricultural production is geared toward international trade. We need to support and develop this aspect. On the other hand, let us not forget that we have other farms that are not export-oriented. I am talking about supply-managed farms. Bill C-282, which is currently in the Senate, received strong majority support in the House. It should be passed quickly.

When I talk about having respect for our farmers and the way they work, it is because these people are essential and are the bedrock of our rural regions. This bill needs to be passed as soon as possible.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his very good speech.

There is a slaughterhouse capacity problem here in Ontario and Quebec. The Liberals have done nothing to improve the situation. What are the most important recommendations, solutions, measures or anything else for improving this situation?

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I really want to thank my colleague for that great question. I went over that earlier, but this will allow me to reiterate what I said. It is a public investment. It takes ongoing public support for the other small-scale sites. There are a lot of projects that exist already. There is no need to start from square one.

I often say that we need to trust the people working on the ground. Let us make a list of the projects that already exist and launch an incentive program and ongoing support to keep it going. It is a societal choice that we need to make: Either we continue to pollute our planet by transporting our animals thousands of kilometres, or we are smart and we set up other sites that could also absorb any overflow if there is a major disruption, as in the case of COVID-19.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I enjoy serving on the agriculture committee with my colleague.

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I want to touch on recommendation 14 regarding skills development and the encouragement for training and re-skilling programs. During testimony we heard from UFCW, which represents many workers in our food and processing sectors. In particular, it recommended that the government bring together industry players, representatives of workers and the government, a tripartite representation. I do not think there is enough awareness out there of how technically skilled agricultural jobs have become. A lot of students have a stereotypical and very old-fashioned idea of agriculture, when in fact it is a very technologically specific area.

What does my colleague think about the government having to do more to promote awareness of not only the skills required but also the very well- and high-paying jobs that are available and the opportunities that exist in this sector so that we do not always have to rely on importing workers to fill the huge labour gap that exists?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intelligent question, like the ones he often asks at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

That is what I was talking about earlier when I spoke about having a vision for the future. When we take action, we need to consider what things will be like in 10 or 20 years. We need to start informing, training and providing information to our young people right away.

My colleague mentioned something fundamental at the beginning of his speech. He talked about sitting people down together. The federal government has a hard time doing that. It usually prefers to act as if it has a monopoly on the truth and to launch a nice program that comes with a nice, absolute truth that may not necessarily work.

We need to have people in the industry sit down with people in government for a real, serious and solid consultation to see what measures can be taken. Obviously, this will have to be done in a way that respects jurisdictions. That was clearly spelled out in our report. We need to do that and improve training and information programs, because many young people looking for a career are unfamiliar with the field. We have to work on that.

• (1800)

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on something intriguing my colleague said. He said that Ottawa, which collects half of our taxes, could reinvest a portion of that money in stimulating regional agricultural development. For example, it could invest in abattoirs, which are few and far between right now. The rules say that abattoirs cannot get more than 50% in public money because they are not money-makers in the regions, supposedly.

At the same time, if I understand my colleague from Berthier-Maskinongé's brilliant reasoning correctly, he is saying that, if this infrastructure were to be built, it would be much like an investment in an aqueduct or other public spending of that nature in that it would stimulate an entire regional ecosystem. It would stimulate the vitality of our towns and the livelihood of our corner stores because people would live in the area. The federal government could invest money—our money—in our abattoirs, in our regions, instead

of spending money to transport our livestock 800 kilometres away to be slaughtered. That impacts the quality of the meat, the environment and animal health. We could do it close to home instead.

I would really like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, that is an excellent question, and the member basically answered it for himself.

My esteemed colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue is absolutely right. He raised a very important point, and he provided a more in-depth explanation of what I was trying to quickly explain earlier. I am talking about a societal choice, about public infrastructure that would create an ecosystem. That is what we need to implement. Such an ecosystem would be in keeping with our environmental policies.

We know that, right now, Canada is not even close to meeting its greenhouse gas reduction targets. The government will continue to give nice speeches for the next 10 years, and meanwhile, we will still be dealing with torrential rains, hurricanes, droughts, aphids and all sorts of problems.

Can we be consistent, reduce transportation and support the vitality of our regions? I love working with my colleague, and I think that was a great question.

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, there is a private member's bill currently in the Senate, Bill C-282, from a Bloc Québécois member. The Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance, which represents 90% of agriculture food exporters, says that if Bill C-282 becomes law, it would be dangerous for future Canadian agri-food exports. The bill would prevent the government from talking about supply management in any future trade negotiations. If it became a problem, would it not affect the agricultural sector, one of the star performers in the Canadian economy, in terms of exports?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Perron: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that great question.

My colleague said that the trade alliance represents 90% of farmers. They often say that, but it actually represents 90% of exporters. That is an important nuance.

Of course the alliance is worried, because it believes that we will need these producers in order to develop other markets. What we are being told is that the government supports supply-managed producers, but not to the point of protecting them. It supports them, but it wants to hang onto them as bargaining chips. That is what we want to put an end to with this bill, which aims to ensure the sustainability of the supply management system because it brings stability to our rural areas and promotes dynamic use of our land. It is not in conflict with exports. We are capable of doing two things at the same time.

I just got back from a mission abroad. When I go on those missions, I always talk about our food exports. I also champion our exporters, and I want to speak directly to the ones who are tuning in right now. I want them to know that they do not need to fear Bill C-282. Bill C-282 is about ensuring sustainability. If we do not pass this bill, foreign producers will get 18% of the dairy market. That is one out of every five litres of milk. When we reduce domestic production, it will not work anymore because it will come flooding in from outside.

If the government decides not to protect these people, it should have the decency to tell them to their faces and buy back their quotas, because to do otherwise would be hypocrisy. These people are essential. We need them. We must pass this bill, which is in danger of being rejected by the House. The government—

• (1805)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the member's time is up.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a very real pleasure for me, as the NDP agriculture critic and a proud member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for almost six years, to be able to rise on this debate.

Let us face it: The House of Commons does not get to review many agriculture committee reports. I am pleased to have this opportunity to participate in a concurrence debate on a report that is quite relevant and important. I am glad we are having this debate today.

The agriculture committee is a unique institution within the House of Commons. I have sat on a number of committees as a substitute before. One thing I have always appreciated about the agriculture committee is that we tend to operate very much on a consensus basis. I think it comes from an understanding that no matter what political party a member sitting around that table is from, we realize that we all represent farmers; that is across the political spectrum.

We come to the table with different viewpoints, and we certainly stick by our principles. However, the realization that we all represent farmers and want our agricultural industry to do well lends itself to a very respectful tone at the committee. It is rare to see reports coming out of our committee with a dissenting opinion or even a supplementary opinion attached. That is one thing I truly do appreciate.

I am very proud to represent a rural riding on Vancouver Island, which has its own long and storied history with agriculture. We have a number of families in the Cowichan Valley that have been farming for five generations. It runs in our blood there. It is certainly not to the scale that we see in the Prairie provinces, but we are very proud of our agricultural history. We are proud of the fact that we are Canada's only Mediterranean coastal climatic zone, which allows us to grow some unique fruits and vegetables that cannot be found anywhere else in Canada.

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I am proud to come from that region and to speak up for the farmers in my area. When it comes to this particular report, let us get to the heart of the matter. When we are talking about processing capacity, we are essentially talking about a value-added industry in agriculture in Canada. We are all aware that, whether it is raising animals, getting eggs from chickens or growing vegetables or fruits, that is the primary production end of it. Farmers do quite well selling those. We all love going and picking our fresh produce and so on.

However, there is a whole other industry that is extremely strong in Canada and carries a lot of economic might, and that is our processing industry. We take those primary products of Canadian agriculture and add value to them. Canadians can go to their local supermarket and look at just the sheer abundance of processed food that we have; I am not talking about the food in the centre aisles, I am talking about anything that has had value added to it.

It is important for members to understand that, when we did this report, when we were doing the study into the subject matter, we were right in the middle of COVID-19. The worst had passed, but there was a huge trail of wreckage from that pandemic, on Canada's food industry. We were very much dealing with a lot of people who were still suffering from that crisis and from the trauma that it inflicted on so many who work in this industry.

