



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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CANADA

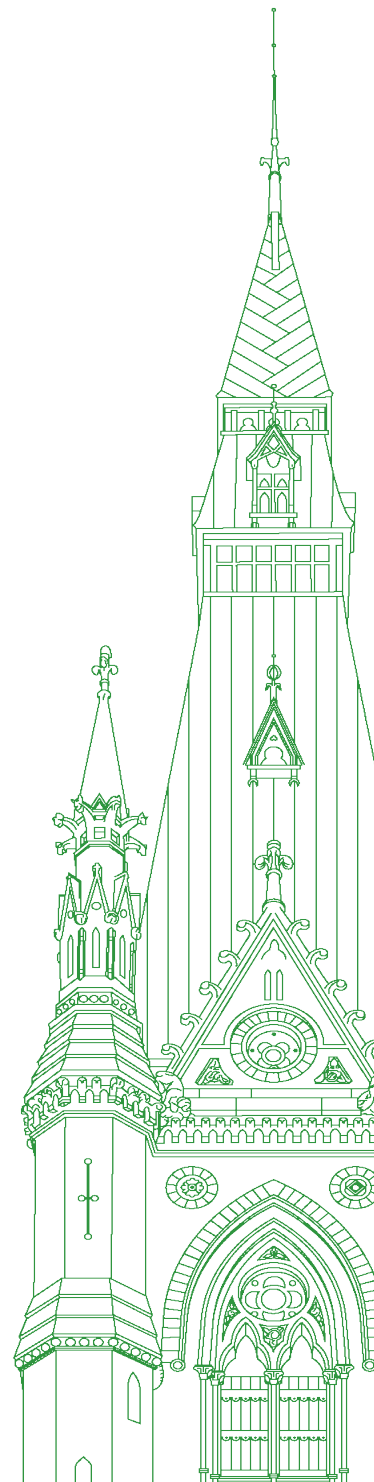
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

# House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



## **CONTENTS**

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 5, 2024

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

### CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON ELECTORAL REFORM

The House resumed from November 7, 2023, consideration of the motion.

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise for the first time this session to represent the people of Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill and to speak to the matter about which many of my constituents are passionate, and that is Motion No. 86 on a citizens' assembly on electoral reform, sponsored by the member of Parliament for Nanaimo—Ladysmith and jointly seconded by me and 20 other members of Parliament.

The motion calls for the creation of a citizens' assembly on electoral reform, which, in turn, would determine whether electoral reform is recommended in the Canadian context and make suggestions as to how the electoral system could be improved.

We must address voter apathy and lack of trust in our electoral system. When young people say that they do not vote because their vote is not going to make a difference in what the government looks like after the election, we need change. When people in certain regions in the country feel that they are not represented because most of their elected representatives are from a party that has drastically different views from theirs, we need change. When certain groups of Canadians do not feel welcomed or able to participate in our parliamentary system, which is oppositional and largely the legacy of male white settlers and colonialists, we need change. When qualified individuals who want to help make our country a better place opt out due to the polarization and abuse fostered by our current system, we need change. When the only way to inflict policy is to demonize and overthrow the existing government rather than to collaborate and work together to come up with the best solutions to help Canadians, we need change.

We know we need change, and over 75% of Canadians agree and support electoral reform.

How do we get it and why a citizens' assembly? We know that a citizens' assembly is made up of representatives of non-elected Canadians, a wide range of Canadians from across the country, who can be chosen by subgroups to represent every group across our country. It is selected like a jury, with steps taken to ensure representation of the population. It can look at a broad range of reforms and options for reform, and the findings can either be referred to government or we can go to a referendum. There are different options, depending on how we proceed.

We have already seen that trying to find consensus on election reform through the usual order of business in government procedures has failed. In 2015, it was the will of this government to implement electoral reform, but the process found consensus only on retaining the status quo. While the intention was to create a more representative and responsive democratic process, achieving consensus on a specific alternative proved elusive. However, Canadians still want electoral reform.

It may not be the most urgent issue facing us today, but it is an extremely important one to the future of our democracy and our country. There are always going to be more urgent issues. After trying to find a way to change our electoral system, the government was confronted with many challenges, including a change in the government to the south of the border, which posed many challenges to our government. We then went into the COVID pandemic, and that took up a lot of urgent attention. Then there have been wars like in Ukraine and now the Middle East. There is the affordability crisis in the post-COVID economy. There are always more urgent issues for the government of the day to deal with, so trying to address this important issue through the normal course of business is very difficult, and we have to find another way to do it.

This is one of the reasons why a citizens' assembly is the way to proceed. It would allow for the issue to be re-examined in a way that goes beyond electoral cycles and parties. It could lead to better outcomes based on evidence. The participants would develop an in-depth understanding of the issue by listening to experts who share their knowledge with the assembly. They would aim to reach a consensus and make recommendations, either to Parliament, where negotiations and compromise could continue to reach a multiparty agreement, or through a referendum. It would provide legitimacy in making hard decisions and build trust in government and democratic institutions.

### *Private Members' Business*

A citizens' assembly allows for ordinary Canadians to participate directly in government by discussion, which is one of the hallmarks of a parliamentary system, one that has been on the decline over the past decades, a decline that has coincided with the rise in conspiracy theories.

To quote Rob Goodman in his recent book *Not Here*:

...the rise of the conspiracy theory to the dominant style on the Canadian right, from [the Leader of the Opposition] ("They've been following you to the pharmacy, to your family visits, even to your beer runs") to [another member] (the World Economic Forum is "actually talking about putting microchips in our bodies and in our heads") to Maxime Bernier ("A FUTURE WORLD GOVERNMENT . . . WILL DESTROY CANADA"). It is not a novel point to observe that these sorts of messages are delivered, without fear of contradiction, to siloed and bunkered audiences, that they grow in the dark like mold, that they couldn't bear even a minute of scrutiny. Yet they are a baroque and unreal projection of the very real fact that meaningful politics is conducted far out of ordinary earshot.

A citizens' assembly would allow discussions to be conducted in the earshot of Canadians. What better way to combat this trend than to use a citizens' assembly where ordinary citizens are engaged in discussion to tackle some of the divisive and politically difficult issues of the day, such as electoral reform?

Citizens' assemblies have been used in Canada, in Ontario and British Columbia, and around the world in many countries, such as Ireland, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain to name a few, on a number of different topics. Even though the citizens' assemblies that were in Canada, in Ontario or B.C., did not result in changes, they were very robust and well-received assemblies that brought forth some good suggestions. We can change the way these work so that we can actually act on the suggestions that come forward.

With the increasing polarization and extremism in Canada, we need less confrontation and more co-operation. We need to find a way to ensure better representation of all Canadians. As Canada evolves, our electoral system must accommodate the changes to ensure a robust democracy.

Our parliamentary system, while having evolved somewhat over the years, was developed in a very different time. Since then, women and indigenous people, to name two groups, have been given the vote. However, Canada's institutions of government have not changed dramatically to accommodate these groups or facilitate their full participation. We adopted our own flag under former prime minister Lester B. Pearson. We repatriated our Constitution and adopted a written Charter of Rights and Freedoms under former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, recognizing the changing nature of our country.

Our electoral system should also change so that our government better reflects the changes in our society. While our parliamentary monarchy has served us well, we should consider whether a parliamentary public system might be better suited to the Canada of today, a natural evolution from the repatriation of the Constitution to the development of our own written charter.

Would proportional representation, such as Iceland has, or a mixed proportional system, such as Germany or New Zealand have, better serve the interest of all Canadians? These questions need to be addressed.

Motion No 86 is not merely a proposal; it is a declaration of our commitment to a democracy that is inclusive, representative and resilient. By supporting the establishment of a citizens' assembly, we are taking a bold step toward a more just and equitable Canada, one where the votes of the many guide the decisions that shape our collective destiny.

In our diverse and vibrant democracy, it is imperative that the voices of all citizens are not only heard but are actively incorporated into decision making. The citizens' assembly envisioned by Motion No. 86 would serve as a powerful mechanism for fostering inclusivity, ensuring that every Canadian, regardless of background or affiliation, would have a genuine opportunity to contribute to shaping the future of our nation.

To quote Ernest Naville, a Swiss philosopher and theologian, "The right of decision belongs to the majority, but the right of representation belongs to all."

• (1110)

**Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Motion No. 86, which calls on the government to establish a citizens' assembly on electoral reform.

While I appreciate the spirit in which the motion has been put forward by the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, I am unable to support it for reasons that I will set out.

I would acknowledge that a citizens' assembly can play a constructive role in making recommendations around alternative electoral systems. After all, a citizens' assembly is comprised of non-partisan private citizens who are selected randomly as part of a lottery process.

Accordingly, a citizens' assembly is well positioned to consult, to deliberate and to design alternative electoral systems. Indeed, citizens' assemblies have played precisely this role twice in Canada, in British Columbia and in Ontario, in 2004 and 2006 respectively. However, the motion does not precisely call for that. Rather, it calls for the establishment of a citizens' assembly with a mandate to "determine if electoral reform is recommended for Canada, and, if so, recommend specific measures that would foster a healthier democracy."

Based on the wording of the motion, if the citizens' assembly determined that electoral reform were desirable, presumably it would go about making recommendations on alternative systems, but the wording on its face is somewhat ambiguous. It is not clear. What is clear is what is missing from the motion, and that is any mention that there be a referendum of Canadians to decide whether to adopt any new electoral system.

A citizens' assembly on its own is completely insufficient to determine any new electoral system. Likewise, I would submit it would be inappropriate for politicians to make such a determination, for example, by way of a bill introduced in Parliament, having regard for the fact that all of us have partisan political interests that would influence decisions around the design of any new electoral system. Nothing short of a referendum will suffice.

A referendum is needed in order that any new electoral system have the moral weight and legitimacy that would be needed. Indeed, anything less would likely cast doubts among segments of Canadians that certain partisan actors had taken advantage or manipulated the electoral system for partisan or ideological gain, which would undermine democracy and undermine confidence in any new electoral system.

Therefore, I cannot support the motion on that basis. I cannot support a motion that could be construed as recommending a process whereby a citizens' assembly on its own would determine a new electoral system as opposed to merely recommending alternative electoral systems.

With that, I would like to make a few observations more broadly on the matter of electoral reform.

Proponents of this motion make the case that this is something that Canadians want. Indeed, within the motion itself, a poll is cited that indicates a sizable percentage of Canadians would like to see a citizens' assembly. I would respectfully fully question whether this is something that Canadians want, and I question it not on the basis of a poll but on the results of votes of Canadians in seven referendums held over the past 20 years in three provinces. In five out of seven referendums, Canadians, given the choice, have voted against electoral reform and in favour of the status quo, first-past-the-post system.

• (1115)

The only referendum in which a clear majority of voters elected to adopt a new electoral system was in the 2005 referendum in British Columbia in which 57% of voters gave the green light for electoral reform, but it did not meet the threshold for implementation. There were two subsequent referendums in British Columbia in which more than 60% of voters opted for the status quo.

Although it may be unfashionable to say, perhaps the reason voters have opted for the status quo is that the first-past-the-post electoral system has served Canadian democracy well. There are many merits to the first-past-the-post electoral system, including that it is straightforward. It can best be summed up as this: the candidate with the most votes wins. What could be more straightforward than that? It is also inherently democratic. It is based on the premise that each voter is equal; one person, one vote with each vote weighted equally. That is in contrast to alternative systems where some votes count more than once, based on second and third ballot choices for example.

As former prime minister, the current secretary of foreign affairs in the United Kingdom, David Cameron observed in a column he wrote in *The Telegraph* in 2011, the first-past-the-post system produces winners whereas alternative voting systems, in some instances, produce winners out of losers, in the sense that candidates

### *Private Members' Business*

who, in some instances, placed second or third out of first-ballot rankings end up winning.

Further, first past the post is efficient and transparent. It tends to produce decisive results. Canadians learn, more or less, on election night what kind of government they are going to get. That is in contrast to many European countries where governments are formed weeks, sometimes months, after election night. That is not efficient. That is not transparent and, I would submit, it is not democratic. First past the post ensures accountability; it is heavy on accountability. When Canadians decide that it is time for a change, time to change the government, first past the post tends to produce such an outcome, and it provides accountability by connecting members of Parliament with their electors and their constituents. That is in contrast to other electoral systems where, for example, members are elected based on being on a party list.

Those are just some of the many reasons the first-past-the-post system is a system that has worked. I would submit that it is not by accident that Canada is one of the most stable and strong democracies in the world. I do not think it is an accident that we have seen, for more than 150 years, the peaceful transfer of power. Very simply, if the system is not broken, then there is no need to fix it.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Motion No. 86. We have been talking about electoral reform for a long time. Many political parties have pledged to reform the electoral system in all sorts of ways, or said, before forming government, that they were going to undertake public consultations leading up to this reform. Unfortunately, for reasons we need not go into here, this never happened. Several parties abandoned this electoral promise, among many others, after getting elected.

The motion proposes an original approach that may lead us down a different path from the one we have taken in the past, which has led us nowhere since we are still having the same debate. It is about creating citizens' assemblies that would prompt reflection and bring forth a proposal for electoral reform. It is a very democratic way of bringing citizens together to propose solutions.

There are elements of the motion that I would like to talk about. First, it says that election results often do not reflect the will of the voters. All anyone has to do is look at the election results we often get in Canada, the provinces and Quebec, to realize that the party that got the majority of the power did not get the majority of the votes. Some people say, and I have heard this in my riding, that they did not vote for that, and that the government does not deserve that much power, since most of the population did not support it. That is something to think about.

*Private Members' Business*

Voter turnout is in decline. When we talked about Chinese interference last year, the opposition parties agreed, followed by the Liberal Party later that summer, that civic engagement is important and that the Chinese interference problem had had an adverse effect on voters' confidence in the electoral system. The Bloc Québécois said that it was extremely important to eliminate this sword of Damocles that is Chinese interference in order to build people's confidence in the electoral system. It is by building confidence in the electoral system that we will improve voter participation in the electoral process.

The motion lauds citizens' assemblies, saying that they are independent, non-partisan and representative. That means that they will be inclusive. Obviously, we are talking about the voting system. Within this process, we are encouraging people to think about electoral reform and to propose solutions, which is an important step. We need more than people just saying that we need to do something different: We need people to propose alternatives.

We find this approach interesting. I am therefore announcing right now that the Bloc will vote in favour of the motion.