We tabled that report in the spring of 2021. Unfortunately, in the summer, the Prime Minister decided to call what many thought was an unnecessary federal election. As a result, we never got to have a government response to that report. When we reconvened for this 44th Parliament, one of the first orders of business was to retable that report by unanimous consent so that we could actually get the government response to it. That is why it was report number one of this 44th Parliament.

COVID-19 was brutal. It changed Canadians' eating habits. We were no longer going out to restaurants, because they were closed by public health orders. We were essentially getting our food from supermarkets. The way the industry had to respond to that sudden and dramatic shift was a bit like an earthquake through the industry.

• (1810)

We also know that many of the workers working on farms and working in the food processing factories, the processing plants, were struck down by COVID-19. They tragically succumbed to the disease or became sick and had to be off work for several weeks. Some developed long COVID symptoms and were unable to return to work. That was a huge shock to the system. For an industry that was already suffering from labour shortages to suddenly have its very limited workforce decimated even further was very brutal, and it allowed our committee to take a hard look at the weak links in our supply chains and our ability to feed our local population.

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I can remember the word I was using as a theme to guide my questioning as a part of that study was “resiliency”. We did not have a lot of resiliency built into the system. One of the things COVID helped us understand is where the weak points in the supply chains are, and we discovered there were a lot. It is my sincere hope that we can learn our lessons from this report and the many others that other parliamentary committees have done, because we know other shocks are going to come in the future. They may be climate-related or may be from another pandemic. We do not know, but it is a very unstable place we are a living in right now. If we do not learn lessons from our past, we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes.

When it comes to the main theme of processing capacity, I am very proud that in our report we focused recommendations 2, 3 and 4 on the theme of processing capacity. One of the main themes was how to encourage local processing capacity to develop. I will focus my comments on the beef industry, as this area was extremely exposed and suffered terribly from COVID-19.

As many who are familiar with agriculture know, two corporate entities run 85% of the beef processing capacity in Canada. They are JBS and Cargill. They have three main processing plants. In those plants, during the pandemic, workforces were decimated by COVID-19. In some cases, they were completely shut down. In other cases they had one shift out of three working. This caused a massive rolling backlog throughout the entire supply chain.

In the beef industry, there are cow-calf operators, who raise calves out in the fields. There is the National Cattle Feeders Association, which takes them and overwinters them to grow them to a certain weight. Then, of course, there is the processing capacity. However, when our processing plants were knocked out of commission or severely curtailed in their ability to handle a typical workload, suddenly all of our feedlots were jam-packed full because they had nowhere to send all of these cattle. Then if we go back even further, we had a lot of ranchers who could not even get the cows off their lands. Because they were so constrained in where they could get their cattle processed, it exposed some of the very real weak links. That is why we see three recommendations in this report specifically looking at ways the federal government can step up to the plate and develop local processing capacity.

We had all of our eggs in just a few baskets, and when those baskets did not operate anymore, we had no other places to put the eggs, to use a complicated agricultural metaphor. The way to address this in the future is to make sure we have processing capacity built up in our regions. Not only is it good for local economies, because they provide much-needed jobs, but it also, whenever there is going to be a future shock, allows our country to better withstand that.

That is why we see recommendations on how we develop “local processing businesses and regional small-scale abattoirs”, how we can “identify strategic funding opportunities to address regional processing capacity” and also how we can increase funding to funding envelopes like the local food infrastructure fund, which could provide these services for small communities like mine, Duncan, in the Cowichan Valley. These are solid recommendations, and I am glad our committee spent a remarkable amount of time on them.

• (1815)

Another area that I want to highlight in this report is the harmony that is needed between provincial jurisdiction and federal jurisdiction, especially in the context of processing capacity. If a person goes through a provincially mandated processing centre, they can sell within their province, but they cannot sell internationally or across provincial borders. To do that, they would need a federally inspected facility; essentially one that is inspected by the CFIA. However, I think that for an animal processed in British Columbia or Alberta, if British Columbians or Albertans are eating that and it is perfecting safe, it should be good for Canadians across every province. We were encouraging the government to work with the provinces to find ways where we could harmonize the requirements between provincially and federally regulated facilities.

I also want to talk about labour, particularly about skills development. As I said in one of my earlier interventions, there is an incredible disconnect: many people in Canada do not know where our food comes from, how it is grown and how it actually arrives on our dinner plate. First, we need to educate more young people in our urban centres about the hard-working men and women who are out in agriculture doing this hard work in getting the food on our plates, and the incredibly complex system of how it gets there. I also think that for people who are coming out of high school and looking at potential career paths, a lot of them might overlook agriculture, because they have an old-fashioned, stereotypical view that usually involves a red barn and a cute tractor from the 1950s when agriculture is so much more.

Twenty-first century agriculture is an incredible user of technology. We are talking about cutting-edge science in robotics, in communication with the Internet and so on. It is incredible how much innovation is going on in our agricultural sector. With that innovation and technological need, we have to fill those jobs. We need very technically specialized people to come in to operate and fix those machines and be real economic drivers for the industry.

I was glad to see representatives from UFCW come before our committee. It is one of the largest unions in Canada. It represents a lot of the workers in food-processing centres, and it really does want to see the government step up to the plate to work with employers and union organizations so that there is more awareness in Canada's public school system about some of the exciting career paths that exist in agriculture. If we could start that kind of investment now, because the need for labour is so great, I think that is one of the ways we can start heading things off at the pass later on.

The final thing I want to concentrate on when we are talking about food processing in Canada, and this may come as a surprise to some people, is recommendation 16, which is the recommendation that we have a grocery code of conduct, and I will explain to members why that is important.

Much has been made in the news this year about the incredible corporate profiteering that has been going on in certain sectors. If we look at any sector, whether it is telecom, oil and gas, the grocery sector or banking, corporate profits over the last three years have reached unprecedented levels. In my opinion, they are the key driver of inflation that we are seeing today.

This recommendation on establishing a grocery code of conduct is extremely important, because when it comes the relationship between larger grocery chains and the producers and processors who supply them, there has always been a power imbalance. We have five large grocers that control 80% of the market. When they wield that kind of market dominance, they are able to set a lot of the terms and conditions about what products get sold on their shelves. So, for a processor or producer who wants to make money, chances are they have to sell their stuff at Metro or Loblaws, and that is simply the only way they can turn a profit.

● (1820)

There is a power imbalance there. A lot of the time, people who were supplying the foods that people find in the grocery stores found that those processors were getting dinged with hidden fees. There were fees if they supplied too much, if they supplied too little, if they were a day late, etc. There was no rhyme or reason to the fee structure, but they were powerless to fight that. That is why we see this major call for a grocery code of conduct from producers and processors.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR A SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM ACT

The House resumed from November 1 consideration of the motion that Bill C-322, An Act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to rise to speak in support of Bill C-322, an act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program.

It is quite similar to a bill I put forward in 2021, an act to develop a national strategy on school food security. I chose this as my PMB because, as a former teacher, I have seen first-hand how desperately a national school food program is truly needed in this country. Unfortunately, it never made it to second reading, because Parliament was dissolved. Therefore, it died on the Order Paper; however, I am really glad to see it brought back today and to be able to speak to it.

This bill would mandate the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, in consultation with the Minister of Health,

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provincial governments, indigenous governing bodies and other relevant stakeholders, to develop a national framework to establish a school food program. Within a year of the act coming into force, the minister must prepare a report setting out the national framework. The minister must table a report before each House of Parliament on any of the first 15 days on which the House is sitting after the report is completed. Within five years of tabling the report, the minister must undertake a review of the effectiveness of the national framework and prepare a report setting out his or her conclusions and recommendations regarding it.

I would like to explain why a bill of this nature is absolutely necessary in Canada. First, our children are sent to school to learn. Nutrition plays a key role in allowing that to happen; of course, good nutrition contributes to academic achievement. Child cognitive development depends on adequate nutrition. According to Roberts et al., “Inadequate protein and energy intake in childhood is directly associated with reduced growth, and is indicative of several psychosocial problems later in life”. They continue, “Undernourished children also exhibit impaired development and decreased functional capacity”, while “Children who do not receive adequate nutrition and psychosocial stimulation are likely to underperform in school and to have poor levels of cognition and education, which are linked to low-income earnings later in life”.