I heard my Conservative colleague's speech. The debate is interesting and we need to keep it going precisely because we are parliamentarians, representatives of the people, and not everyone agrees on electoral reform. I heard my Conservative colleague say, in short, that we would need a referendum, that people would have to really participate in the debate by indicating their agreement or disagreement. We agree. However, my colleague said that that was simple, that it was an extremely simple process. It is true that it is simple. However, just because something is simple does not mean that it is the best option.

That is why we are giving this further consideration. The Bloc agrees with this way of doing things, and we think that the advantage of this approach is that it takes things out of the hands of politicians, because, historically, that has never worked. The motion proposes that this study and reform be put into the hands of citizens, those who we seek to represent and who we want to be properly represented by our electoral system. We are therefore inviting these people to hold a citizens' assembly on changes to the electoral process.

• (1125)

The motion also talks about diversity, and I agree with that, but there is one small problem. Actually, the Bloc Québécois thinks it is a big problem. The motion talks about all sorts of factors to consider when it comes to ensuring that the citizens' assembly is inclusive, but nowhere does it mention that the Quebec nation must be represented on a pro rata basis to its demographic and political weight. There is nothing in the motion about that. We are therefore asking our colleagues to make sure that the Quebec nation is properly represented so that the Bloc Québécois can consider this approach to be successful.

As I mentioned, this is a sensitive issue because the voting system is the cornerstone of democracy, so this is an extremely important study. There is no perfect electoral system. For example, France has a completely different system from ours and the French are not necessarily more satisfied with their system. There will al-

ways be plenty of critics, and that is also the case in other countries. What is the solution?

It is important to note that, when political parties take office, they completely switch gears. Here is what this government said in the 2015 throne speech after taking office:

...the Government will undertake consultations on electoral reform, and will take action to ensure that 2015 will be the last federal election conducted under the first-past-the-post voting system.

This is an example of how, unfortunately, none of the political parties can be trusted. The Bloc Québécois is perhaps the one exception. That said, we will never be at the helm in this Parliament. We can hardly afford to leave it in the hands of political parties. After the throne speech, a special committee on electoral reform was formed: 57 meetings were held, 196 witnesses appeared and 567 participants took part, only to achieve absolutely nothing.

Given that impasse, it is worth considering a citizens' assembly. It could be a solution. However, the Bloc Québécois does not want to see this happen all willy-nilly. Obviously, we want there to be a referendum, as my Conservative colleague proposed. We also want Quebec to maintain its political weight and we want the Quebec nation recognized, as the House voted in favour of by a large majority. All these criteria must absolutely be met for the Bloc Québécois to eventually support a bill that would lead to this possibility.

That was the Bloc Québécois's overall thinking on citizens' assemblies.

• (1130)

[English]

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am so happy to stand today and speak in support of Motion No. 86. My colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith and the member for Elmwood—Transcona before her have done vitally important work to ensure that electoral reform is a discussion we are having in the House.

We all know why we are in this place right now talking about this. It is because of the failure of the current government to live up to the promises it made to Canadians before being elected.

I read somewhere that the current Prime Minister had mentioned over 1,600 times during the election campaign that he was going to fix our electoral system. Of course, he did not do that. As soon as he had that taste of power, he chose a different route. I think that is why electoral reform is so important. It is to prevent this constant back and forth where we see Liberal, Conservative, Liberal, Conservative, without having to have a majority of votes.

I am hearing a few heckles from the Conservatives. I actually want to touch on that, because, of course, I have been listening to my colleagues from the Conservatives talk about electoral reform, how it works and whatnot. I know that some of the members speaking are being a little disingenuous.

For example, if one were to look at how Conservatives elect their own leaders, one would find that they do not believe that first past the post is the best way to do that. They use a form of electoral reform to elect their own leaders within their party. That is their party politics.

One will often hear them talking in this place about how there is a “coalition” between the New Democrats and the Liberals. Of course, they know very well that there is no coalition, that this is not what is happening. More importantly, we should recognize that coalitions are meant to be part of our electoral system and our parliamentary system.

I know that this is not the culture in Canada to date, but that is the system within which we are working. If anyone ever says that coalitions are illegal, they do not reflect the will of the people or any of that, this is actually incorrect. While we do not have a coalition, I would say that coalitions are part of our electoral system. Moreover, in fact, we have seen many times that the Liberals and the Conservatives work very well together.

My main thinking on this, in terms of why we need electoral reform, is that I feel our politics are becoming so much more divisive, so much more pushed to the sides. The problem is that the vast majority of Canadians do not live on the outside edges. Most Canadians are centrists. They want to see common sense. They want to see their politicians work together. They want to see us working on the things that matter to them. However, because of our political system, things are moved to the side. Things are moved to the edges. It is very dangerous. We are seeing this across the country.

I would be remiss if I did not raise the issue of what is happening in my province of Alberta. This weekend, I was at a rally to protect trans kids, because Premier Smith, and perhaps we should call her “Marlaina” Smith, has decided to make an attack on trans kids.

I have to say that the reason she is doing this is fully political. It is because, in Alberta, the centre, the vast majority of Albertans, are not controlling what our political parties do.

Right now, in Alberta, the far right is controlling what our premier does. We saw this with Jason Kenney. He was not brought down by Albertans; he was brought down by the far right, extreme views of some Albertans, which do not represent the majority of people who cast a ballot in Alberta.

Danielle Smith does not have to protect herself from the centrists. She needs to protect her job by actually going as far right as she can. Who cares about the most vulnerable minority groups in our provinces, who require real leadership from their premier? Who cares about kids who could lose their lives? As long as one keeps one's job, as long as one is able to do that, then one is in good shape.

• (1135)

When I hear the Conservatives in here trying to heckle me and saying that first past the post is the most effective, I think we can see in our country that this is not what is happening. We even see it within the Conservative Party. Erin O'Toole was not brought down by the centrists within the party. He was brought down by the far right. The Leader of the Opposition has to keep the people on the far right happy or lose his job. This is a problem with our electoral system.

I spend a lot of time talking in schools. I used to be a teacher before I was elected. I love meeting with students and talking about our electoral processes. I always talk to them about this idea that

we need representation. Our Parliament needs to look like our country. We need to have the same makeup and diversity that makes Canada so wonderful and so strong. It needs to be represented in our Parliament.

The problem is that the current system makes it much harder to ensure that what happens in this House reflects what happens in our beautiful country of Canada. We do not see enough women or minority groups represented in politics. We do not see that diversity of age, ethnicity and language. All those pieces are missing when we have a first-past-the-post system.

When I speak to young people, I always think that they should all be thinking about politics as a potential career, every one of them. We need more people who want to get engaged. We need more women and more diversity within our House of Commons. However, in the back of my mind, I always think it is really hard for women to engage. It is really divisive and hateful. We make it difficult for minority groups to participate, raise their concerns and raise their voices.

I always use child care as a perfect example of that. I mean no offence to my colleagues who are older white men, but if we filled this place with old white men, would they care as much about child care as a young woman with small children would? Do we not think that there is some recognition that a 16-year-old who is going to be living on this planet a lot longer than me, or any other member, would care more about climate justice and climate change than somebody who is wrapping up their career?

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

**Ms. Heather McPherson:** I am not naming names.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important. I want to end by quoting something we heard from the Edmonton chapter of Fair Vote Canada, which is “really worried about how toxic and divisive our political discourse is becoming. Many people we talk to don't even want to get involved because of it. There is more that holds us together than divides us, but our winner-takes-all voting system is holding us back from solving problems together. A non-partisan citizens' assembly is a way to bring Canadians into the conversation about making our democracy stronger. A Citizens' Assembly can engage Canadians across the country in a conversation about improving our democracy.”

Canadians want this; as representatives of Canadians, we should be making sure that we are moving forward on it. I thank the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for all her important work on this.

[Translation]

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is an elephant in the room, and there is a mouse, but we are talking about the same thing. The elephant is some people's desire to see a reform of Canada's electoral system that would bring it closer to what is known as proportional representation. What is happening is that the elephant is trying to hide by disguising itself as a mouse in the hopes of going unnoticed.

*Private Members' Business*

Indeed, this motion is an attempt to leave the door open on a file that did not come to fruition about six years ago because of differences of opinion among the parties in the House concerning the system that should replace the current first-past-the-post system, as well as a lack of public interest in such a reform. I will explain.

In 2016, the Prime Minister asked me to chair the Special Committee on Electoral Reform, whose mandate was to do an in-depth study of the issue. That is one of the reasons I am so interested in today's debate. The committee held a series of hearings in Ottawa before touring the country to meet with Canadians where they live.

We crossed the country, stopping in every province and territory. In all, we visited 18 cities in three weeks, moving on to a new city each morning to hold hearings in the afternoon and evening, and starting again the next morning. Unfortunately, the hearings were not standing room only. Sometimes we heard enthusiastic and even passionate testimony in favour of reform. Sometimes people read prepared and almost identical texts, a sure sign of a well-coordinated campaign behind the scenes. In Victoria, the hall was full. In Quebec City, it was not.

I was able to reconnect with some of my former NDP colleagues, who had clearly come to present briefs in favour of proportional representation in support of their party's official position.

The committee did a remarkable job. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of its members, including the members for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston and Joliette, as well as the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who is currently a minister in the B.C. government. They worked with diligence and zeal.

We produced an exceptional report, which provides a list of electoral systems from which a democracy can choose based on its political culture. The report is even used today as a political science textbook.

Two weeks ago, I was hosted at Concordia University by Professor Donal Gill, an outspoken supporter of electoral reform. He told me that he used the committee's report in class.

• (1140)

[English]

Unfortunately, the committee could not agree on a replacement for the current first-past-the-post system. Conservatives preferred the status quo. The NDP and Greens wanted PR. Liberals have always favoured the preferential ballot.

One practical issue that arose is that any major reform of the voting system would necessarily require a national referendum. I say in jest that, if one really loves this country, one does not wish a national referendum on it. If one has lived through two Quebec referenda, one has developed a healthy aversion to plebiscites on existential matters. In a country as vast as Canada, with a great diversity of deeply held regional perspectives, a referendum on a national scale on such a fundamental question can only lead to divisive results that further challenge national unity. No thanks.

Also, a national referendum would require a singular focus by the government when so many urgent issues of importance to Canadians abound and demand attention. One must remember that, at

the time the committee released its report, a major development was suddenly monopolizing the government's energies: the election of Donald Trump, who was bent on tearing up NAFTA. There are priorities.

The problem with our politics, in my humble view, is not the electoral system. Therefore, engineering it will not lead to the democratic renaissance we hope for.

Further, proportional representation is not a panacea for all that ails our politics. The real problem is the sad state of political discourse. We are losing the capacity to dialogue and reason with one another, because we cannot agree that a fact is a fact and because we judge the merits of people's views on whether they resemble us ideologically. It should not matter whether I like someone when it comes to recognizing the value of their experience or the merits of their argument.

That it does is the tragedy of our present-day politics, and I am not sure the splintering of voices in Parliament that could accompany proportional representation is the solution we are looking for. Big-tent politics that has flourished under our present system, a system that requires compromise, has its advantages.

Last, I do not believe that proportional representation is the solution to low voter turnout, especially among young people. Millennials can still be excited by a candidate and get out to vote in large numbers, regardless of the electoral system. We saw that in 2015. Rather, I suspect that low voter turnout is the product of a more and more individualistic and atomized culture. These days, personal agency seems a stronger value than collective action. Added to this are the facts that many problems seem too complex and intractable, and that big corporations and technologies, especially digital ones, seem more powerful and faster moving than governments.

When it comes to motivating young people to vote, I find that the traditional appeal to duty is no longer as effective as it was with older generations, especially those who have seen and lived through the sacrifice of war. When I speak to young people about voting, I speak of a different kind of duty, a duty to self. The ethos of personal authenticity that prevails today has in some ways become the highest value, whether we are talking about musical artists expressing themselves through their own compositions, or people broadcasting their views on every little thing on social media. What I say, especially to younger people, is that if they really live by the credo of personal authenticity and view it as the highest form of personal integrity, then to be true to themselves, they must express their views at the ballot box, whether it changes the electoral result or not.

I understand and respect the views of the member who has sponsored the motion in good faith and out of real concern for our democracy. However, I do not believe we need to revisit electoral reform at this time.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank and congratulate the principal analysts from the Library of Parliament who were assigned to the committee and who produced such an incredible report, which, as I said before in my speech, is still being used today as a textbook in political science classes. I am speaking of Dara Lithwick and Erin Virgint, who were really exceptional.

• (1145)

[Translation]

I would also like to commend Christine Lafrance, clerk of the committee, for her unsurpassed professionalism. She is an outstandingly effective and experienced clerk. With Ms. Lafrance at the helm, it was smooth sailing all the way.

[English]

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, proportional representation is fundamentally about ensuring Parliament reflects how people voted. It is about upholding each citizen's right to equal treatment under election laws and equal representation in our democracy. Unfortunately, our current electoral system, first past the post, is outdated and unfair. It does not accurately represent how people voted; creates false majorities results in barriers to participation for women, racially marginalized and other equity-deserving groups; and results in worse outcomes for everyday people, including on things like the environment, the economy, health and tackling inequality. At a time when people are struggling to make ends meet and when we are witnessing the devastating impacts of the climate crisis and increasingly divisive politics, we need to ask whether our current system serving Canadians. I would say no.

Before getting into politics, I taught political sociology at the University of Victoria. I also lectured in political science classes on the topic of electoral reform, and I co-hosted a television program called *Voting for Change?*, which brought experts, elected officials and community leaders on to discuss proportional representation.

It is clear to me that proportional representation is more fair, more effective and a more engaging democratic system. Canadians would benefit from this change. However, regardless of which electoral system one prefers, the process of engaging Canadians in a citizens' assembly is one that everyone should be able to get behind.

Of course, the Liberal Party does not want this, because it reminds people that the Prime Minister failed to deliver on his promise to reform our electoral system. He made a firm and unequivocal commitment, which he and his team repeated over 1,800 times, telling Canadians that 2015 would be the last election under first past the post. Canadians believed this promise, and it would have been the right thing to do. However, it was one of the first of many promises to Canadians that he would break. Over the past eight years, the Liberals have shown that they are more interested in maintaining power and the status quo than in ensuring that every vote counts.

### *Private Members' Business*

Canadians deserve leaders who follow through on their promises, leaders who have a sense of integrity and leaders who are willing to listen to the voices of Canadians. Instead, we have a Prime Minister whom Canadians no longer trust and a party that has broken their trust so many times that people now joke that the worst thing for a policy is to be an explicit Liberal commitment; policies have a much better chance if they are unspoken vested interests of wealthy Liberal insiders. Trust has been broken, and this is why a citizens' assembly is such an important tool.