It is imperative for children to have access to healthy food, and we know that things are tough right now. Groceries are expensive, and the cost of living because of inflation has made it so that more and more families are having a difficult time putting food on the table. This bill would bring us closer to ensuring that our kids have access to at least one healthy meal every school day. It would ensure that our kids are not spending their school day thinking about how hungry they are or wondering when they are going to eat their next meal. Instead, they are able to focus on learning.

The effect of malnutrition on learning is not the only reason Bill C-322 is a necessity in Canada. When I think back to my teaching days, I remember seeing kids eat alone or walk in the hallways alone, just kind of disappearing during the lunch hour; that was one of the toughest parts. Something we often do not think about is the shame that a child or adolescent feels when they do not have a lunch. They are afraid of attracting attention to themselves during those moments, because they do not want to answer any uncomfortable questions about why they do not have a lunch with them. They do not want their peers to know that their families cannot afford to feed them. It impacts their self-esteem and their ability to fit in. Food insecurity limits a child's ability to fully participate in social activities and in their school community, which amplifies existing feelings of social isolation related to material deprivation.

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No child should have to feel that way. No child should be subjected to unequal opportunities for friendships or positive social interactions. Edward Frongillo and colleagues investigated adolescents' experiences of shame related to food insecurity using an ethnically diverse sample of 40 adolescents aged nine to 15 years old. Participants described feelings of sadness, anger and internalized shame, and among the situations that brought out these feelings, the most common were social encounters at school among peers. This feeling of shame often leads to increased mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression and even suicidal ideation. That is why this bill is so important: It would give the government the opportunity to work with provincial governments, indigenous governing bodies and other stakeholders to develop the best possible framework to put in place.

● (1825)

If done properly, this framework would not single out food-insecure children. It would offer all kids one healthy meal per day in order to make schools more inclusive. According to Chloe Pineau and colleagues, "Numerous studies have documented the shame, stigma, embarrassment, and social isolation associated with the use of charitable food programs...". Therefore, it would be best if we could find a way for all children to benefit from receiving a healthy meal at school, to level the playing field.

I would like to share one particular memory that I have from my teaching days that has stayed with me ever since. I was teaching secondary 1, 2 and 3 students at an English high school in Montreal. One day early in December, I was on hall duty. I had to spend the lunch hour supervising a certain hallway in the school. One of my sweetest secondary 1 students, a seventh-grade student, who always sat in the front of the class, always smiled and behaved in the most polite way, was walking toward me. She looked like she was not in a rush to go anywhere in particular. The rest of her classmates were in the cafeteria at the other end of the school. I saw that she was empty-handed and I asked her where her lunch was. To the question, she responded that she did not have a lunch because her parents were saving the food for the Christmas holidays. The Christmas holidays were still a couple of weeks away. I told her to go to the office because the office had food to give to students who were in this kind of situation. I told her that they give snacks to students who forgot their lunch or who did not have any lunch. She was reluctant to go and ask for food and actually said, "No, Miss, I'm okay." Of course, I brought her with me and assured her that it was okay and that this happens to many kids. I also explained the situation to the office staff so that they would set something up for the next couple of weeks.

However, most kids do not get caught. Most kids are really good at hiding when they do not have a lunch to bring with them to school. On the way back to my classroom, I thought back to whether there were any signs that I could have picked up on. I thought about her grades and realized that she did receive a few failing grades. I had not understood why because she was not coded and she always seemed like she was paying attention. This was a student I taught back in 2016. I can only imagine how many kids are in that same situation today, if not worse.

The current economic context has increased the need for school food programs in Canada. Nearly two million people, including

more employed people than ever, used food banks in March 2023 alone, which is a 32% increase from that same month one year prior. One in four Canadian children live in households that experience food insecurity.

Not only is a school food program the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do. According to research conducted in countries similar to Canada, every dollar invested in school food yields an estimated social return of \$2 to \$6. This is the reason I will be supporting Bill C-322.

● (1830)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of constituents from Kelowna—Lake Country.

Today I rise to speak to the Liberal private member's bill before us. Canadians are struggling to heat their homes, to find affordable places to live and to feed themselves and their families. After eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, residents in my community and other Canadians cannot even provide basic necessities for their families. Many families are finding themselves in this situation.

More children are not able to access nutritious food, and more of their parents are relying on food banks. Food bank usage hit another record high in 2023, with two million people using a food bank in one month. Canada's largest city, Toronto, just reported that one in 10 people relies on a food bank. Usage is up over 30% in my community. This is a crisis and a result of government policy failures. The idea that children are missing meals because families can no longer afford to buy food is heartbreaking. However, the legislation would not address the causes. The only thing it calls for is for ministers to do reports and reviews, all of which we would not see for years down the line. We need to focus on stopping the crushing inflation and cost increases to families.

The NDP-Liberal government continues to create legislation and policies that are driving up the cost of everything. Its inflationary spending has driven up inflation, which has driven up interest rates. The facts are that after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, higher taxes and increased red tape and bureaucracy have driven investment away. This has Canada sliding further down each year, with a continued low Canadian dollar, making anything bought from our largest trading partner, the U.S., more expensive and putting Canada on track to be one of the most unproductive and least prosperous OECD countries. The International Monetary Fund listed Canada as having the sixth-worst misery index score out of 35 industrialized countries. Simply put, the higher the score, the worse the economic situation and quality of life. Canada's score is the sixth-highest.

However, the Liberals do not want to be talking about any of this. They want to make it appear like they are helping, even though they are the cause of high prices and people's misery. It is like walking along and being tripped by someone, and while looking up at them, they hold out their hand and say, "I am here for you; let me help you up." Meanwhile, the person on the ground is lying there thinking, "I would not be lying here if you had not tripped me in the first place." The truth is that the proposed legislation would do nothing to address the rising cost of groceries through inflationary spending and increasing carbon taxes that increase the cost of fuel. The bill would bring more government and more bureaucracy. It would be more government studies and more government reports.

If we look back, we can remember that the Liberals campaigned on this bill in 2021. Now, two years later, the Liberals want to make it seem like they have not broken yet another one of their promises. The legislation is not even from the government; it is a private member's bill to think about enacting legislation. In reality, the bill is a placeholder. Even if the bill had any substance to it, the effects would not be felt anytime soon, and, again, it would do nothing to mitigate the causes. The bill is about creating reports. Not-for-profits are the ones doing the work serving communities now. We must do more to fight food price inflation by the federal government's stopping the spending.

Children need and deserve proper access to nutritious food at every meal. According to Dalhousie University's Agri-Food Analytics Lab, a new survey showed that almost half of Canadians are purchasing less protein for their meals and that over 45% of people are prioritizing saving on costs by skipping out on nutritious meals for themselves and their families. The Prime Minister said that Conservatives are exaggerating how bad people's personal financial situations are, but in B.C. alone, over 66% of people are worried that their health may be compromised in the long run. A resident in my community even told me that because food prices are so high, she was praying that her garden would be able to provide enough food for her household with four teenagers.

● (1835)

People have been left to pray. I spoke with a resident from my community who said she works with seniors and some of them are so undernourished, they actually look forward to being admitted to the hospital so they can be provided with some nourishment. This is the Canada of the NDP-Liberal government and its decisions after eight years. It is nothing short of shocking, how they are affecting people.

There are things we can do now: First, we can axe carbon tax 1 and carbon tax 2 outright across Canada. Second, we can stop the inflationary spending, which is also increasing interest rates. Third, we can stop the red tape and bureaucracy that is holding back investment, making Canada uncompetitive and unproductive, which is increasing Canada's misery index.

There are record-breaking lineups outside food banks and people who cannot afford to house themselves are living on the street. For the first time, there are working middle-class people living in their cars. In my home province of British Columbia and in my community of Kelowna—Lake Country, one of our local food banks just said a 91-year-old came in as a client for the first time in her life.