A citizens' assembly has legitimacy and public trust because it is independent, non-partisan and a representative body of citizens. Seventy-eight per cent of Canadians support the idea of striking a non-partisan, independent citizens' assembly on electoral reform, which is not surprising when Canadians are feeling disheartened by the polarization of politics. They are concerned about the health of Canada's democracy, and we are witnessing low voter turnout, as well as voter disengagement. Citizens' assemblies have been used successfully in Canada and in other countries around the world to tackle difficult issues through nuanced public deliberation. While 90% of Canadians want a Parliament that reflects how people voted, a citizens' assembly on electoral reform would give citizens a leadership role in building consensus on the specific model for electoral reform for Canada.

To me and to the majority of Canadians, it is clear that proportional representation is a fairer and more democratic system. It ensures that every vote counts and that all voices are heard. It would lead to a more representative government that truly reflects the diversity of our country; the research backs this up. Proportional systems have better representation of women, racialized groups, 2SLGBTQ+ folks and other equity-seeking groups. Canada has an embarrassingly low percentage of women in Parliament, and the House has never reflected the diversity of our country. However, there is an abundance of research showing how proportional representation increases representation of marginalized groups, creating new avenues of political power for groups traditionally denied fair access to power and representation. Representation matters. A true democracy is not just a system that represents the majority but also one that represents, upholds and protects the rights of minority folks.

• (1150)

Right now, when trans kids are facing such intense discrimination and hate from right-wing elected leaders, it is important we ensure that their voices are represented in Parliament. I want to tell trans kids that we see them, we hear them and we will stand with them.

*Private Members' Business*

Proportional representation also encourages parties to work together. Since no single party is likely to win a majority of seats in the legislature, it leads to more cooperation and compromise. Parties' being forced to work together leads to more inclusive policy-making. As they are forced to consider the views of other parties and their constituents, and enact more representative policies that reflect the needs and interests of a broader range of citizens, we get better policy.

It also helps governments avoid policy whiplash. Under the first-past-the-post system, we typically oscillate between two parties that frequently win false majorities. Policy whiplash happens when, in a polarized system, party A comes in and undoes the majority of policies of party B in order to start its own agenda. Then, when it is defeated, party B comes in and undoes all of the work of party A. This happens back and forth, to the detriment of citizens. It wastes bureaucratic resources and stalls progress that would support Canadians.

Proportional representation forces parties to work together, which helps reduce political polarization and gridlock. It can lead to more stable and effective governance as parties are less inclined to undo the work that has gone on before, when they were included in creating it. There is greater continuity because it requires greater consensus.

Overall, proportional representation can help create more inclusive, representative, and effective democracies. We have seen a glimpse of that when we have had minority parliaments in Canada. We would not have health care in Canada if it were not for a minority government forcing Lester B. Pearson to work across party lines with Tommy Douglas. We would not be rolling out dental care for the first time in Canada if New Democrats had not used our power in a minority government to force the Liberals to provide dental care. We get better policies when we work together.

I think one of the most compelling arguments for proportional representation is that people want to vote for what inspires them. They want to vote for the candidate who best aligns with the vision they have for the future. Unfortunately, our current system requires them often to vote for what they do not want. People want to see their vote count. It is part of the reason proportional representation increases voter turnout. Many people are strategically voting, but it is demotivating. Under our current first-past-the-post system, many Canadians feel that their vote does not matter. Proportional representation would ensure that every vote counts. It would allow a more diverse range of voices to be heard in Parliament. It would also encourage greater voter turnout, as people would feel their vote actually matters.

The Liberal government has claimed that proportional representation would lead to unstable minority governments. This is simply not true. Many countries around the world use proportional representation, and they have stable governments. In fact, the vast majority of OECD countries use the proportional system. Proportional representation can lead to more stable governments as parties are forced to work together.

I think we have all seen very clearly how our current first-past-the-post system has an incredible amount of divisive politics in it. Just look down to the United States to see, to put it mildly, an ex-

ample of a majority system with divisive politics. When designing a made-for-Canada proportional system, we also have the opportunity to make it more difficult for extremist parties to gain power, as we could set thresholds requiring parties to win a significant portion of the vote in order to gain seats in Parliament.

It is time for the Liberal government to stop making excuses and start listening to the voices of Canadians. We need a government that is committed to democratic reform and that is willing to take action to ensure that every vote counts. That is why I am joining the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith to call for a citizen's assembly on proportional representation. It is time for people to get on board and understand that Canadians deserve a voice. The government needs to listen.

Proportional representation is the future of democracy in Canada. Let us put in place a fairer system where Parliament truly reflects how people voted. Join me in calling for a citizen's assembly on proportional representation. Together we can create a more just and fair Canada.

● (1155)

**The Speaker:** The time has come for the member's right of reply.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith has the floor.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it has been such an honour to bring forward Motion No. 86 in the House of Commons and to have this vitally important debate around electoral reform.

Now more than ever we need all members of Parliament to work together to strengthen Canada's democracy to ensure those elected are representative of our communities and to encourage members of Parliament to work together to implement real solutions at the pace required to meet the emergent needs faced by Canadians.

People are struggling across this country like I have never seen before in my lifetime. An affordable, safe and adequate place to call home is out of reach for so many in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith and across the country. Too many are unable to provide for their families, seniors are unable to retire with dignity and people living with disabilities do not have anywhere near the supports they need to make ends meet.

To make matters worse, the impacts of the climate crisis are here, with extreme weather continuing to devastate communities across the country. I could continue listing the problems faced by Canadians for my entire speech, but because of limited time, I will say that for all these reasons we cannot keep doing things the way they have always been done.

We cannot allow the ever-increasing rise in divisive and adversarial politics we are seeing here in this very House to become the norm. This is not representative of who we are as Canadians.

[Translation]

That is not what Canadians want. Now more than ever, Canadians from coast to coast to coast tell me they want their elected representatives in Ottawa to collaborate with members from all the parties, engage in respectful debate when disagreements arise, and find solutions that serve the best interests of Canadians. That is what a true democracy looks like.

[English]

However, to get there we need to see representation that matches our communities.

As I have discussed in this House before, we have only 30% women elected in this House when women account for over 50% of the general population, and this is at the highest it has ever been. The same applies to Black Canadians, who make up only 2.6 % of those elected but 4.3% of the general population. Indigenous people, whose lands we are on today, hold 3.3 % of seats but make up 5% of the Canadian population. This needs to change, and soon.

To make positive changes, we need to ensure the votes cast by Canadians are truly represented by those elected in the House of Commons. Instead, we have seen a government have 100% of the power with just over 30% of the vote in the last election.

We all watched as the Liberals campaigned on a commitment to move forward with electoral reform time and time again, which has collected cobwebs ever since, with little movement and no action taken to date. This inaction has been met with silence on the issue by the Conservatives.

It is not too late for all parties to come together and do what is right. It is time we give Canadians the tools required to move forward in a positive direction, to take partisanship out of the equation and to see solutions put forward that are not based on the next election but the long-term best interest of everyday Canadians.

Canadians across the country are reaching out to their members of Parliament asking for the implementation of a national citizens' assembly on electoral reform. Canadians are asking for the work to be done by an independent, non-partisan and representative body of citizens to bring forward real, made-in-Canada solutions to ensure Canada's democracy is strong and those elected are representative of the vibrant diversity that makes our country the incredible place it is.

Canadians are sharing with me that the debate we are having today and the vote to follow on electoral reform has given them hope. It has given them hope that, as Canadians, we can come together and agree that strengthening our democracy is the responsibility of each of us and hope that we can envision and create a better future. Canadians have spoken, and have said loudly that this is a priority.

Bringing this motion forward and seeing the response from Canadians across the country has been incredible as I watched floods of volunteers knocking on doors, making phone calls and getting signatures on petitions and bringing them forward to mem-

bers of Parliament seeking their support on this motion. Much of this work was made possible through FairVote Canada, its tireless volunteers and so many volunteers across the country.

I want to thank all those who have participated and continue to contribute to this important work. To quote Helen Keller, "Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much."

● (1200)

[Translation]

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

[English]

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.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:** Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

● (1205)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 7, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### FIRST NATIONS CLEAN WATER ACT

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.)** moved that Bill C-61, an act respecting water, source water, drinking water, wastewater and related infrastructure on first nation lands, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, it is with great privilege that I rise today to speak to Bill C-61, the first nations clean water act, at second reading.

Upon its introduction to this House on December 11, 2023, Chief Logan of Lheidli T'enneh First Nation said that its introduction was "huge for our nation to see a light at the end of the tunnel." That day, I was joined by first nations partners and federal colleagues to present a bill that reflects the collective vision for a future of safe drinking water and first nations communities, which is work that began with our government's commitment in 2015.

### *Government Orders*

Today, we take an important step forward to ensure that all first nations will have clean drinking water in their communities for generations to come. This bill honours our commitment, not only to first nations but to all Canadians. It would bring us even closer to reaching parity of access to clean drinking water in first nations and non-first nations communities and it would ensure that first nations are in control of their water and their future.

First, let us remember where we came from. Last year, the government officially repealed the 2013 Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act. First nations across the country had been asking for this since before the bill was even introduced. Why? The members of the Harper government never considered including the voices or perspectives of first nations when it drafted that legislation. To them, this was a problem to be solved, an issue to be managed.

The Conservative bill set rigorous water quality standards for first nations communities, but then allowed the Harper government to systemically ignore and underfund water systems for a decade. It enabled the Harper Conservative government, including the current leader, to put the blame on first nations for failing to deliver on a promise that they never agreed to in the first place. This kind of anti-indigenous racism has been baked into our institutions since they were established. First nations saw the Harper-era legislation for what it was: cynical, political and useless.

This kind of approach changed when we ran in 2015 because we made a promise to first nations and to all Canadians that we would do things differently. We committed to repealing and replacing the Conservative water bill, legislation so hated by first nations that partners called for its repeal before it was passed; and we committed to creating new law to protect water for first nations in true nation-to-nation partnership.

Since 2015, we have met extensively with first nations leaders and communities. We have listened to concerns and priorities and we have shared in this work with partners, with class action litigants, with rights holders and with first nations communities from coast to coast to coast. The AFN stated that, “The bill is the first of its kind to be introduced since the passage of the UN Declaration Act.” Article 19 of the declaration requires states to consult and co-operate with indigenous peoples before adopting legislative measures that affect them. It requires us to do things differently and to deeply consider what consultation and co-operation actually mean.

Hundreds of consultations were held with first nations communities and partners to shape this proposed law and address key priorities identified by first nations. The work of consultations began in 2018 and it consisted of multiple engagements in a variety of approaches. These formal conversations led to the extensive work on the bill we see today. This is reflected in feedback like we have recently heard from the Blackfoot Confederacy chiefs and Treaty 7, who have said recently, “The government clearly listened to the concerns of the Blackfoot Nations regarding the final consultation draft of the legislation and made significant changes to [the bill].... It is for this reason that our nations support...Bill C-61.”

• (1210)

[Translation]

As we are often reminded by elders, knowledge-keepers and many people across the country, water is life. Water is the foundation of community well-being and health. As we all know, we need to do more to protect first nations' water sources.

[English]

Some partners shared with me how powerful it was to see their words, their feedback, reflected in our way forward. On the day the bill was tabled, Chief Erica Beaudin of Cowessess First Nation said, “I believe today is historic; not only because the bill has been introduced, but because it is the start of that day where our children will be born with the regulations that are needed.” This is truly a historic moment for law development in Canada.

Throughout this consultation and in my visits to first nations, I have heard the many ways first nations people have suffered through imposed law that undermines their safety, their culture, their connection to the land and water, and the deep sorrow and damage to their ancestors and children as a result, but Canada has committed to do better, to be a better partner in protecting this land, this water and this country together. It will be by working together like this that we advance legislation that restores power, self-determination and tools of equity for healing to occur and for the true potential of all people of this land to prosper. With the newly passed United Nations declaration act, there will be many more opportunities to use and improve on collaboration in law making in the future.

The Assembly of First Nations led the call for the repeal of the Harper bill, and through its extensive work it identified five key issues that would need to be included in any new legislation. They are as follows: Affirm first nations' inherent rights to manage their water systems; create the tools first nations need to protect their source waters; hold governments accountable to invest the funding needed for water infrastructure; codevelop minimum standards for clean drinking water; and support the creation of a first nations-led water institution. Each of these five areas is significantly addressed in this bill, and the AFN now says it is confident that the proposed legislation addresses one of the most critical priorities of first nations: ensuring safe and clean drinking water and adequate waste water.

Bill C-61 recognizes and affirms the inherent right of first nations to self-government, including jurisdiction in relation to water, source water, drinking water, waste water and related infrastructure on, in and under first nations lands. The proposed legislation would also establish rights-based regulatory pathways to protect water and source-water adjacent to first nations lands. This would be done in consultation and co-operation with first nations, other federal ministers, provinces and territories to protect drinking water sources that flow onto first nations lands. It would commit the federal government to working with first nations to ensure they have the tools they need to protect the lakes and the rivers that feed water systems.

[Translation]

Bill C-61 supports the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, including by applying the principle of free, prior and informed consent.

[English]

The bill would strengthen funding commitments to providing adequate and sustainable funding for water services on first nations lands comparable to services received in non-first nations communities. The bill would establish minimum national standards for drinking water and waste-water services on first nations land based on the choices of first nations themselves. It would help ensure that first nations have reliable access to drinking water and waste-water services on first nations lands in a manner that is comparable to services available to those living in non-first nations communities. It would also ensure that first nations are involved in making the decisions related to their drinking water and waste-water services. The government would have to consult and co-operate with first nations when making funding allocation decisions and developing federal regulations.

[Translation]

Federal regulations governing drinking water, waste water and related infrastructure on first nation lands would ensure that all first nations have effective regulations for their drinking water.

[English]

At the same time, the bill would support first nations in exercising their inherent right to self-government by making first nations law paramount over federal regulations under the bill, should first nations choose. The bill would also facilitate water agreements, including transboundary source water protection agreements and bilateral financial agreements between first nations and Canada to support the exercise of first nations jurisdiction on first nations land. The bill would also require Canada to be an active partner in the creation of a first nations water commission that would support first nations in exercising greater control over drinking water and waste-water services on first nations land.

In short, the bill would put first nations in the front when it comes to making decisions on clean drinking water. First nations peoples have always known the importance of protecting the lakes and rivers that give life to us all. They should be the ones making these important regulations to protect water for their communities. They should have the power to develop clean drinking water stan-

dards, and they should have the funding they need to do this work along with the tools that enable it to be done.

• (1215)

It is not one thing that will protect water for generations; it is many. This bill addresses the key elements first nations have identified that they need to do this work. It is also why the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority is supportive of its introduction. As Chief Wilbert Marshall said, it is a unique opportunity for first nations to control their service, critical to the socio-economic and environmental well-being of their communities.

Aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, this legislation was developed through engagements that put first nations voices at the centre. In fact, we shared two draft versions of the bill with every community across the country to get their feedback. We also posted it online. With the extensive feedback through many sources, it has been first nations voices that have led the process, pushing the federal government to examine itself and its ways to evolve toward true partnership in law creation.

[Translation]

This is a first for Indigenous Services Canada. I would like to thank everyone who reviewed the bill, provided their feedback and helped us develop and strengthen it.

[English]

Even though many first nations partners have expressed their support for Bill C-61, the process of review and debate is important to ensure the law is as strong as it can be to achieve its goal of clean water access for generations to come. This stage of the legislation process is equally important, and we will debate this bill. We will hear from first nations voices in committee, and we will be ready to make amendments, guided first and foremost by the voices and experiences of first nations partners.

It is with this spirit that I hope all members will debate this bill: through the lens of self-determination and honour of the commitments Canada has made to first nations people and communities, yet has often failed to meet. Right now, first nations do not have the power or resources to protect or monitor the water flowing into their communities, and the result has been generations of loss, damage, illness, grief and even death.

### *Government Orders*

Last year, I visited with Tataskweyak Cree Nation in northern Manitoba. I met with elders, educators and members of the Tataskweyak to hear about their love for Split Lake, a body of water that almost entirely surrounds their community. I heard about their history of playing, drinking and enjoying the lake in the past, and their deep grief and anger about the poisoning of the water through decades of industrial pollution. The water is so damaged that it now cannot be used to bath with and swim in, let alone drink. The community routinely sees dead animals in the lake, adding to the grief and distress they feel living so close to a once vibrant and alive body of water.

We have worked hard with the community to find an alternative water source at a neighbouring lake, which has meant building a 44-kilometre water pipeline to the nearest clean source of water. However, even with this new source, members are distrustful of the safety of their water supply, and they worry about the spread of contamination to the wildlife in the region, which is an important food source and part of the circle of life. No people should have to live with such fear of their water and such grief of the loss of this most essential element of life.

[Translation]

While the provinces and territories have laws and regulations governing the provision of drinking water, there are no similar regulations for first nations on first nation lands.

[English]

When the federal Liberal government took office in 2015, there were 105 long-term boil water advisories in effect. Sadly, given the decade of neglect under the Harper Conservatives, this was not surprising. Indeed, funding for operations was significantly below provincial levels, making it hard for communities to train and retain water operators.

Since then, the federal Liberal government has increased funding for water infrastructure by 150%, and the number of long-term water advisories has gone down by 73%. We have also worked together to prevent hundreds of short-term advisories from becoming long-term. Today, 96% of first nations communities do not have a long-term water advisory.

Even still, as Chief Moonias just recently told me from Neskan-taga, trust of water is hard to find when a person has lived their whole life without confidence in its safety. We must continue our efforts to improve long-term access to clean drinking water for first nations. We can see a light at the end of the tunnel with the majority of long-term advisories on a clear path to a lift.

• (1220)

We can never go back to an arbitrary and opaque system of first nations water protection. First nations have the inherent right to clean water, like we all do, and this bill would enshrine the tools needed to ensure Canada honours its commitments as a true partner in protecting drinking water for future generations to come. It is the first law in our country to be developed in such a collaborative way with first nations. I truly believe the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the development of law will mean better outcomes for all Canadians.

I look forward to each member's reflections on how to continue this inclusion as we debate this bill together, and I call on all parties to join me in moving forward with the first nations clean water act, because as Chief Beaudin said, "Indigenous people, indigenous children deserve to be conceived, born and die drinking clean water."

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois applauds the introduction of this bill.

It is pretty unbelievable, not to say absurd, that in 2024 we still need to pass legislation to ensure that first nations across Canada have access to clean drinking water. Canada is not a developing country. It is a G7 country. Nearly 20% of the world's freshwater reserves are in Canada. It is extremely surprising that in 2024 more has not been done about this.

The Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act has been criticized ever since it was adopted in 2013 and even before that, as the minister said. I wonder why it has taken so long for the government, which came to power in 2015, to introduce this bill.

In 2017, water was tested in certain communities across Canada. In the community of Listuguj, back home, the water tested positive for lead. Indigenous Services Canada's suggestion was to let the water run.

What will this bill do to ensure that first nations have access to clean water?

[English]

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her passion for clean water. I share her dismay that this country, in many ways, has led to discriminatory policy and funding for first nations. In fact, that is why we are here today.

Discretionary funding for water safety has been part of the government's shameful legacy, and we are changing that with this legislation. In fact, not only would this legislation install tools and protection for first nations that are enforceable; it would also create the capacity and partnerships with provinces and territories that play a huge role in protecting the water that feeds first nations.

Finally, this law would enshrine the right for first nations people to have equitable funding, like that of non-indigenous communities, for the protection of their water sources, something that has been sorely lacking. First nations partners would have the ability to develop those funding models, together with the Government of Canada, to ensure that we never find ourselves in this situation again.

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the Liberal government has been in power for eight years. It is shameful that there are still indigenous communities without access to clean drinking water.

Also, February 6 is the one-year anniversary of the tailings ponds leak that impacted northern indigenous communities, first nations and Métis communities. It has been one year, and we know that Imperial Oil knew for years that there was leakage. There have been no charges and no accountability. Indigenous leaders have come to testify at the environment committee, and they have been calling for accountability for Imperial Oil and big corporations that pollute our waters.

When will the government stop letting big polluters like Imperial Oil off the hook, start listening to indigenous communities and protect their inherent right to clean water?

• (1225)

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Speaker, I would say that this legislation would establish the inherent right to clean water, and it would do more than that.

What it would also do is provide first nations with the tools to be able to monitor the source water that feeds their drinking water systems. That is work that we must do together with provinces and territories. This is collaborative work with multiple levels of jurisdiction that sets first nations on a pathway to have the tools to better detect when their water sources are polluted.

I too have met with the first nations deeply affected by the Imperial Oil spill. Part of the dismay is the worry, concern and fear that the water systems were contaminated for far longer than they knew about. This bill would make sure that situations like that are a thing of the past.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Madam Speaker, in listening to the minister here this morning talk about water advisories, the previous Conservative government left eight and a half years ago, and there are still over 100 water advisories on first nations. In my home province of Saskatchewan, I have seen reserves burn down water treatment plants because the Liberal government has done little or nothing. She can talk about the previous Harper government, but the current government has done very little in the last eight and a half years. I would like her to comment on the situation.

The other thing is that there needs to be education provided for people on reserve to operate these water treatment plants, which is part of the problem we have seen with the government over the last eight and a half years.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Speaker, trust a Conservative member to blame first nations people for burning down their own water treatment plants and for not being smart enough to be able to understand how to operate those plants. That is the kind of paternalism that led to 105 long-term boil water advisories. They were just not worth investing in, I guess.

First nations people have the dignity, the ability and the intelligence to be able to operate complex water systems. I have met water systems operators from across this country. One thing we had to change was the discriminatory funding for water operation in first

### *Government Orders*

nations left by the previous Conservative government. Of course, that meant as soon as people got training, they often left for better opportunities to support their families.

We changed that as a Liberal government. We actually created equity in the way water operators are funded on first nations compared to off first nations. However, there is more to do to combat attitudes like that across this country.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for Bill C-61. Ever since it was tabled in December, I have been looking forward to this debate to learn more about the bill. Certainly, as I read it in black and white, it recognizes sovereignty over infrastructure and the right to clean drinking water.

I do not say this in any way, shape or form to suggest that this is not properly thought through, but I am keen to know how we avoid, with training, infrastructure and all the benefits of settler culture privilege, what happened in Walkerton when the provincial government shut down the testing facility, and the water contained E. coli. It did not raise the alarm and people died.

We know that having safe, clean drinking water is the right of indigenous nations. How would the Liberal government ensure this process is adequately funded?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Speaker, first of all, let me say that I have travelled across this country and visited with first nations people in every province and territory. Universally, the conversation has always started with a deep recognition that water is indeed life, and in fact, water itself has life and is an important element of being custodians and protectors of this planet we all call home.

I want to acknowledge the member's long-standing work on protecting the environment. I am glad she is looking at the bill so closely in her usual fashion.

I will say that the second important element of the five elements in the bill actually commits the Government of Canada to ensure that first nations have the resources and the funding they need to maintain and to operate their water systems, which would be inclusive of recruiting and training new water operators on an ongoing basis. The work on determining how to do that funding would be done and developed with first nations so that it would be truly a collaborative process, rather than one that would be dictated by the federal government to first nations.

*Government Orders*

• (1230)

**Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I first want to congratulate the minister on her work and the speech she shared with us today.

I think some of the important work that has taken place over the last eight years comes from the separation of what was formerly known as Indigenous and Northern Affairs into Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, as well as Indigenous Services Canada.

I also appreciated the minister's comments with respect to recognizing the value and importance of a nation-to-nation relationship and having first nations and indigenous peoples as part of the decision-making, because the way we move forward really has to come from a better recognition of what we have done in the past, and I think we have to recognize that we have not always done it well.

I would like to hear her comments on some of the publicly available data when it comes to water advisories, as well as the importance of seeing this legislation thoroughly debated and moving it forward as quickly as possible.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Madam Speaker, I would say that Canadians are seized with the need for all first nations to have access to clean water. That is why we have a transparency tracker on the Government of Canada website that can delineate all the remaining 28 long-term boil water advisories and at what stage they are in terms of the work needed to deliver clean water. Most projects are either in the construction stage or waiting for the comfort of chief, council and community to lift that advisory. There are a few who are still determining the best approach.

I would say that it is important to understand the difference in the attitude about sovereignty and indigenous inherent rights between our government and the Conservatives. We heard the member opposite and his shameful comments just a few moments ago. That reflects the overall comment that many people have about the opposition party right now.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Madam Speaker, today I rise to speak to Bill C-61, an act respecting water, source water, drinking water, waste water and related infrastructure on first nation lands, which I will hereafter refer to as the first nations clean water act.

I want to first comment on what the minister just spoke about. She likes to hurl insults, but she is part of a government that has refused to meet with 133 Ontario chiefs, many of whom are in her own riding, to talk about relief from the carbon tax. One reason they had to move to court action was that the government would not meet with them. Talk about the height of "Ottawa knows best". There are 133 chiefs, like I said, many of whom are in the minister's own riding. She refused to meet with those chiefs, and now, court action has started. That is peak colonialism, and the minister should be ashamed of herself.

Before I get into my speech on Bill C-61, I would like to take a few moments to acknowledge my colleague and friend, the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, who recently stepped down from his role as shadow minister for Indigenous Services Canada. We all know the member. He has a great vision for this

file. He wears his heart on his sleeve, and he truly believes in reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Canada. We all know him for his soft-spoken demeanour, his sense of humour and his well-thought-out and articulated positions on indigenous issues. He is someone we really want to listen to when speaking about his file.

I have learned a lot from the member. I know he has really taken this file to heart. He told me he will continue to meet with stakeholders. He values the information and knowledge he has gained from the wisdom of those stakeholders and from the experiences he has had on this file. He said that he will remember those for the rest of his life.

I would also be remiss if I did not thank the member's staff or give them a mention at least. Dion works in the constituency office but is heavily involved in this file in Ottawa quite often. Emalie and Linnae put a lot of effort into this file. Their hearts are in it. I could not be more thankful for the opportunity I have been given to work with the member and his staff.

Moving on to Bill C-61, Canada, as a whole, is blessed with clean, fresh and safe drinking water. It is home to 20% of the world's fresh water and 7% of its renewable water supply, yet safe, clean drinking water has been unavailable for many indigenous communities. The history of Canada's efforts or perhaps "challenges", in a better word, with respect to addressing the long- and short-term boil water advisories has been one plagued with the inability to get it done.

I am not necessarily speaking to the efforts of one government or another. It is quite clear that all governments today share part of the responsibility in this failure. That is not to say that there were not earnest efforts or, in the case of the current government, are earnest efforts to address this issue, but we know that the efforts in general continue to rely on the archaic and paternalistic Ottawa-knows-best way of doing things. That is what is at the heart of the matter.

This failure is our collective fault, and the worst thing we can do is continue to rely exclusively on public servants, in some cases thousands of kilometres from the problems, to make decisions needed to solve them. It is my hope, and surely something I will be focusing on at committee, that Bill C-61 would address this approach. We look to indigenous-led solutions in partnership with surrounding communities and with all levels of government to ensure, once and for all, that safe, clean drinking water is available to indigenous communities.

The history of the indigenous water crisis is a long one that truly did not start garnering attention until after the tragedy in Walkerton or the contamination in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. In 2001, the then Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development began to survey water and waste water systems in indigenous communities across Canada “to establish a baseline of information regarding existing drinking water infrastructure”. The assessment covered “740 drinking water systems serving 691 First Nations communities, finding that nearly 30 per cent” were water systems with “potential health and safety concerns...46 per cent” were systems requiring “some repairs” and only a quarter were considered “low risk”, experiencing “minimal” issues “without any problems”.

• (1235)

The figures at the time estimated the problems could be fixed for approximately \$1.6 billion. Based on those survey results, in 2003, “the Government of Canada announced the First Nations Water Management strategy”. It was “the first comprehensive plan to tackle drinking water in wastewater systems within First Nations communities.” The plan allocated \$1.6 billion between 2003 and 2008 to address seven key areas: “infrastructure upgrades...improved monitoring and reporting...enhanced [operating and maintenance]...increased training...new water quality management protocols...enhanced public awareness; and... new standards, policies and protocols”.

While a “2009 Health Canada report noted that the strategy led to an improved understanding of the challenges plaguing [indigenous] communities...and allowed for faster and more coordinated responses to emerging water issues”, it did not, according to a 2005 report by the commissioner for the environment and sustainable development, provide the same safeguards on drinking water that existed “off reserves”. The conclusion was that a lack of a regulatory regime for indigenous communities, “failure to carry out testing” and a “lack of...technical support...for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of water systems” had to be addressed if the water crisis were to be fixed.