Private Members' Business

There is a food bank now for students at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan. Our two community food banks and the many not-for-profit agencies are helping to feed families with young children, seniors and our most vulnerable.

In Victoria, some food banks are seeing monthly increases by the hundreds. In Vancouver, one food bank has registered nearly 2,000 clients since July. This is what happens when they tax the farmer who makes the food, then the trucker who transports it and then the parent who buys it. A resident in my community of Kelowna reached out to me because the taxes on his gas bill were actually higher than his total gas usage cost for the month. That puts pressure on other home expenses like food.

Inflationary deficit spending is driving up inflation, which is driving up interest rates. Housing prices have doubled over the last eight years. Rents have doubled over the last eight years. What the Liberals are doing is not working. This private member's bill today from a Liberal is, in fact, an acknowledgement that Liberal policies simply are not working.

Across the country, Canadians are realizing that the NDP-Liberal government is simply not worth the cost. Feeding our children is important and I know all of us in this house want to make sure every child is fed. We need to scrap the NDP-Liberal carbon tax, stop policies that mean increasing costs for farmers, and stop policies that will make food packaging more expensive. We need to bring down the spending, which will also bring down inflation so that parents can afford to buy food.

Only Conservatives would stop the inflationary spending to bring inflation down so that Canadians can bring home lower interest rates and afford to live. We would reduce taxes to bring down inflation and make paycheques go farther. This placeholder bill would do nothing to stop the causes of why families are struggling to feed themselves. It is actually an acknowledgement that the policies of the government are not working.

We must fight for our families and children, and their well-being. This means fighting government bureaucracy and red tape, and fighting to stop the root causes of the misery of residents in Kelowna—Lake Country and across the country. It means fighting the costly carbon tax and inflationary spending that the NDP-Liberal government continues to pile onto Canadians, increasing prices and their misery.

Private Members' Business

• (1840)

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to speak to Bill C-322, an act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program. Obviously, no one can oppose virtue. Of course, I am moved by this issue, which is crucial for all young people.

I work alongside a specialist in educational success, the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. It goes without saying that educational success goes hand in hand with having a full belly. That is key. There are many local initiatives. We are blessed in Quebec, that much is true. Everywhere, in every region, people fight tooth and nail to provide meals for students in schools.

I am the daughter of a school principal and a teacher. As an aside, I would like to say hello to my mother, Françoise Lajeunesse, who is likely watching. I have seen and heard stories of children who arrive at school every morning with empty tummies. I myself have helped many children, foundations and organizations in my region that offer meals to young people. Some of these kids have not eaten since last night. Some did not even eat last night. Some get cranky in the afternoon, not because they are stressed, but because they are hungry and have a headache. How can they succeed? This situation has to end sooner rather than later. It is a disgrace.

Is that acceptable in a G7 country? That is totally incomprehensible to me. Then again, there are places where people have chosen to make a change. In Wales, thanks to the Universal Primary Free School Meals program, by 2024, all children in elementary school will be entitled to a meal at school. The Welsh government implemented this new public policy to address child poverty and ensure that no Welsh children have to go to school on an empty stomach. The program guidelines can be found on the Welsh government's website, and we could draw inspiration from them. The aim is to promote healthy eating, increase the variety of food that children eat, improve social skills at meal times, and improve behaviour and academic achievements. These are the basics of life.

In France, school canteens have been feeding all French children for decades.

For school-aged children, food is essential to their growth, psychomotor development and ability to learn. It must be balanced, varied and spread throughout the day: for example, 20% of total energy in the morning, 40% at the midday meal [what we call lunch], 10% at 4 p.m. and 30% in the evening. Meal time is an opportunity for students to relax and connect with one another. It should also be a special time for discovery and enjoyment.

The quote I just read is from the website of France's ministry of national education and youth. It expresses my thoughts on this issue very well.

Although Quebec does not yet have a universal school food program, it has had a food policy in place in early childhood centres for 25 years.

• (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I must interrupt the hon. member for a moment. It is rather noisy right now. I am going to ask someone to go and see what is going on. Perhaps we should close the lobby doors, if that is where the noise is coming from.

The situation is now resolved. The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

Ms. Marie-Hélène Gaudreau: Madam Speaker, I agree, it was getting a little hard to concentrate, especially because we are discussing something that is tough on our young people. I was talking about early childhood centres having a program to ensure that children have full tummies and are able to learn so that they can succeed in school and have prosperous futures. We are well aware that early childhood development requires that we teach children about healthy habits and things like that, but also that we encourage their physical and cognitive development.

That said, there is still an elephant in the room. Creating this kind of plan merely extends Ottawa's reach into areas outside its jurisdiction. Education is a provincial responsibility. It is up to Quebec to decide what course it chooses to follow in this area. It is not for Ottawa to dictate yet another national framework on a topic that I am sure is quite meaningful to the member for Acadie—Bathurst. This framework must not go ahead, at least, not in its current form. Otherwise, it would be a case of interference.

In August, on Radio-Canada, Quebec's education minister said that the department of education had already injected \$50 million into its programs to help the neediest children. I admit that there is room for improvement, and I think I have made it clear today how much of a priority this is for our young people. However, the method being used is not the right one. Ottawa has to stop presenting itself as a champion of progressive policies at the expense of constitutional laws. Why not champion both at once?

I know that the federal government is aware of the social crisis, the housing crisis, the inflation crisis, the food bank crisis, and the fact that families are being forced to make truly heart-wrenching decisions. When a parent, a mother, wonders whether they should pay the rent or mortgage, which they may be late on, or pay for groceries, how do they feel? Thousands of people are in that situation. Honestly, it really makes me upset. It breaks my heart.

If the Liberal members want to develop social policies, education policies or health care policies, then they should get elected to the provincial legislatures. That is where that stuff happens. The House of Commons is not the right place. It is at the National Assembly of Quebec that Quebec's MNAs debate education policy. It is section 93 of the Constitution of Canada that says so, not me.

If the federal government wants to do more, how about this for an idea? If federal MPs want to make a real difference when it comes to what Quebec schoolchildren get to eat, they should pick up the phone, call Quebec City, talk to Bernard Drainville and Eric Girard and transfer that money to Quebec. Quebec is in charge of school boards, Quebec knows its own schools, and Quebec has always been in charge of its education policy. For pity's sake, let Quebec set up its policies as it sees fit.

In closing, all this centralizing has to stop. I urge the federal government to be a good partner and make this crucially important issue a success at every level.

• (1850)

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, they say that public education is the great social leveller, yet we know that kids cannot access the promise of education if they are hungry. Today, millions of kids across our country are going to school without food in their bellies. This is something we can change. The bill before us, Bill C-322, can be a part of a change toward the creation of a nationwide school food program that will provide healthy meals to kids going to school right across Canada.

There are many reasons why we should pursue a national school food program. I was looking at a study from The Rockefeller Foundation showing that in the United States, the \$18.7-billion investment in school meal programs provides a return on investment of \$40 billion. Perhaps for some people those kinds of numbers are motivating, but I think there is a much more profound reason we need to do this: Access to healthy food for kids is a human right. Kids deserve to access the promise of education with food in their bellies. Far too many, millions of kids across our country, are not able to do so.

That is why we in the NDP have long called for a national school food program. I want to particularly highlight the work of the member for Vancouver Kingsway, who tabled Bill C-212 in 2021 on a national school food program, and also our excellent critic, the member for Winnipeg Centre, who has been working tirelessly on this issue in her role as the critic for children, families and social development.

Canada is not doing well when it comes to the provision of school food. Right now, Canada is the only G7 country that lacks a national school food program. Among the OECD countries, we are one of only a few countries that lack such a program. A 2017 study by UNICEF ranked us 37th out of 41 countries. These are 41 of the richest countries in the world, and we are ranked 37th when it comes to the provision of school meals. This is something we need to do much better on.