In 2006, “the Government of Canada launched the Plan of Action for First Nations Drinking Water”. The plan of action was built on the first nations water management strategy “and committed an additional \$60 million between 2006 and 2008 to...address the findings of the 2005 Commissioner's report.” The plan of action included the creation of an “expert panel”, which found a number of issues that had yet to be addressed by Canada, including that “adequate resources — for...training...operations and maintenance — are more critical to ensuring safe drinking water than is regulation alone” and that a gap existed “between the federal government's cost estimates and the actual amount of funding needed to bring First Nations drinking water systems up to...standard”.

The next step forward came in 2008 with the introduction of the first nations water and wastewater action plan...An additional \$330 million was allocated to support [the action plan], which reinforced the [2006 plan] while adding new objectives, including a commitment to consult with [indigenous communities] on new legislation as well as the commissioning of a national engineering assessment of the status of First Nations water systems across the country.

The resulting report, released in 2011, demonstrated that, while Canada had a much better understanding of the water issues in indigenous communities, only marginal progress had been made since 1995.

### *Government Orders*

In 2013, the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act was created by the government to support the development of federal regulations to improve first nations' access to clean, reliable drinking water and effective treatment of waste water.

According to the Office of the Auditor General...“[b]etween 1995 and 2003, the federal government spent about \$1.9 billion to help First Nations communities provide safe drinking water and wastewater services.” A further \$600 million was committed in Budget 2003 to support the [plan]...between 2006 and 2014 the federal government “invested approximately \$3 billion towards water and wastewater infrastructure and related public health activities to support First Nation communities in managing their water and wastewater systems.” From 2015 to the present, the federal government has spent over \$5.7 billion “to build and repair at least 123 new water and wastewater plants, repair or upgrade 658 others, and support the effective management and maintenance of water systems.”

As I mentioned before, this is an issue that has been the responsibility of successive governments from both sides of the aisle. Clearly, the issue is not spending money, with over \$11 billion having been spent by successive government to address the problem. As I alluded to earlier in my speech, we have to look at the way we have been doing things that address the issue. It is time for a new approach.

Now I turn to Bill C-61. We should ask ourselves if this is the new approach we need. I can assure members that that will be the fundamental question that will need to be answered, and in the affirmative, by indigenous leaders at committee if this bill is to succeed. Bill C-61 looks to do a number of things, including affirming and recognizing “that the inherent right to self-government, recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, includes the jurisdiction of First Nations in relation to water, source water, drinking water, wastewater and related infrastructure on, in and under First Nation lands” and setting our principles and provisions to address issues related to first nations clean and safe drinking water, and waste-water treatment and disposal on first nations.

*Government Orders*

● (1240)

The bill also seeks to create a new first nations-led water commission, as promised, that would monitor water in communities, help them obtain legal advice and make recommendations to federal, provincial and territorial governments where required. As well, subject to the wishes of a first nations governing body, drinking water quality and waste-water effluent would at least need to meet the federal guidelines and regulations, or the standards of the province or territory where the first nations lands are located, and seek to provide pathways to facilitate water protection by creating water protection zones for first nations, provinces and territories to come together to protect, manage and preserve water and source water.

In 2019, legal action was initiated against Canada in a proposed class action suit on behalf of all members of first nations and member resident on reserves that had a drinking water advisory for at least one year since 1995. On December 22, 2021, the Federal Court and the Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba issued a joint decision approving an agreement to settle the class action lawsuit.

The terms of the settlement agreement were announced on July 30, 2021, and included the following: “\$1.5 billion in compensation for individuals deprived of clean drinking water; the creation of a \$400 million First Nation Economic and Cultural Restoration Fund...a renewed commitment to Canada's Action Plan for the lifting of all long-term drinking water advisories...the creation of a First Nations Advisory Committee on Safe Drinking Water; support for First Nations to develop their own safe drinking water by-laws and initiatives; [and] a commitment of at least \$6 billion to support reliable access to safe drinking water on reserves”. A plan of “modernization of Canada's First Nations drinking water legislation” is included in that as well.

Bill C-61 specifically requires the Government of Canada to provide funding that, at a minimum, meets the expenditures set out in the 2021 settlement agreements. This commitment is \$6 billion to be spent between June 20, 2021, and March 31, 2030, to address short- and long-term water advisories. As of May 2023, there were officially a total of 31 long-term drinking advisories in Canada, impacting 27 indigenous communities. This number, of course, has fluctuated over the years and, in some cases, communities have gone off only to be put back on a short time later.

One of the most glaring deficiencies in Canada's approach to safe water for indigenous communities has always been a proper identification and capture of the full picture with respect to unsafe water sources in indigenous communities. Part of the problem is the exclusion of public water systems that the federal government has not given funding. It also does not account for long-term advisories in the territories. A full accounting, taking in these omissions from the official numbers, brings the current total across Canada as high as 55. The lack of consistent and transparent data collection regarding water advisories makes it almost impossible to get a clear picture of the extent of the problem across the country.

For those who may be listening who may not understand what a water advisory is and why it is so fundamentally important to the health of communities, advisories can be issued by a local government, first nation or public health authority when drinking water quality has been or may have been compromised to the point where

its consumption poses a risk to public health. Water quality can be adversely impacted as a result of a number of factors, including such conditions as contaminated groundwater or aquifers supplying wells, the presence of bacteria such as *E. coli*, unacceptable concentrations of harmful chemicals or pesticides, problems with inadequate filtration or malfunctioning equipment or failing to meet the clean drinking water guidelines in Canada.

Numbers can be misleading, and as I mentioned just a few moments ago, many communities continue to hop on and off these water advisories. For instance, five of the 90 first nations communities in which long-term drinking water advisories have been lifted since 2015 have had new long-term drinking water advisories issued since 2019. Two of those communities have had their previous long-term drinking water advisories in place for over 15 years. An additional 12 long-term drinking water advisories are in effect in Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick for first nations water systems that are not subsidized by the federal government, along with 10 long-term drinking water advisories in British Columbia. Also, we cannot forget the north where the Northwest Territories and Nunavut each have one long-term drinking water advisory in effect.

● (1245)

If Bill C-61 is to be successful, there will have to be a complete review and overhaul of how we account for water quality advisories. One of the other concerns about Bill C-61 that must be addressed at committee is the government's approach to consultation on the bill.

Many first nation leaders, including the AFN, were involved in the process to develop the legislation and will support it. I believe it has been a long time coming, yet not all first nations leaders agree, and there seems to be a growing chorus of voices from first nations communities opposed to the legislation, mainly stating that it was not co-developed or does not have their support. It will be important to hear from those leaders to hear and address the concerns they may have with Bill C-61.

Furthermore, there are a number of other questions that must be explored at committee, including that some communities face extensive barriers to long-term access to safe drinking water, barriers that are unfortunately not solved by money alone.

What are those barriers and how can we partner with indigenous communities to overcome them? Keeping in mind the close spiritual and historical connection with the land, is relocation an option for communities in extreme conditions where no matter of money will provide a long-term solution? If that is an option, what does that look like for an indigenous community? How do we solve the issue of transparency and ensure data is current and relevant and provides a real picture of the water situation?

Long-term operation and maintenance continues to be an ongoing impediment to safe water access. A limited number of trained staff, and in some cases no trained staff, for remote locations beg the question of how we solve critical staffing issues. Perhaps there is potential to explore regional solutions, or shared water management systems that provide a sharing of personnel and resources.

We must also look at the aggravating or mitigating factors limiting access to clean drinking water, such as remoteness, overcrowded communities and areas with poor to no access to water. We need to understand one solution does not always fit all in these situations.

Lastly, what role can technology play? Are remotely operated plants an option? Do we have that kind of technology or the infrastructure available in Canada? We need to hear from witnesses who can speak to those potential solutions.

Conservatives agree clean drinking water is a basic necessity of life. We must work with provinces, territories, municipalities and indigenous communities to develop a real solution with an agreed upon timeline to deliver access to safe drinking water to all communities.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, today we are debating substantial legislation dealing with water. I wanted to highlight that, as a legislature, we often have substantive pieces of legislation before us. This morning, the focus is on Bill C-61, and later this afternoon we will be debating at third reading the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement, both of which are substantial pieces of legislation. There is a finite amount of time and a desire to see good legislation pass in a timely fashion, so we are hoping the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement will pass this afternoon. We are also hoping to see the Conservatives put a high priority on this legislation. I am wondering if the member can give a clear indication of what sort of time frame he would like to see before this bill goes to committee.

• (1250)

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in my speech, this piece of legislation, Bill C-61, is an important step forward and something that has support from organizations such as the AFN. Others do have some questions they would like asked, and we will get to that in the committee process.

As for the actual time schedule, it is the government that controls the agenda in the House. We are at its mercy. It is really up to its members and their priorities. I notice something with other pieces of legislation, such as the indigenous-led legislation we just finished up in committee today, Bill C-53. That legislation, on self-governance concerning Métis in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alber-

ta, was promised for months and brought in at the dying days of the session before the break in June.

This piece of legislation, Bill C-61, was again promised for months. I do not know what the delay was on the government's side. I do not know what it was. I believe the delay has been over six months, when we could have been discussing this or even bringing it to committee, and perhaps even passing it at third reading. Again, it is the government putting up these roadblocks. We would like to see what timetable it has in mind.

[Translation]

**Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. Bill C-61 is important. The Kitcisakik reserve, which is in my riding, does not even have clean drinking water. I recently visited Kuujuaq. It has no water that is safe to drink. The reservoir is very old, even in Nunavik. The government therefore needs to take action on principle, considering that there is a lot of water, but no adequate infrastructure.

What does the government claim to be doing, and what does my colleague think about it?

[English]

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, it is still shameful that this kind of situation still goes on in our country. I know the member shared a story of a long-term boil water advisory in her riding. The riding of Kenora has had the longest boil water advisory in history, for well over 10,000 days now. It has been in effect since 1995.

That was the heart of my speech. The Ottawa-knows-best approach is clearly not working. With all the technology and brainpower available, we still have boil water advisories. The fact that we are able to solve this and we have not is not beyond me. This tells me that the structure and the status quo itself is not working. If we can address that symptom, I think then, with more indigenous-led solutions, we can actually get this problem fixed.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I always appreciate what the member has to share. I also appreciate that he did list some of the court case settlements. However, I want to ask about source water protection and who has the authority. I know that there have been discussions about whether first nations should have the authority to discuss source water, be it municipal, provincial or federal.

I wonder if he could share his thoughts on what this would mean and why it should be discussed in committee.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, I take it that INAN committee has wrapped up, because the member for Nunavut is in this place continuing to work hard for her constituents.

*Government Orders*

This is one of the things I wanted to highlight, and I should have focused more time on it. Those discussions need to take place. We address it, and Bill C-61 does touch on it, by including those voices and those conversations, especially when the bill talks about source water. I spoke about it a bit. I will make a note to speak on it a little more, but one of the things we will address in committee are issues like that.

• (1255)

**Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague highlighted the fact of the timeline on the bill. The government has promised and floated the bill for a long period of time. It is troubling because this is part of the track record of the government, of talking about something and then putting it on everyone else when it has failed to schedule the time.

The member highlighted some organizations in some communities. I know some first nations are quite concerned about the bill, about the fact that they were not consulted and what that means for them. I am wondering if you could highlight what you are hoping to achieve through committee.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member needs to address all questions and comments through the Chair, not directly to the member.

The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, I want to commend my friend, the member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, for her work with first nations and Métis communities in her riding. She is a tremendous champion for those voices, and I know those communities appreciate all her knowledge and willingness to continue to learn on this file. It is not a file that should be taken lightly. I know she takes it very seriously and really digs in, and I appreciate that.

She could not be more bang on with her comment. The government, like with many other pieces of legislation, waited until the last second to bring this in. The legislation, as she mentioned, was promised for six months and counting. Bill C-53, the Métis self-government legislation, was brought in during the dying seconds of the sitting before we adjourned in June. We could even go back to the Whitecap Dakota treaty, which was also brought in during the dying days.

Again, it is a growing concern. On the one hand, the government says that the indigenous file is the most important relationship. However, on the other hand, it drops these pieces of legislation at the last second or in the dying days of Parliament.

First nations communities deserve more than that. We should be promoting them front and centre. Unfortunately the government says one thing and does the other.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I appreciated the speech of the hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. I could not quite decipher between the lines on whether he would vote for the legislation at second reading to get it to committee. Would he know if this would be the position of his caucus?

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that we will be voting in favour of this at second reading.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am concerned with many of the comments the member made about the lack of consultation. In fact, there have been considerable consultations, even representations from AFN at today's introduction of the legislation itself.

Could he provide his comments as to why the government should not work with AFN and the many different chiefs and others to ensure that we get it right? We are confident in the legislation today because of all the inputs in consultations?

**Mr. Jamie Schmale:** Madam Speaker, unfortunately I did not catch the whole segment of the member's question. It was about the AFN. I think I did say that there should be consultation within all groups.

The AFN, as I did point out, was in favour. However, at the same time, if we want to listen to the AFN, we should also listen to it when it talks about the carbon tax and the 133 chiefs of Ontario who want relief from the carbon tax. The Northwest Territories premiers are now calling for a break from the carbon tax. Let us start listening to those indigenous voices and axe the tax.

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, it is with deep humility and a great sense of responsibility that I take up the torch today for indigenous relations and the development of the north and its regions within the Bloc Québécois.

First, I would like to salute my hon. colleague from Manicouagan for her outstanding dedication and hard work on behalf of the indigenous nations of Quebec and Canada over the years.

I am committed to working closely with indigenous communities in the years to come and making progress in strengthening their rights and autonomy while fostering equitable nation-to-nation relations, and I am committed to following in the footsteps of my colleague from Manicouagan.

Before turning to the bill at hand, I also want to give a shout-out to the participants of the second edition of the First Nations Expedition, who are, as we speak, about to set off from Témiscaming or Kebaowek. The participants will cover a total of 3,250 kilometres by snowmobile on their way to Wendake, passing through Mash-teuiatsh, Rouyn-Noranda, where they stopped the day before yesterday, Maniwaki, Saint-Michel-des-Saints, and many other places.

I went to Témiscaming yesterday to meet up with them. Politicians from Témiscamingue of all stripes, so to speak, came out to salute the courage of the participants in this second edition. Participants were selected based on their heightened awareness of the indigenous causes supported by the expedition, as well as their thirst and curiosity to learn more about indigenous nations.

I want draw attention to the two men who came up with the idea. The first is Christian Flamand, an Atikamekw man who spoke passionately yesterday about his commitment and the depth of his convictions. The second is Derek Jeremy Einish, a Naskapi man. Both are motivated by the principles of reconciliation, friendship, respect, solidarity and courage.