Right now, the situation in Canada is a patchwork of programs that are held together by NGOs, volunteers, schools and private donors. They are working so hard to ensure that kids can have healthy meals at school, yet we know it is not meeting the need that exists in our country, despite their tireless efforts. That is why the federal government has a responsibility to come forward with a fully national school food program that meets the needs of kids.

I mentioned the situation in Canada. Every province and territory has some semblance of funding for school meal programs. Unfortunately, that funding is falling far short, between three cents and 94¢ per person, per meal. I think anyone in this House who has bought food recently can say this is not nearly enough to ensure that kids are getting nutritious food at school.

Right now, this is a particularly pertinent issue because we have seen the cost of food skyrocket. With the profits of the grocery giants going through the roof, more and more Canadians are struggling

to put food on the table. School food programs, given the existing patchwork, are even having a hard time affording the food they need to provide the level of school meals they are currently providing, not to mention meeting the needs that exist across the country.

Private Members' Business

In my home province of British Columbia, we are very fortunate that the NDP provincial government just recently announced a historic program, Feeding Futures. This is a \$214-million school food program over three years. It is the largest investment in a school meal program in Canadian history. It is making a difference right across our province, with school districts now able to increase existing programs and create new programs where none existed.

We need the federal government to come to the table as a partner. This bill in front of us, Bill C-322, can be a contribution in that direction.

I will mention that it has taken a long time to get to this point. Of course, the Liberal Party, in 2019, committed to investing in a school food program. It did not put a dollar value to it.

• (1855)

In 2021, we saw in the Liberal platform that the government would commit \$1 billion over five years. That was two years ago. Just imagine all the kids across our country who could have been fed over the past two years if those dollars had flowed and that commitment had been made real with a budget commitment. We are hopeful that budget 2024 will include these necessary dollars so that the patchwork of programs across the country can get the funding needed to deliver more meals.

This vision for a national school food program needs to be universal. It should not be just for kids who are not getting adequate food at home. It should be for all kids so that we are not stigmatizing those who come from more disadvantaged backgrounds. We know that it needs to be cost-shared with the provinces, and it should be free or low-cost for the kids participating in the programs. It also needs to support indigenous food sovereignty and local food production. Those are the characteristics I hope would be reflected in a national school food program created under the terms of the bill before us. This could make our country stronger. When we do it, we will be better for it in so many different ways.

I had my eyes opened to the potential of school food programs two years ago when I visited Suwilaawks Community School in Terrace, in northwest B.C. I visited Suwilaawks with a number of people, including Sam from the Coalition for Healthy School Food, Margo from Farm to School and the principal of Suwilaawks. They showed me the school food program there, and it was tremendously impressive.

Private Members' Business

I got to go into the kitchen and watch little kids lined up to get homemade soup and fry bread, which had been made by a volunteer named Janis Sharyk Fowler, who has been volunteering at the school for 12 years, and one of the indigenous support workers at the school, Colleen Morgan. She is fondly known as Grammie Colleen to the kids. She got up at seven o'clock that morning to make over 200 pieces of fry bread. Seeing the joy on the children's faces when they came into the school to get this food really brought home the potential of these programs to give kids the nutritious food they deserve so they can learn in our schools.

I would be remiss if I did not also highlight the work of another tireless volunteer in the Terrace area, and that is Gurjeet Parhar. Gurjeet has been working on local food programs and food security for so long through the Kalum Community School Society. The Kalum Community School Society has been delivering a good food box and a food-share program in communities from Dease Lake and Telegraph Creek in northern B.C., all the way down to Bella Coola and over to Haida Gwaii. She has been a tireless proponent of school food programs. I want to thank her for her incredible work across the northwest.

This is an idea whose time has come. It is time for us to move quickly now. There have been far too many delays in getting a national school food program up and running. We need this billion-dollar commitment over five years to hit the ground and to match the funds that are being brought forward by provinces such as my home province of British Columbia. We can improve Canada's standing among peer nations. We can get nutritious, healthy school food to kids right across our country and make our country stronger as a result. We can uphold the human rights of these kids who are going to school hungry.

In a country as rich as ours, we should do no less. We should make every effort to ensure that our children and children in communities all across this nation have the school food they deserve and need to learn.

● (1900)

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today and support Bill C-322, an act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program.

I want to thank my colleague, the member for Acadie—Bathurst, for introducing the bill.

I enjoyed a career as a teacher, a principal, a divisional principal and a coach. During that time, I had the opportunity to work with thousands of students, their families and educators from across Manitoba. I grew to understand the importance of being well fed and having nutritious options available during the school day, before it begins and when it ends.

Nutritious food and its availability is important for a number of reasons for a student: energy, concentration and attention span, sense of self, and a general positive outlook each and every day. As mentioned by my colleague across the way a moment ago, Canada is the only country in the G7 without a national standard or framework on nutrition programs in schools. I want to be very clear, before moving on to some other elements of my remarks this evening, that we understand provincial jurisdiction over the vast majority of

education in Canada. This bill serves as a catalyst for all levels of government to work together for the well-being of young people across the country.

[*Translation*]

I understand that, as my hon. Bloc Québécois colleague said a few minutes ago, education is under provincial jurisdiction. At the same time, I think there are many examples of how collaboration among several levels of government can lead to positive policies in Canada. I think this bill is no different. This is an opportunity to work together.

[*English*]

I want to read some words that were shared with me by Alan Campbell, a fellow Manitoban, who serves as the current president of the Canadian School Boards Association. In my brief time in Parliament thus far, I have tried my best to include the remarks of folks who live where I come from, because I believe that it is my responsibility, and our responsibility here, to reflect their voices back to Canadians through this chamber and the roles we occupy.

Mr. Campbell had the following to say with respect to this bill:

Local school boards across the country are ready and willing to work with our provincial and federal governments on the creation of a national framework for a school food program. Recognizing that in many rural and urban communities across the country, existing school nutrition programs already function with direct support from local charitable organizations and school boards, there are already many highly successful models on which to build in order to rapidly create a framework for a universally accessible school food program in all schools across Canada.

He went on to say:

In Manitoba, school boards point to the long-standing success of the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba...a charitable organization which for decades, has partnered with the Manitoba School Boards Association as well as the public and private sectors in delivery of strong and sustainable nutrition programs in many Manitoba schools. The newly elected [Premier of Manitoba] Wab Kinew [and his] government...[have] committed to working with school boards and the CNM to expedite more food programs to more schools, and this partnership in Manitoba may well serve to [positively] inform the development of the national framework as sought out in...[this bill].

I spoke just yesterday to Premier Kinew and informed him that I would be talking about this matter in the chamber today. He simply wanted me to reiterate that the values of the Government of Manitoba are aligned with the intentions of this bill. We will be proud to work with him and his government in an effort to see it pass and to deliver for children across the country.

I want to turn for a moment to the disproportionate impacts facing indigenous communities in Manitoba as they pertain to poverty. I note that a few of my colleagues here and my colleague from Winnipeg Centre would know the tragic nature of these statistics very well.

• (1905)

The graduation rate for first nations students in Manitoba has been as low as 50% in recent years. This can be compared to the rate of roughly 95% for non-indigenous students in the public system in Manitoba. Out of the 11,000 kids in Manitoba who live in the child welfare system, 90% of them are indigenous. Therefore, key to reconciliation, key to doing our part to deal with the tragic consequences that poverty brings to communities, and as I just mentioned, disproportionately to indigenous communities in Winnipeg and in Manitoba, is that we must look towards how we can deal with nutrition.

There are also many opportunities here, again key to reconciliation, to include indigenous values and perspectives as they relate to food, diet and health, and how those things are reflected in curriculum. There are ways for us to embed indigenous teachings and world views in the Healthy Food in Schools website, curricula and conversations.

I have grown to admire the work of a grassroots organization called Teach For Canada, which is doing wonderful work to develop and support education on reserve in Canada's northern communities. Here is what their executive director, Ken Sanderson, offered as commentary with respect to this bill. He said:

In championing Bill C-322 and the creation of a national school food program, it's crucial to recognize the ongoing inequities faced by First Nations. 'Teach For Canada-Gakinaamaage,' with its mission to address educational disparities in First Nations, underscores the interconnected nature of these challenges, emphasizing the need for a localized, community-driven approach to achieving student success in the classroom. To truly commit to ending child hunger, we must prioritize community consultation and tailor our efforts to create a well-rounded learning environment that addresses the linked needs of education and nourishment. This requires a nuanced approach that considers factors like food costs, insecurity, and the need for culturally sensitive, Indigenous-informed nutrition.

My former employer, the Winnipeg School Division, where I got my start as a teacher some years ago, is the largest school division in the city of Winnipeg and, indeed, in the province of Manitoba. Many of its schools are located in my riding, and many of the staff who work in them reside there. The Winnipeg School Division continues to provide nutrition programs throughout its 79 schools, and in my riding, Gladstone School offers a robust breakfast program that ensures all learners are prepared to learn. The challenge is that most nutrition programs are supported by limited grants and the goodwill of charities. If we want to create a robust society, it is important to provide all learners, not only in the Winnipeg School Division but also all over Canada, with a targeted and sustainable source of nutritional food.

In my home province of Manitoba, the government funds the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba, which I referred to earlier, and it provides grants to schools. In 2021-22, these grants supported close to 34,000 children through 302 programs. As a principal, I used to apply for these grants on behalf of students, and they are wonderful. They provide an incredible amount of support that is desperately needed for young people; however, it is not enough. I watched the impact that these programs had on students in schools where I worked, schools where colleagues of mine worked and schools that my friends' kids went to, and it reinforced the importance of having at our disposal this type of support to make sure that kids have a positive experience in school.

Private Members' Business

In closing, I will reiterate the urgency of implementing a national school food program. I hope that we will be able to find bipartisan support in this chamber for this piece of legislation. I know that there are areas in which my colleagues and I may disagree, such as about the source of inflation and what is driving the cost of living and affordability in this country, but I do think that we can agree on the importance of ensuring that these programs exist.

When federal and provincial governments work together, great things can happen for Canada. We have seen this on deals ranging from child care to health transfers and efforts to combat climate change. I hope that Bill C-322 will afford us another opportunity to do just that.

• (1910)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand in this place to debate the issues that are so important to Canadians.

Since we are talking about an issue that deals with education, and I will get to the substance of the bill in a moment, I want to give a shout-out to a young lady from B.C. whose name is Abigail. I had a chance to have a visit with her in the hallway prior to coming into this debate, and she informed me that she plans to be Canada's second female prime minister. I send a big shout-out to Abigail, a very bright young lady in elementary school. It just speaks to the incredible potential that exists across this country in our young people.

We are talking about one of the fundamental issues our country is facing, which is the affordability of food. There are three things I hope to be able to address in the short time I have here before us. The first is that, when it comes to the idea of a school lunch program, the idea of this sort of thing sounds great. However, as with many things that get talked about in the nation's capital, studies, reports and frameworks in this case do not feed kids.

I will start by emphasizing something because our country needs real action to ensure we can address the affordability crisis so many are facing. It is leading to kids going to school hungry and families making difficult decisions about whether to pay for rent, home heating or groceries. The first point I would like to make in this debate tonight is that food has become unaffordable for so many in our country, and it should not be that way.

Let me emphasize how fundamentally advantaged Canada is when it comes to being a producer of high-quality food products. We have the space, the capacity, the expertise and the experience to produce the world-class, quality food people need not only here in our own country but also around the world. Certainly it is a travesty that we are seeing approximately two million visits to food banks per month in our country when we have been blessed with such incredible capacity here at home. It is truly a tragedy.

Private Members' Business

We see the underlying causes of that. The fact that we have to talk about some of the issues surrounding kids going to school hungry is absolutely tragic. However, we have before us a very simple step in the right direction. It is a bill, currently sitting in the Senate, that would address some of the challenges, and it is the common-sense Conservative bill, Bill C-234, which would remove the carbon tax on all types of farm fuels and home heating. It would allow for the price of food to be brought down in our country. It would ultimately help families, our people from coast to coast to coast, because of course our north is deeply affected by the price of food, yet the bill is unfortunately being stalled.

We have to ensure that folks are able to have prosperous jobs, so we can address some of the challenges we are talking about. It has been raised several times in the debate tonight, and it is fundamentally important. In the short time I have, I will get into some of the jurisdictional challenges momentarily, but we have to acknowledge how important it is to ensure our society functions well, for civil society begins to deteriorate when people cannot afford food. The actions of left-leaning ideologies are directly forcing prices in this country to rise, and that is truly a travesty.

As a fifth-generation farmer of on my family's farm in Alberta's special areas, I was discouraged today by the fact that the Prime Minister did not offer support for farmers but said he will meet with them to tell them how they should or should not do their business. Truly, it is that attitude that farmers do not need. Left-leaning ideologies need to get out of the way to let farmers grow crops and raise livestock to ensure we have that high-quality food.

The second point I will make in the short time I have is that this bill is actually an admission of Liberal failure. In two of their election platforms, I believe in 2015 and 2021, the Liberals promised to have a national lunch program, yet they were unable to fulfill that. This is an admission of that failure. I would—

• (1915)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, I have to interrupt the hon. member. We need to allow for the reply.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst has five minutes for his right of reply.

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is definitely going to be difficult to summarize the two hours of debate that we have had on my bill in five minutes.

I would like to thank all of my colleagues from the various parties who spoke to this very important bill, which could change the lives of the children in our society. As I said in my speech, I think that this bill is one of the most important pieces of legislation that we will debate this session.

It is 2023. I would like us to just take a moment to think about these striking examples. Many children go to school hungry. They do not have any breakfast or lunch, and they do not even have a snack at school. One in five children say that they do not have enough to eat at home. Within first nations communities, 50% of households say that they struggle to feed their family. We are one of the only countries in the G7 that does not have a school food pro-

gram. In some provinces and territories, there are some schools that get funding for school food programs while others do not, which means that some children are falling through the cracks.

These few striking examples demonstrate why we need to have a framework, a national program in our schools, to ensure that our young people do not go to school hungry, do not have to think about being unable to learn and can stop worrying about not having anything in their lunch box.

I know that some of my colleagues and some parties have concerns about their respective provincial jurisdictions. We know that education is a provincial jurisdiction, but my bill makes it very clear that we will need to work with the provinces and territories to create a national program. We are going to respect those areas of jurisdiction, and that is why we are going to engage in discussions with the provinces and territories.

This morning, I was fortunate to be invited to make a presentation to the Coalition for Healthy School Food. I want to thank all these groups for their extraordinary work over the past several years to ensure that we have school food programs in our schools across Canada.

This bill is also too important to politicize. I find it disappointing to hear some of my Conservative colleagues say that if there were no price on pollution, no price on carbon, we would not need school food programs.

[English]

In 1982, 42 years ago, I was in grade one. There was no price on pollution, but interest rates were high. Some of my friends beside me did not have anything to eat. This is not a new problem, and that is why we need to address it.

• (1920)

[Translation]

I humbly ask all my colleagues in the House to support this bill. They should not do it for me, but they should do it for our children, for our young people in our schools who need a school food program, who need to stop worrying about going to school with an empty stomach. What we are doing here is trying to make life better for these children and their families. I hope my colleagues from the various parties will support my bill.

I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to introduce this bill in the House. Once again, I would like to thank everyone who spoke to it.

I hope the bill can move on to the next stage.

[English]

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

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion 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.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we would request a recorded vote, please.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 6, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, J.F.K. purportedly said once that victory has a thousand fathers, but defeat is an orphan. From this, we can gather that the decision to hire GC Strategies to build the ArriveCAN app was a failure because nobody will admit to being the one responsible. Nobody wants to claim the parentage of this terrible decision.

Conservatives have been persistently prosecuting this case of the arrive scam scandal. The government spent \$54 million. It contracted GC Strategies to build the ArriveCAN app. The RCMP is now investigating some of the contractors involved. We have repeatedly asked a simple question: Who is the person responsible for the decision to hire GC Strategies? This is a two-person company. Nobody in the company does any IT work. All they do is receive the contract and then subcontract it. They go on LinkedIn and send messages to people asking them to do the work. They do not do any of the work themselves. They just receive the contract and subcontract it.