The aim of the expedition is to pay tribute to children who attended residential schools, missing and murdered indigenous women, Joyce Echaquan, whose name has come up several times, and children who were taken from their families at birth.

To segue into my thoughts on the bill, I will start by saying hello to a representative of the Naskapi Nation of Kawawachikamach, Billy Shecanapish. We met yesterday and he told me that he has spent his life advocating for water and working with water in indigenous communities. I think that is the perfect segue. I want to say hello to Billy and all those participating in the First Nations Expedition.

For indigenous communities, water is not just about staying hydrated, nor is it simply a commodity or resource. Water is considered sacred, because it is a source of life, knowledge and rights. Water is considered a living entity, with a spirit of its own. Human beings have a responsibility to protect and care for this vital resource from mother earth. In short, water is a symbol of indigenous sovereignty.

That is why I am rising today in the House to speak to Bill C-61, an act respecting water, source water, drinking water, wastewater and related infrastructure on first nation lands. After first reading of this bill, I think it is too soon to give my opinion on it, since the first nations are not all in agreement. We still have a lot of questions about the consultations that were held with first nations and about many of the bill's provisions.

When all of that is put together, it may not have the original intended effect. By way of observation, the notion of co-development, when the government and its main partners are not in agreement, says a lot about the current process. With all due respect, this also happened with Bill C-53, so perhaps the government needs to review the mechanism it uses for consulting with first nations in order to make it truly inclusive and have a real dialogue.

On the surface, Bill C-61 may appear to be a long-awaited response to the ongoing equality issues related to access to water for indigenous people in Quebec and Canada, but the devil is in the details.

I want to talk about the basics of the right to drinking water. Access to a safe, clean source of drinking water is fundamental to life. Unfortunately, many first nations communities across the country face significant barriers to accessing safe drinking water. Since 1977, the government has been promising to provide reserves with water and sanitation services comparable to those available in the

### *Government Orders*

majority of similar non-indigenous communities. However, these promises have often gone unfulfilled.

● (1300)

First nations continue to endure a disproportionate share of the consequences of poor water management, water insecurity and lack of access to good quality drinking water, a situation that would be considered intolerable for anyone living off the reserves. For most people living in a G7 nation, it would be frankly unthinkable.

The consequences of water insecurity require no explanation. However, since we are still here debating a bill on water, in the House, in 2024, I will nonetheless speak to the link between water insecurity and the high rate of suicide in many indigenous communities. In recent years, numerous studies have shown that water insecurity and the loss of traditional water-related practices contribute to feelings of anxiety, depression and loss of cultural identity. These factors, in turn, can significantly affect the risk of suicide. In short, access to safe, clean drinking water is essential not only for the physical health of indigenous nations, but for their mental health and cultural vitality as well.

One of the clearest examples of this chronic inequality is the never-ending drinking water advisories on first nations reserves. Despite Canada's fiduciary commitments to provide potable water to first nations, its repeated promises to eliminate these advisories and its international obligations recognizing potable water and clean water as a human right, these advisories have been in place for decades.

It is odd that Canada, a country where water is abundant and easily accessible, is still unable to offer adequate infrastructure for drinking water access and waste water management. Unlike developing countries, Canada is not dealing with a water shortage, seeing as it possesses 20% of the world's freshwater reserves. It is not deficient in resources or dealing with the instability of an illegitimate or dictatorial government. The current situation should be blamed on successive Canadian governments and their chronic negligence toward first nations. The federal government's lack of interest in first nations is obvious when we look at the limiting and discriminatory situation imposed on these communities, leaving them stuck with poor sanitary conditions.

Questions remain. Given these realities, Bill C-61 represents a first step in the right direction.

This enactment affirms that the inherent right to self-government, recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, includes the jurisdiction of First Nations in relation to water.... It sets out principles, such as substantive equality, to guide the provision for First Nations of clean and safe drinking water and the effective treatment and disposal of wastewater on First Nation lands. It provides for minimum standards for water quality and quantity and wastewater effluent. It also provides pathways to facilitate source water protection.

### *Government Orders*

However, as I mentioned earlier, it has not gone unnoticed that we are debating legislation in 2024 to give communities decent access to clean drinking water and proper infrastructure. This bill may seem like a step in the right direction, but it is simply not good enough.

Let us start with the fact that the government's main partners on this bill, the first nations themselves, disagree with the statement made by the Minister of Indigenous Services that the legislation she was working on was the closest the federal government had come to co-developing law with first nations.

The lack of consultation could explain why the bill seems to view free, prior and informed consent, as defined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as a mere suggestion or guiding principle rather than a strict requirement applicable to all aspects of the bill.

How can first nations trust that the government will consult them on the provisions of this bill, if the government cannot even consult them when the bill is first drafted?

This bill does confirm that water on, in and under first nation lands is part of first nation lands, providing a strong bulwark against provincial land claims. Subclause 6(1) of Bill C-61 explicitly recognizes that first nations have an “inherent right to self-government, recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*” with respect to “water, source water, drinking water, wastewater and related infrastructure on, in and under First Nations lands.”

• (1305)

The terminology in this section, which refers to section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, clearly establishes that first nations' right to self-government over water on reserve lands constitutes recognition of a constitutionally protected right, not simply authority conferred by law. The fact that the words “water” and “source water” are added means that first nations have complete control over water of any kind on their reserve lands.

The protection of source water is crucial to ensuring that first nations have access to quality drinking water, which supports economic development and helps preserve indigenous rights and cultural practices. Although the bill talks about protecting source water, it does not lay out any specific requirements for protecting it.

On the contrary, both the control and protection of source water remain vulnerable in the provincial and federal agreements required by paragraph 6(1)(b). This does not provide adequate authority to first nations for protecting water sources. First nations will have limited jurisdiction over source water, given that this jurisdiction depends on the agreement between the federal government and the respective provincial or territorial government for coordinating the enforcement of first nations legislation. This is problematic, because water protection varies considerably from one province to another. Also, this bill could always serve as a way for the federal government to shirk its responsibilities to its indigenous partners. Giving first nations considerable power perpetuates concerns about a somewhat disengaged federal government.

Bill C-61 does not even recognize the basic human right to clean drinking water. Meanwhile, the bill cites the principle of substantive equality in paragraph 5(2)(a) which states that “the distinct needs of First Nations for reliable access to water services must be addressed in a way that respects First Nations rights and their access must be comparable to that in non-Indigenous communities”. Substantive equality is not, in itself, a right to good-quality drinking water. In fact, Canada's refusal to recognize the right to safe drinking water goes against its stated commitment in favour of the right to safe drinking water as a fundamental right within the United Nations.

I want to talk about Kitcisakik, which is located in the riding of my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. I would like to talk about a community in my region, Abitibi—Témiscamingue. This indigenous community has been without running water and electricity for years now. Thanks to Quebec's recent commitment, the community will finally be connected to the power grid over the next three years. Unfortunately, the community of Kitcisakik will remain without access to water. Because the water table is too high, it is impossible to dig on site and build the necessary infrastructure, making access to running water impossible. Only the communal showers and the band office have access to this precious blue gold.

Moreover, Kitcisakik has dreamed for the past 30 years of building its new village, Wanaki, which means “land of peace” in the indigenous language. In this way, it could finally acquire modern facilities and infrastructure. This brings me to a key aspect of this issue. To develop water management infrastructure requires considerable, recurring and predictable funding. Historically, this has never been the case. From 2015 to 2018, \$146 million was allocated annually to fund this type of infrastructure. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer in 2017, it would have taken \$361 million a year to fund and maintain first nations' drinking water and wastewater systems. The government covered only 40% of the estimated needs.

Once again, I will talk about my region to demonstrate the impact. Maintenance and construction costs are much higher in the regions, and that forces communities to make heart-wrenching decisions. In February 2021, the Abitibiwinni nation on the Pikogan reserve near Amos reported that it was finding it difficult to allocate the funds needed to maintain and run its water and waste-water systems. It is difficult for a community to have to choose between maintaining its infrastructure, water and waste-water systems and roads, and fostering economic and social development when the envelopes are simply not there. We should keep in mind that, in remote regions, the cost of every repair is higher because of the distances involved, the labour shortage and the competition from mining companies in the construction sector.

From reading the bill, we get the impression it seeks to tackle inadequate funding. However, the language used is superficial, requiring only that the government provide “funding that, as a minimum, meets the commitment expenditures” set out in the 2021 Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Settlement Agreement.

● (1310)

The funding provisions in the bill simply do not go far enough to guarantee sufficient funding for first nations. According to clause 26 of this bill, the Government of Canada is content to make “best efforts” to provide adequate funding for water services and to offset the actual costs to first nations of water and sanitation services.

That is a gateway to inaction. The term “best efforts” allows the government to shirk its responsibility to provide First Nations with real access to clean, safe drinking water.

If the minister can simply claim to have done their best to make sure a community has access to water, and the community still does not have access to drinking water, that is legal under the terms proposed by this piece of legislation. That is unacceptable. It is a shirking of responsibility toward our indigenous constituents, and we cannot tolerate such negligence.

I will remind members that the investigation conducted by the Institute for Investigative Journalism at Concordia University revealed that Indigenous Services Canada funded only 33% of the needs of the community of Kebaowek, located in my riding, while the federal government should have contributed 80%. No matter the infrastructure, if the federal government does not do its part, it is unrealistic to think that first nations will be able to meet expectations.

The drinking water problem is also affecting non-indigenous communities. Take, for example, the municipality of Laverlochère-Angliers in the Témiscamingue region. Its inhabitants do not have access to drinking water because it is just too expensive for a community of about 300.

Some 30% of the population of Abitibi—Témiscamingue gets its water from private wells. A study conducted by the Direction régionale de santé publique showed the presence of arsenic in the private wells. It validated the hypothesis that the contaminated wells were associated with a certain type of rock often found near gold deposits. Some of the private wells were dug in gold deposits, so their water contains arsenic. It is important for both indigenous and non-indigenous communities to understand the geology of our region so as to reduce the risk of contamination.

It is also important to remember that, according to a survey conducted by the Abitibi—Témiscamingue public health directorate, four out of five households had not cleaned or disinfected their wells in the past five years.

This is another important point that needs to be included in this bill. How can we fund prevention if indigenous communities opt to dig their own wells? These are important things to think about.

In conclusion, I would say that we are at a crucial point in time and that we must seriously consider the future of access to drinking water in Quebec and Canadian indigenous communities. Although imperfect, Bill C-61 is an attempt to do something about the persis-

tent inequalities experienced by indigenous peoples when it comes to access to drinking water.

However, despite its good intentions, it fails to address basic concerns. The issue of a real and meaningful consultation of first nations is still up in the air, casting a shadow on the legitimacy of this legislative measure. In addition, the funding provisions fail to guarantee sufficient resources to adequately meet the needs of indigenous communities.

We cannot overlook how unacceptable it is that, in 2024, we still have to stand here and talk about the need to ensure access to clean drinking water and decent infrastructure. This highlights the government's ongoing failure to deliver on its commitments to indigenous nations.

As elected representatives, we have a responsibility to ensure that every citizen has equitable access to an essential part of life, namely drinking water. Bill C-61 is an opportunity to improve the situation, but it needs to be strengthened and adjusted to truly meet the needs, demands and rights of first nations.

We must take urgent action and firmly resolve to put an end to this unacceptable situation. Access to clean, safe drinking water is a basic human right, and we must not tolerate any further delay in making that a reality for everyone. The House's commitment to reconciliation and to indigenous peoples requires that we take bold action to ensure that every indigenous and non-indigenous community has a future and can thrive with dignity and fairness.

● (1315)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, personally, I see two strong aspects of Bill C-61.

First and foremost, I appreciate and value all the work and contributions from the minister and indigenous leaders throughout the country. They brought this legislation forward through consultation and hard work.

Second, we talked about the UN declaration, in terms of how we bring forward legislation. Again, we see that the legislation is being driven not just by the minister but also by indigenous leadership.

It is so important that we continue to work hand in hand with indigenous people in order to protect mother earth, as it is often referred to, particularly when dealing with water. Could my colleague provide his thoughts on that?

*Government Orders*

● (1320)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his commitment to first nations and for his question.

I will answer it by pointing out that the Minister of Indigenous Services was asked to release a list of the first nations and organizations that were consulted about the bill. That request went nowhere, and instead the minister stated that all first nations had received the bill, as well as a second one based on consultations with communities.

We obviously need to ensure that consultations have indeed taken place, in a spirit of consultation, not simply sharing information.

Take the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador, as an example. Its members must be able to take part in the process and have their say, particularly when it comes to first nations located in Quebec. That is what nation-to-nation dialogue is all about. It is an interesting principle, but the government needs to walk the talk.

*[English]*

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, a lot of the thoughts the member shared are quite similar to what I have analyzed as well.

I would like to hear from the member what his thoughts are on the current Liberal government's attitude toward indigenous peoples, and what it means that it introduced this bill that would not meet international human rights laws.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Nunavut for her comments and question.

She was already one of the members of the House I most respected. When I had the chance to get to know her better on the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, I grew to admire her and her genuine commitment to the first peoples even more.

Obviously, in this context, the government must do something toward reconciliation as part of a nation-to-nation dialogue that is as inclusive as possible. When one informs people of something, that is not a dialogue. If I sent someone an email, I obviously cannot say that we had a dialogue. That is key. We have seen the government taking the first nations for granted in too many bills. They have been taken for granted since the Indian Act. That has done a lot of harm.

Now, we need to take action. I think that we can demonstrate a new openness in 2024. That means being proactive, reaching out, and accepting that there may be different ways of seeing things. We are talking here about a fundamental right, access to water. We have to get this right.

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his recent appointment as our party's critic for this very important file.

Earlier, I was trying to tell the Minister of Indigenous Services that, in 2017, water testing was done back home, in the community

of Listuguj. The tests found that there was a certain level of lead in the water that did not meet the acceptable or recommended limit set by Health Canada. When the community reported this to Indigenous Services Canada, the department told those people that the problem would be solved if they let the water run for a while prior to consuming it, instead of simply helping the community invest in replacing the plumbing, for example. These tests were carried out in a day care centre. The children were drinking this water. We know that consuming lead or a certain concentration of lead in water has an ill effect on health. It affects children's brain development.

I hope the bill will ensure that, when communities ask for help, the government and Indigenous Services Canada will respond and that the necessary funding will be available.

Does my colleague think this will be the case, or does he still have concerns, especially with regard to funding?

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I want to say a special thank you to my colleague for her leadership with the community of Listuguj. She clearly knows every detail of that community's needs.