It is like if you, Madam Speaker, hired me for \$100 to paint your fence, and then I went and hired another member to paint the fence for \$50. They did the work. You paid me and I collected a whole bunch of money in the middle. That is essentially how GC Strategies operated in this case and in other cases. It does not have the people or capacity to do the actual work.

By all indications, it was a terrible decision to spend enormous amounts of public money through GC Strategies for this overpriced, glitchy, ineffective app. We have all kinds of things that have come out during the discussion of this issue. We have doctored resumés that have, in another case, been presented to the Government of Canada. We have systemic questions about how the procurement process works. We also have senior public servants accusing each other of lying about who made the decision. This is quite incredible. We have senior public servants Cameron MacDon-

Adjournment Proceedings

ald and Minh Doan accusing each other of lying about who made the decision to go with GC Strategies.

Again, we have repeatedly, in this House and in committee, asked who was responsible for this decision. I put the question to the Minister of Procurement yesterday, but he did not answer. Under the Liberal-NDP government, over the last eight years, we have seen how everything is broken, but nobody is responsible. Apparently anything that goes wrong is nobody's responsibility. Again, as J.F.K. said, victory has a thousand fathers, but defeat is an orphan.

There are a lot of orphans according to the Liberals. They said they did not make the decision and it was external factors. This was a decision of someone in government. Somebody decided this two-man company working out of a basement doing no IT work were the right people to build this app. They were the right people to spend \$54 million on.

We will continue to ask the government this simple question: Who made the decision? Was it a minister? Was it the Minister of Public Safety or the Minister of Procurement? Was it a particular senior official? We have senior officials actually accusing each other of lying. They are saying, "It was not me. It was that guy." The government is ultimately responsible for the decisions made while it is in power. It has been in power for eight years.

It is a simple question. I hope the parliamentary secretary will answer. Who made the decision to choose GC Strategies to build the ArriveCAN app?

• (1925)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always find it interesting that the member opposite will take an issue, whatever that issue might be, will associate it with the Prime Minister or the government and then will add onto the end of it "scandal". The member is very consistent in doing that. It does not matter to what degree it is factual. He insists on always putting in the word "scandal" and then trying to associate it with the government.

I am not saying there are no wrongdoings. In fact, when the member asked the question and the minister responded, here is what the minister indicated:

...what I am happy to explain to the House is how seriously our government takes allegations of inappropriate behaviour with taxpayers' money and contracting or subcontracting. We are obviously very pleased that the committee is looking into this matter. We are pleased that the Auditor General is also seized with this question.

We are also pleased that the Canada Border Services Agency, when these issues came to light, took the appropriate action with internal reviews and, as was appropriate, referred any and all of these circumstances to the appropriate authorities.

As the minister clearly indicated, we take the allegations very seriously, and the government is determined to support the work on the matter, whether by the Auditor General or the standing committee. At some point in time, hopefully sooner as opposed to later, we will see allegations substantiated or will get to the bottom of the issue. The government is committed to addressing it.

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I do not know by whom, but I was provided a letter that I thought was kind of interesting. It was dated in October. I do not know whether it was the member himself, but somebody asked for the RCMP to come before one of the standing committees. I think it was addressed to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. The member looks a little puzzled, so I am not too sure if he is aware of it. Maybe the document is in another committee. I am not 100% sure, but the bottom line is that the letter, signed off by the RCMP, indicates what the RCMP understood:

...the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates (OGGO) has adopted a motion calling for the appearance of, among others, Sergeant Kim Chamberland in respect of "reports that the RCMP is investigating allegations of misconduct by three companies involved in the development of the ArriveCAN app."

Contrary to public reporting, the RCMP is not investigating the ArriveCAN matter.

The letter goes on and states, in essence, that the RCMP does not think that person would be able to contribute positively or in any way to the committee. I do not know how that was ultimately resolved. I just came by this particular letter and am curious to know whether the member is aware of the facts with respect to it. Suffice it to say, just as I started my comments, I note that the government is being very diligent in going through the process and ensuring that tax dollars are protected.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, in typical fashion, the member has delivered a word salad to the House of Commons that has absolutely nothing to do with the question I asked. Somebody in the government made a decision to hire GC Strategies to produce ArriveCAN. The decision was made, so someone had to make it. I did not ever at any point say who made that decision, but I asked the government to tell us who was responsible for that decision. Frankly, the more the government members refuse to answer this basic question, the more guilty they look.

My question is very simple. With senior public servants accusing each other of lying about this matter and with aspersions being cast back and forth in the House, the public has a right to know. Fifty-four million dollars was spent on this app. Who made the decision to hire GC Strategies to build the ArriveCAN app?

• (1930)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, first and foremost, the Government of Canada and the minister in question have made it very clear that we take the allegations very seriously. We are very much concerned whenever tax dollars are being inappropriately expended. At the end of the day, these are tax dollars, which are very important dollars, and the government is determined to get to the bottom of this. We will, and there will be a consequence.

Billions and billions of dollars are spent every year by government, whether directly by government or indirectly through agencies. The government does the best it can to ensure there is a high sense of accountability for civil servants. A number of allegations have been made. We will get to the bottom of them and there will be consequences.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to follow up on a question that I posed to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, a question that he conve-

niently refused to answer concerning corruption at the Liberals' billion-dollar green slush fund known as SDTC.

An independent, fact-finding report reveals a cloud of mismanagement, conflicts of interest and self-dealing at SDTC. The report found, among other things, that the board improperly paid out nearly \$40 million in so-called COVID relief payments, including funneling millions of dollars to companies that board members had an interest in.

The chair of SDTC, during questioning before the ethics committee, was forced to admit that she funnelled \$220,000 to her own company, and then funnelled \$120,000 of that into her own personal bank account. She even moved the motion at the board. Incredibly, she claimed it was all okay because she and the board had received legal advice.

It turns out that the lawyer who provided that legal advice is none other than a member of the SDTC council. In other words, the lawyer was providing legal advice about conflicts of interest when he, himself, had a conflict of interest. In providing that advice and being paid for that advice by SDTC, as he was, the law was broken, because section 16 of the SDTC act prohibits any member of the SDTC council from profiting from SDTC.

Yesterday, we learned that another board member at SDTC had funnelled a staggering \$42.5 million of taxpayers' money into four companies that she had an interest in. She enriched herself to the tune of \$42.5 million. It is unbelievable.

It appears that this only scratches the surface of corruption and mismanagement at SDTC, because according to whistle-blowers, the level of corruption and self-dealing exceeds \$150 million of taxpayers' money squandered.

Despite the well-documented corruption and mismanagement involving tens upon tens of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money, no one has been held accountable. The chair resigned but not at the request of the minister, and the minister continues to stand behind the corrupt SDTC board. Why?

Why is the minister more interested in protecting Liberal insiders who got rich improperly at the expense of taxpayers rather than rooting out the rot and corruption at the Liberals' green slush fund?

• (1935)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to respond to the comments made earlier by the member for St. Albert—Edmonton regarding Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

I feel that it is important to reiterate and stick to the facts of this case. First, the minister took immediate action to initiate a fact-finding exercise through an impartial third party. That exercise found no clear evidence of deliberate unethical behaviour. There were, however, several incidences in which the organization was not in full compliance with its contribution agreement.

Second, to address the inconsistency, including the conflict of interest, the organization has been asked to comply with several corrective measures by December 31. Out of an abundance of caution, financing for all new projects has been temporarily frozen until these measures are in place. SDTC has committed to implementing the corrective measures requested by us on an expedited timeline. Everyone involved is eager to get back to supporting Canadian business.

Third, we now have in place an independent legal review by the firm McCarthy Tétrault to examine human resource allegations brought forward by current and former employees of the organization. SDTC has agreed to allow these employees to speak freely without violating any applicable settlement agreements or non-disclosure agreements.

Fourth, although I know the party opposite likes to take credit for the AG's decision to conduct an audit since the allegations came to light, we have been in dialogue with the office of the Auditor General on this matter. We welcome the Auditor General's decision to conduct the audit. We will await her report on this matter, which will inform whether further action is necessary.