It is unacceptable that a day care does not have drinking water. What happens as a result of a situation like that? The same entity, be it the municipal or local administration or the day care itself, will have to make choices: repair the pipe, or invest the money in education, in preserving the language? In many cases, the health emergency must take priority and the pipe must be fixed. That is a problem because the federal government should be taking on this responsibility. As we have seen over the years, the amounts are simply insufficient.

● (1325)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his speech and also for his response to the question from our colleague from Nunavut. I was amazed by the question she asked. It is so clear to me that this bill must be garbage if our colleague from Nunavut thinks it does not respect human rights.

Could my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue say a few words about that?

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her question and her remarks, as well as for her genuine commitment to first nations.

I will give an example concerning water quality. She accompanied the Kebaowek First Nation here so that its members could speak at a House of Commons news conference on a fundamental issue, namely the quality of water in the Ottawa River, which borders their territory. A nuclear waste treatment and storage facility is going to be built in Chalk River. This project is vehemently opposed by my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands and many others, including myself.

*Government Orders*

The possibility of a leak poses a risk to water quality in the region. We are experiencing numerous climate change-related disasters, and it is possible that a tipping point could be reached. In addition, the facility is located on top of a hill from which water runs off into the Ottawa River, six kilometres away. The consequences will be felt not so much in Abitibi—Témiscamingue as farther south, where the water flows down to Ottawa-Gatineau, as well as Montreal and Quebec City. The consequences could be devastating for both indigenous and non-indigenous residents. We need to be extremely vigilant when it comes to protecting our water. I am making a personal commitment to address this issue.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert has time for a brief question.

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am not sure if I can be brief.

What an absurd situation. I have been listening to the debate since this morning, and I cannot get over it. First nations account for 5% of Canada's population. We are debating a bill that seeks to give 5% of the population of this country access to drinking water. It is mind-boggling to contemplate.

I would like to raise another issue with my colleague. I visited his region to talk about housing. Lac-Simon alone is short 300 housing units. The statistics on housing for first nations are devastating. They are overrepresented when it comes to unsanitary and overcrowded housing.

What does my colleague think should be done to get this issue dealt with here? What can we do not only about drinking water, but also about housing, so that first nations truly have access—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I asked the hon. member to be brief and he took more than a minute to ask his brief question.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue has 30 seconds to answer.

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, it was an excellent brief question because it leads me to point out the importance of first nations self-governance. Funding is key, but it must be significant, recurring and predictable.

Let us talk about Quebec's water policy. Quebec made that policy a fundamental law. Based on my discussions with first nations back home, I would say that if the federal government wants to take meaningful action, it should allow first nations to be subject to the provincial legislation, which is already very progressive. If the government stopped encroaching on provincial jurisdictions, that might help Quebec protect water.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The member did a great job. That was just one second over, which is not bad.

The hon. member for Nunavut.

[*English*]

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqagtittiji*, I am privileged to represent Nunavut in the House. I am sorry I missed the Minister of Indigenous Services's speech as I was in committee. Our committee was concluding the study of the Métis self-government bill. I am

glad I am able to at least find out what her statements were and to respond to them later.

I appreciate that before July 1, 1867, Inuit, first nations and, later, the Métis, governed these lands. Before Canada, they had laws regarding wildlife, marine and terrestrial environments, ecosystems and relationships with each other. Bill C-61, an act respecting water, source water, drinking water, waste water and related infrastructure on first nation lands is a particularly important one to remind us of the existence of indigenous peoples before colonialism. Before colonialism, indigenous peoples protected water and the land, and they used the environment for sustenance, acknowledging the limits. Therefore, protecting and preventing future damage was at the core of being sustained by the environment, especially water.

I take this opportunity to remind Canadians that Canada's colonial efforts to "remove the Indian from the child" remain active. There are more indigenous children in foster care than there were in residential schools. There are more indigenous people who are homeless, in overcrowded housing situations or living in substandard housing. First nations, Métis and Inuit have the largest infrastructure gap. Indeed, the NDP found that the first nations infrastructure gap is at \$350 billion. The Liberal government made cuts to MMIWG funding.

Therefore, when this bill was introduced, I put on my oppressed lens and sought where it could be familiar to me. I found familiarity in asking these questions: Why, in this legislation, are human rights and treaty rights not on par with what other Canadians have as rights? Why does the bill not align with international human rights laws regarding water? Why does the bill provide only a guide regarding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

Before I go deeper into this analysis, I want to share what is included in Bill C-61 according to the Government of Canada website. The key elements of the bill include the recognition and affirmation of the inherent right of first nations to self-government, including jurisdiction over water, source water, drinking water, waste water and related infrastructure on, in and under first nation lands; rights-based regulatory pathways to protect water and source water adjacent to first nation lands, in consultation and co-operation with first nations, other federal ministers, and provinces and territories, to help protect drinking water sources flowing onto first nation lands; and minimum national standards for the delivery of drinking water and waste water services on first nation lands, based on first nations choice.

### *Government Orders*

Other key elements include a federal commitment to make best efforts to provide adequate and sustainable funding for water services on first nation lands comparable to services received in non-first nations communities; a requirement to provide funding that, as a minimum, meets the commitment expenditures set out in section 9.02(2) of the settlement agreement; a requirement for all decisions made under the proposed act to be guided by the principle of free, prior and informed consent; and a commitment for Canada to support the creation of a first nations water commission that would support first nations in exercising greater control over drinking water and waste water services on first nation lands.

● (1330)

To go back to my analysis of the continued lack of commitments toward first nations, as well as the impacts this continues to have on indigenous peoples, unfortunately, Bill C-61 falls short on respecting human and indigenous rights. According to an analysis by JFK Law:

Overall, Bill C-61 provides First Nations with a strong foundation to assert control over their water resources and jurisdiction over water occurring on First Nations land. However, the legislation fails to expressly recognize a human right to drinking water or a guarantee for substantive equality for access to water services on and off First Nations lands. Critically, the legislation fails to include provisions for effective source water protection, which is necessary to ensure First Nations have enough clean water flowing onto their lands and territories to meet their needs.

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations stated, “the first public draft released by Canada in February was developed in secret by Indigenous Services Canada without any direct input from First Nations, a fact that has been raised by the Assembly of First Nations and several regional First Nations organizations over the course of 2023”. Other first nations, such as those represented by treaties 6, 7 and 8 and Neskantaga said early on that they had been kept in the dark about the legislation and did not see it before it was tabled.

I note that, in addition to another bill tabled by the Liberal government, Bill C-38, an act to amend the Indian Act on new registration requirements, Bill C-61 has been introduced on the basis of a court case. In November 2019, legal action was initiated against Canada on behalf of all members of first nations and members resident on reserves that had a drinking water advisory for at least one year since 1995. Terms of the settlement agreement were previously announced on July 30, 2021. While they have been mentioned by others in this House, I repeat that they include the following: \$1.5 billion in compensation for individuals deprived of clean drinking water; the creation of a \$400 million first nations economic and cultural restoration fund; a renewed commitment to Canada's action plan for the lifting of all long-term drinking water advisories; the creation of a first nations advisory committee on safe drinking water; support for first nations to develop their own safe drinking water bylaws and initiatives; a commitment of at least \$6 billion to support reliable access to safe drinking water on reserves; and the planned modernization of Canada's first nations drinking water legislation.

We have heard that Bill C-61 was co-developed with first nations. While I appreciate the effort by the Minister of Indigenous Services, I know that more could have been done. The Assembly of First Nations is an important national first nations organization. However, it does not represent all first nations. There are indige-

nous nations in Canada that are not represented by AFN. During committee, we will need to ensure that as many first nations as wish to be heard, are heard. As parliamentarians, we must incorporate indigenous ways of working together. We must ensure that first nations people who feel ignored are afforded the opportunity to speak to this bill. In this way, we can make sure that Bill C-61 is improved and truly co-developed.

● (1335)

In 2018, the Assembly of First Nations held an engagement regarding safe drinking water. The concerns shared at the time included a lack of adequate, predictable and sustainable funding; a lack of recognition of indigenous rights; potential infringement of indigenous and treaty rights; a lack of protection of source water; and insufficient engagement on water issues that directly affect first nations. When Bill C-61 goes to committee, it must seek to answer all these concerns.

Bill C-61 requires scrutiny to make sure that inherent treaty rights and human rights obligations are met. As a G7 country, Canada must show that it treats the original inhabitants with the utmost respect.

We have generations of first nations that have grown up without access to tap water. They probably think it is normal to drink bottled water. We have first nations who probably think that it is normal to boil water before it is safe to drink. It is 2024, and we must ensure that first nations do not continue to think it is okay to have to do this in order to drink water.

Bill C-61 requires a lot of work. I hope that we, as parliamentarians, do this work with the lens that first nations have inherent treaty rights and human rights and that we must all do what we can to ensure that their rights are respected.

● (1340)

**Mr. Vance Badawey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare from the Chiefs of Ontario stated, “The process of this bill is more than consultation. It reflects co-operation and true co-development, a two-way collaborative process.” Could the member comment on what he said?

**Ms. Lori Idlout:** *Uqagtittiji*, as I shared earlier, I know that the Minister of Indigenous Services has worked really hard with organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations. However, they do not represent all first nations. There are way too many first nations that were not included during this consultation process. In terms of those who were consulted, I appreciate the sentiment, but that does not extend to all first nations.

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Nunavut for her commitment and her speech.

I would like to ask the member a question in light of where she is from. What is the drinking water situation in her community? As I understand it, the territorial governments provide safe, clean water in communities, including first nations and Inuit communities. It is my understanding that this is basically the territory's responsibility.

Have the territories been consulted? Do they approve of the elements included in this bill? What are the needs in first nations communities?

I am wondering whether the issue of drinking water was a factor in her decision to get into politics in 2021 and her commitment to improve conditions in first nations communities.

[English]

**Ms. Lori Idlout:** *Uqagtittiji*, the member's question is an important one.

As an Inuk, as I said earlier, I had to really scrutinize the bill based on my experience as an indigenous person who has experienced oppressive and genocidal policies most of my life. This is why so much in the bill is familiar in terms of those kinds of oppressive policies. The reason I felt compelled to run to sit in Parliament is that this is the place where we can help make those changes. As parliamentarians, we can make sure that we are always fighting to uphold indigenous people's inherent rights. We are fighting to uphold human rights for all Canadians, including first nations, Métis and Inuit.

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Nunavut for the outstanding work she does on this file every day and every week.

Arguably, fresh water is our most precious resource. In Canada, we are lucky to have one of the largest reserves of fresh water anywhere in the world. Many Canadians, including me, take it for granted that, when we turn on the tap, fresh, clean drinking water comes out. However, for so many first peoples, this reality does not exist. That is a shame in a country as wealthy as Canada.

The gist of my question comes from the fact that I have sat in this House of Commons now for just over eight years, and this has, supposedly, been a very important priority for the Liberal government. However, my colleague talked about the infrastructure gap that exists and the fact that there are still boil water advisories, and it is only now that we are seeing this legislative framework come into play in debate, in the form of Bill C-61.

### *Government Orders*

What would the situation be like if the Liberal government had been a little more proactive on the legislative front? If we had seen legislation like Bill C-61 introduced not in the previous Parliament, but the one before that, where might we be now and what difference might that have made for people?

• (1345)

**Ms. Lori Idlout:** *Uqagtittiji*, I very much enjoy working with my colleague.

The reality for first nations, Métis and Inuit, as I was asked about earlier as well, has been unfair. There have been inequities, such as a lack of investments, resulting in many social issues that are beyond what we see for Canadian standards.

The indication that the Liberal government is not showing a true commitment to reconciliation can be seen in this bill. If this bill sought to have true reconciliation with indigenous peoples, it would have shown a willingness to uphold indigenous human rights, international human rights and access to water. It would have included provisions to uphold first nations treaty rights, for example, by making sure that first nations have authority for source water protection and providing an absolute guarantee that funding is sustainable and consistent, so first nations have ongoing access to safe drinking water.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the member expressed some concerns with regard to people she feels were not consulted and should have had more direct input. I know the department has put a great deal of effort into reaching out. The bill will go to committee, and I would encourage the member to look at the potential for changes to the legislation and to work with others at committee.

Could the member provide her thoughts on the importance of the committee itself?

**Ms. Lori Idlout:** *Uqagtittiji*, as I said during my speech, it is very important to get the bill to committee. The Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs consists of very committed MPs, who are trying to make sure that we do better for all indigenous peoples. The committee just completed a study on another bill that required members to think about how we can be united in ensuring that we respect all indigenous peoples, whether first nations, Métis or Inuit.

Getting the bill to committee will be important, as the committee can hear from all first nations and others to make sure we do better for first nations, especially in the area of safe drinking water.

[Translation]

**Mr. Sébastien Lemire:** Madam Speaker, I would like to once again thank my colleague from Nunavut for her intervention.

### *Government Orders*

Of course, first nations themselves will have to invest considerable sums of money as a result of this bill. We have found that, since 2015, the government has invested about a third or a quarter of the sums needed, so there is a cost to investing.

I wonder if my colleague can talk about the cost of not investing enough. What are the consequences for people living in communities and first nations without access to drinking water? What are the real consequences for people who do not have access to drinking water?

[English]

**Ms. Lori Idlout:** *Uqagtittiji*, I thank the member for his very important question on what the costs of not getting this done will be.

I think some of the bigger costs could include Canada's being seen as not upholding international human rights laws regarding water and as not upholding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

At the community and ground level, first nations will continue to have to boil their water before they brush their teeth. They will have to continue to make sure they are given funds to buy bottled water.

We will continue to see first nations struggling to provide source water, as we have seen in Neskantaga, which is experiencing a 30-year boil advisory and may not get the resources it needs to no longer receive boil water advisories.

The Liberal government promised to make sure that boil water advisories would be eliminated, but we still have far too many, and they are causing everyday consequences for indigenous people. We suffer with the highest suicide rates. We suffer the highest rate of mental health issues. There are too many who are addicted and engaging in substance abuse.

We need to do better at ensuring that first nations, Métis and Inuit can have access to water. It is at the core of doing better for first nations.

• (1350)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to such an important piece of legislation. Earlier today, in the form of a question, I talked about important legislation that this legislature deals with, and I cited two pieces. One is the one that is up for debate right now, Bill C-61 and the issue of water; and later this afternoon we are going to be debating in third reading the issue of the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement. As we go through the coming days and the weeks ahead, we are going to be debating substantial pieces of legislation that will have a profound impact in all the different regions of our country. We would hope that the Conservatives in particular will look at the legislation for what it is and ultimately, whether they vote in favour of it or against it, at least allow for that debate to occur.