Finally, the decisions of the chair of SDTC's board and of its president to resign were personal ones. It is for us to follow due process and await the results of the AG's audit before making any pronouncements.

Taking a step back, in consideration of the facts of the matter, as I have laid them out, I am confident that we are on the right path. With the implementation of the corrective measures, the pending OAG audit, the HR review and the reinvigorated leadership at the organization, we can refocus efforts on supporting our Canadian innovators in the clean tech sector.

I take it very seriously when we talk about the Auditor General of Canada. The actions that the government has taken to date, I think, should provide a very high level of comfort to people who would be following this debate. The government is very much aware of it and is taking direct actions to resolve it.

I am a little bit disappointed in the member across the way. As with the member and his colleague just prior, who asked a totally different question in another area, again, there is the fascination that the Conservative Party has with words such as “corruption” and “scandal”. It continually wants to raise them. I understand why it likes those two words. I understand it a lot.

The bottom line is that the government of the day is very much aware of it and is indeed continuing to monitor. As I indicated in response to the previous question, it is in a position to look at the recommendations and to ultimately follow through when those recommendations are brought forward.

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Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I am glad the parliamentary secretary confirmed that the resignation of the chair of SDTC was a personal decision that she did not make at the direction of the minister. This was the same chair who funnelled \$220,000 into her own company and then transferred \$120,000 of that into her personal bank account.

That is corruption, yet it did not meet the level for the minister to call on her to resign. If that level of corruption does not suffice calling for a resignation, what does?

● (1940)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I disagree. The member opposite in the Conservative Party will look at this whole issue as being one of a slush fund.

It is not the first time that they have used the words “slush fund”. We will remember that they also used the words “slush fund” for Canada's child care plan, which saw a massive reduction in child care costs for Canadians from coast to coast to coast, as all provinces and territories signed on with the government.

We have a substantial fund here to support business. The Conservatives say that they support businesses. Often, I find that they will say one thing but their actions demonstrate something entirely different. I wish the Conservatives would get on board and support businesses and our business community.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the big disappointments from last week's fall economic statement was the lack of action on extending the loan repayment deadline for the Canada emergency business account program.

CEBA loans saved hundreds of thousands of businesses across Canada and millions of jobs during the pandemic, but recovery has been slow, particularly in sectors such as tourism. The deadline to repay CEBA loans was extended from the end of 2022 to the end of 2023, but there continue to be calls to extend it once more, to the end of 2024.

Last month, the provincial premiers from across the country called on the government to make that extension. Chambers of commerce, including those in my riding, and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business asked for an extension. The NDP and Bloc Québécois have both asked for an extension. Sadly, both the Liberals and Conservatives in this place have ignored those calls and remained silent. Eventually, the government extended the repayment deadline by 18 days. That time will only allow businesses to secure additional loans and take on more debt.

Adjournment Proceedings

I recently met with Anette and Jörg in my riding. They own one of the oldest craft distilleries in the country. They have been in business for years. As many of the small businesses in my riding do, they depend on the tourism industry to be successful, so the CEBA loan program literally kept their business alive during the pandemic. They were on schedule to pay back their CEBA loan until this summer, when wildfires in the interior of B.C. drove the provincial government to close the region to tourism. It was not just that visitors did not want to come to a region that was on fire; they were literally told they could not come. August, one of the two big months for tourism-related business, was a complete writeoff.

I also heard from Conrad, who has a family-owned and operated fashion store in Osoyoos. The CEBA loan made the difference in getting his business through COVID. Conrad's business is almost entirely dependent on tourism, and it was also impacted by the wildfires this summer. He did not even get to the break-even point this year, and he cannot pay back the CEBA loan or even buy new stock for next year.

The wine industry is a multi-billion dollar industry in the Okanagan Valley. It was hard hit last winter, with an unusually hard and early frost that damaged many vines and even killed vines in some vineyards. Therefore, harvest was cut in half this year, and that impact will be felt next year and years after that when the wine matures. On top of that, most of the 300 or so wineries in the region were also hit by the lack of tourism in August because of wildfires. I had dinner last week with wine industry leaders and learned that many wineries are considering closing or selling right now, because they cannot make ends meet. Some have already closed.

The B.C. Craft Brewers Guild reported yesterday that 15% of their members face bankruptcy if the CEBA loan repayment period is not extended. They are impacted not only by the downturn in tourism but also by the inflation that has driven up the cost of everything that goes into their craft beers.

Small businesses across Canada are in crisis. We need to support them by extending the CEBA loan repayment deadline. It is not too late.

• (1945)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what I would like to do is reinforce exactly what the minister said to the member not that long ago with respect to the CEBA loan deadline:

That is why we are offering additional flexibilities for small businesses to repay their CEBA loans. This includes a full one-year extension on the term loan repayment deadline, more flexibility on refinancing and more time to access loan forgiveness, which is both balanced and fiscally responsible....

We know times are tough, which is why our government is also cutting taxes for growing small businesses and lowering their credit card fees by up to a quarter. We will continue to listen to small businesses, and we will be there for all Canadians.

If I may, I would like to pick up on the issue of continuing to be there for small businesses, because I think it is important to recognize that the government, over the last number of years, even prepandemic, was there to support small businesses in different ways. One that stands out to me offhand is the small business tax reduction that was given, a substantial tax reduction in order to support small businesses. When we went into the pandemic, what we

saw in a very real and tangible way was direct financial support put into the tills of small businesses and into the pockets of small business owners. We saw that in different forms, whether indirectly through wage subsidies for workers, or through rent support or the small business loans. We are talking about billions of dollars. We made it very clear at the beginning of the pandemic that the government would be there to support small businesses, because we recognize the valuable role they play in modern society here in Canada. They are the backbone of our economy, and the potential is absolutely overwhelming. That is why, from giving the tax break and the supports during the pandemic to being able to extend where we can in a fiscally responsible fashion, we are doing that.

I have had the opportunity to visit many small businesses, and one thing I am happy to see is the many programs we put into place to assist them. I constantly get reminded how the government supports have been there and have allowed a business, or even a community non-profit group, to be able to survive; it is because the government was there to have its back.

Nothing has really changed. We will continue to be there to support small businesses today and into the future. One needs to look at the fall economic statement, and there are a number of things we can do, whether directly or indirectly. I often say that one of the best things we can do indirectly is to ensure that there is disposable income for Canadians. We do that through different forms of rebates, such as the GST rebate, or through the enhancement of social programs to ensure that seniors or people with a disability have more disposable income. All of that indirectly allows people to support small businesses. In fact, on a personal note, I am sending out my next householder, encouraging people to get out there and use the small businesses in our community. I think we all have an important role.

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Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I recently asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer to calculate the cost or benefit to Canada of a one-year extension to the CEBA loan deadline. I knew there would be a financial cost for the government to carry \$40 billion in loans for another year. The PBO said that it would be close to a billion dollars, but I also know that many businesses will go under if they do not get the extension. A recent CFIB survey found that 28% of businesses strongly question whether they could remain in business if they lose the forgivable portion of the CEBA loan. If those businesses go bankrupt, the government could lose over \$10 billion in loans it cannot recover. Unfortunately, the PBO told me he could not use the CFIB data and could not find any other data to calculate that loss. However, even if only 10% of businesses go under, we would lose over \$4 billion in unpaid loans. More importantly, we would lose tens of thousands of businesses and hundreds of thousands of jobs across this country.

• (1950)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am personally very sympathetic to small businesses, which in many ways are the backbone of the Canadian economy. I have more than one family mem-

ber very much engaged in small business. I believe my youngest brother had a CEBA loan, though I am not 100% sure of that. I understand how important those loans are.

I can assure the member that had the government not stepped up when it did, there would have been a huge number of bankruptcies. There would have been a lot more unemployment. It would have been so much more difficult for us to recover coming out of the pandemic. I say that only because I truly believe that as a government, we have been supporting small businesses.

The government has some limitations, and that is the reason the minister continues to work closely with our—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:51 p.m.)

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