When I posed a specific question about Bill C-61 to the Conservative critic, he said that it was the government that sets the agenda, as he tried to pass the buck. The member is correct that we do bring forward the legislation, but we are very dependent on opposition members to work with the government in trying to get it out of sec-

ond reading in order to get things to a debate. The Canada-Ukraine trade agreement is a good example of that.

As I said, I look forward to that debate, but the reason I asked the question in regard to Bill C-61 is that I would also like to see the Conservative Party take a proactive approach to seeing this substantive legislation ultimately pass. It is really important for us to recognize that there is a very limited amount of time in which we can actually debate on the floor of the House of Commons, and we would like to see that this legislation actually gets to committee.

It is important to recognize that it is codeveloped. This is something on which a great deal of consultation and work with the first nations communities was done in order to be able to have what I believe is and what the minister refers to as codeveloped legislation. It would have a very real and tangible impact in terms of water supply.

I have had, if not directly first-hand, an indirect first-hand experience in terms of dealing with the issue of water, and that is with Shoal Lake. With respect to the history of Shoal Lake and how Winnipeg ultimately came to receive the water we receive today, which is virtually untreated, that water comes from Shoal Lake. The Ojibway were protecting that water and had accessed and resourced that water for thousands of years. The City of Winnipeg is actually responsible for ensuring now that we are able to get water, and we turn to Shoal Lake. First Nation No. 40 provides us some of the best water in the world out of Shoal Lake, and at the same time, indigenous people, in particular the Ojibway and others, were at times under a water advisory.

Let us think of that: Shoal Lake provides healthy, clean water to the city of Winnipeg, but people who are living around Shoal Lake were at times under water advisories. For decades, they had attempted to get infrastructure built. I was so pleased when we as a government, a few years ago, committed to Freedom Road, making a connection that ultimately assisted a first nation community.

In terms of this legislation, the issue of reconciliation should not be lost. Never before, at least in the last many years, have we seen a prime minister who is so committed to reconciliation that it is not just words; it is tangible dollars and substantial legislation.

• (1355)

We can talk about the hundreds of millions of dollars and the building up of infrastructure and supporting of infrastructure development, whether it is the social infrastructure of health care, schools and education, or whether it is streets and bridges and roads. As a national government under this Prime Minister, we have had genuine, sincere, tangible investments going into the hundreds of millions of dollars, to support indigenous leaders and their communities. The leadership is there; it is very real and it is making a difference. It is making Canada a healthier nation. We are working with first nations in order to be able to achieve that.

What I like about Bill C-61, as I pointed out in the form of a question, is that for me, personally, it does a couple of things. One, it deals with one of those life ingredients, if I can put it that way, that being water, in a very tangible way, whereby it can be regulated and it can be protected going into the future. It is first nations who are going to be leading Canada on that particular file, I would suggest.

We need to support that. That is why, for the first time, we actually have legislation to deal with that. Unlike previous governments, this is a government that has literally worked in such a way that this is being said to be co-operative or co-sponsored legislation, if I can use that term.

The impact that the AFN and others, whether directly or indirectly, have had on this legislation is considerable. It would not be what it is today if that consultation, if that working together, had not occurred.

As I said in my question to the member who just spoke, there are always going to be concerns. We recognize that. That is one of the reasons I indicated, at the beginning of my comments, that we want to see this legislation ultimately be allowed to go to committee. The sooner it can go to committee, the better.

In good part, it is going to be the Conservative Party that has to work with the government and the opposition to allow this legislation to go to committee, so that we can hear from all of the different stakeholders. In particular, and I would not classify them as a stakeholder but as a partner, we want indigenous first nations to be able to provide their ongoing thoughts and, where they can, provide their support for many of the things that are incorporated in many aspects of the legislation, which are there because, in fact, they requested that they be put into the legislation.

That is the reason I think it is really important, when we take a look at the legislation as a whole, that we recognize that this is something that has, in fact, been worked on for five-plus years. What we need to do is take it to the next step.

We have heard from all opposition critics. We have heard from the minister, and we have heard the explanation. There is the opportunity, hopefully sooner as opposed to later, to actually see the debate conclude and allow the legislation to ultimately pass to the committee stage—

• (1400)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** It is time for Statements by Members.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, while we have been fighting to give Canadians more choices in the grocery aisles and fairer prices at the checkout counter, Conservatives have tried to block all of our attempts to help Canadians.

### Statements by Members

Between Jenni Byrne's current affiliations with Loblaws and the deputy leader of the Conservative Party's past lobbying for Walmart, it is no wonder the Conservatives are ragging the puck on our competition legislation, why they went so soft on Galen Weston at committee, or why they refuse to fight for Canadian families. Their leader has been getting his marching orders from corporate CEOs.

The Leader of the Opposition will cut child care and dental care, but not grocery bills. Conservatives are not in it for Canadians, they are in it for themselves and their corporate buddies.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### MARINA LAROUCHE

**Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today, I am rising to pay tribute to Marina Larouche, who passed away in January at the age of 88.

This woman led a very impressive life. As the mother of nine children, she was balancing work and family well before that concept became popular. After being involved in minor hockey for many years, she worked as a city councillor for 28 years. One of the highlights of her career was heading up the Accès Bleuets campaign, which led to the construction of a four-lane divided highway through the Laurentides wildlife sanctuary. That gave us a safer, less congested highway that benefits everyone.

What is more, in 2002, she received the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal, and in 2015, the Chicoutimi-Nord arena was renamed the Marina Larouche arena in her honour.

In short, Ms. Larouche was a model woman, mother and politician.

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### CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians want concrete action on making their grocery bills affordable.

While we come up with solutions, Conservative members are out cross-country skiing and dragging their feet. This is no surprise. Given that the Conservative leader's right-hand woman is affiliated with Loblaws and the Conservative Party's deputy leader used to be a lobbyist for Walmart, the Conservative leader is clearly getting his orders from big corporate CEOs.

We now know that the Conservative Party is not sincere about adopting a grocery code of conduct. That is why it opposes stronger competition laws.

The Conservative leader will cut back the services that Canadians depend on, but he will certainly not cut down their grocery bills. The Conservatives are not there for Canadians; they are there for themselves and their cronies.

*Statements by Members*

When Conservative members get up on the other side of the House to shout about affordability, they remind me of chihuahuas: all bark and no bite.

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**DANY LAFERRIÈRE**

**Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Dany Laferrière is a master of both pen and nuance, so much so that he was honoured with the Grand Prix des Ambassadeurs francophones de France in Paris on February 1. Mr. Laferrière received this prestigious literary award for his book *Petit traité sur le racisme*. It is about racism, a thorny and slippery subject, but one that Laferrière handles in his own inimitable way. He deploys words intuitively, evocatively and thoughtfully, asking questions, but not dictating the answers. His novels and non-fiction writing enable us to enjoy all the charm and fun of different experiences without having to endure the attendant suffering.

I saw Dany Laferrière in Paris in October. He was staying at an artists' residence, where he doled out bon mots and a stream of laughter in his honeyed accent, dazzling those who feel deeply and seek nothing more than to be a part of the crowd.

For all of these reasons, I am honoured to share the news of this prestigious award, which is an honour for Quebec and Haiti too.

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[English]

**AURORA BLACK COMMUNITY GALA**

**Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I had the privilege of attending the Aurora Black Community gala to celebrate Black History Month.

This wonderful sold-out evening featured the talents and achievements of the local Black community. Our Prime Minister sent a personal message to Phiona Durrant, the indomitable president of ABC, which I had the pleasure of presenting to her.

The Hon. Jean Augustine, the force behind Black History Month was present as a guest of honour. Our Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities joined us to underscore the importance of this month.

As allies we join together in these meaningful celebrations, but we must also continue the important work alongside organizations, such as ABC, to support Black communities, combat systemic racism and ensure that every Canadian has equal opportunities to benefit from all Canada has to offer.

Our government has made significant investments to support Black communities and will continue to do so. ABC's theme this year is "forward together, forward for all", and that is exactly what we must do: move Canada forward, together, for all.

• (1405)

**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon know the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

From his NDP-Liberal government's own 2023 northern housing report, after eight years housing starts in Yukon are down 19.3%. Housing starts are down 21.2% in Northwest Territories. Fewer than 20% of families can afford to purchase a home in Nunavut, and if someone is lucky enough to have a house in Nunavut, their mortgage payment went from \$2,000 a month to \$3,200 a month in just one year.

Northerners have a choice in the next election: the costly coalition NDP-Liberal government and its quadrupling of the carbon tax, its northern housing crisis, its wasteful spending, its 30-year high murder rates or our common-sense plan to axe the tax, build homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

It is time to bring it home.

\* \* \*

**CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians and Liberals are very much concerned about the price of groceries, a very serious issue. It is one of the reasons we brought in the Competition Act.

Let me talk about a lady by the name of Jennie Byrne. Jennie Byrne was the leadership campaign manager for the leader of the Conservative Party. Did members know that she still is the senior adviser to the leader of the Conservative Party? She is also an active adviser to Loblaw's. She is the one who is telling Loblaw's, which is making billions of dollars, what it should be doing.

Not to be outdone, the deputy leader of the Conservative Party, and I cannot make this up, is the former advocate for Walmart. We can talk about conflict. How dare the Conservatives try to say that they are on the side of Canadians, when it comes to grocery prices? That is just not true.

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**ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BRANCH 251**

**Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Vimy, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 251, proudly celebrated on January 27. I congratulate them. They make us proud, and we are honoured to count on the strength and service the legion offers to our constituents.

[Translation]

For 60 years, the members of branch 251, in the riding of Vimy, have nurtured the values of dedication, sacrifice and community spirit. In Laval, we are proud to attend the annual Armistice Day parade.

Because of their local initiatives, their caring treatment of veterans, the inspiration they provide to our cadet corps, and their role as stewards of our heritage, they are now and forever woven into the fabric of our community.

I thank them for encouraging the commemoration of our fallen heroes and for sharing the principles that bind us as Canadians.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, Canadians know the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Rural Canadians in particular no longer have a government that works for them. No government has failed to represent rural Canadians more than the current Liberal-NDP coalition. The Prime Minister has neglected, divided and punished rural Canadians for simply living their rural way of life.

The good news is that Canadians will have a clear choice in the next election, a choice between a costly Liberal-NDP coalition that would raise their taxes, double their housing costs and allow crime and chaos in their communities, or Conservatives who would restore hope for all Canadians. The common-sense Conservative plan is straightforward: axe the carbon tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

Only Conservatives would help rural Canada and all Canadians.

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#### BEN NEWMAN

**Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour an unsung hero of Canadian basketball.

Ben Newman, a St. Catharines businessman, staged the first ever NBA game and brought Toronto its first professional basketball team. At only 26, he went to New York to represent Canada at what was then called the Basketball Association of America. In 1946, Newman was essential in organizing the NBA's inaugural game, where the New York Knickerbockers narrowly beat the Toronto Huskies 68 to 66. At the time, The Globe and Mail said Newman was "considered one of the dominion's greatest authorities on the sport." While the Huskies only played for one season, two of their players are now honoured in the Canadian Basketball Hall of Fame. In this House we know Toronto continues to excel in the NBA.

Ben Newman left a legacy of generosity and joy for his family, for St. Catharines and for all Canadian basketball fans. He is remembered by his wife Sheila, his daughter Francine and his grandson Jordon, who continue to share his story. Newman will also be on this year's ballot as a builder of the game at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Massachusetts. I hope his impact will be remembered here and throughout Canada.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

#### HOUSING

**Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal-NDP government has created a made-in-Canada housing

#### Statements by Members

crisis. Our country is now the least affordable housing market in the entire world, and the Prime Minister's costly policies have only made matters worse. Retirees are now living in laundry rooms, millennials are living in their parents' basements, students are living under bridges and Canadians of all ages are having to choose between paying their rent or mortgage, and putting food on the table and heating their homes.

Investing in a home of one's own is about shelter, but it is also about independence, stability and opportunities. These dreams used to be available and achievable for any Canadian, but not anymore. The Liberals have no real solutions to fix their made-in-Canada housing crisis. After eight years, the chickens have come home to roost, or at least they would if they had a home.

Conservatives will build the homes, fix the budget, axe the tax and stop the crime. Now, let us go.

\* \* \*

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Liberal government has allowed catch-and-release criminals to cause chaos in our streets, resulting in car theft numbers unlike anything we have ever seen in the past.

According to the Liberal government's own news release, auto thefts in Toronto are up 300% since 2015. What happened in 2015? The Liberal government happened in 2015. This auto theft crisis has happened under its watch and ports are full of stolen cars waiting to be shipped overseas while Canadians are left paying the price through increased insurance premiums.

The Liberal-NDP coalition and Prime Minister are not worth the costs. Change is needed, and only Conservatives would increase the mandatory minimum penalty for a third offence of motor vehicle theft. We would repeal the catch-and-release rules in the government's bill, Bill C-75, to ensure repeat offenders get jail and not bail.

A Conservative government would hit the brakes on car theft, protect the property of Canadians and bring home safe streets. It is just common sense.

*Statements by Members***CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while Loblaw profits are at an all-time high so are Canadian grocery bills, and who is working to keep it that way? The Leader of the Opposition's campaign manager and top political adviser.

Last week we learned Jenni Byrne, a senior Conservative adviser, is currently listed as an active lobbyist for Loblaw all while she participates in Conservative caucus meetings and has daily calls with the Leader of the Opposition to set strategy.

While Jenni Byrne has been profiting off the anti-competitive practices of Loblaw, the Leader of the Opposition has been profiting off her counsel on exploiting Canadians' anxieties over grocery prices. Now it all makes sense why Conservative MPs have been putting up roadblocks on legislation to combat predatory pricing and anti-competition practices.

On this side of the House, we will keep working to combat high grocery prices despite the interests of Conservative insiders.

\* \* \*

**TERRACE SEARCH AND RESCUE**

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the work of volunteer firefighters and search and rescue teams across northwest B.C. These folks give a tremendous amount of their personal time both training and responding to calls, and they do it for one reason: to protect their neighbours. It is one of the truest expressions of community there is.

I want to give a special tribute today to the volunteers of Terrace Search and Rescue, who responded to the tragic helicopter crash in our region on January 22 that claimed four lives. Their skilled response in difficult winter conditions was invaluable.

There is a small way we can recognize volunteer contributions like this, and that is by increasing the income tax deduction for fire and search and rescue volunteers from \$3,000 to \$10,000. I am proud to stand with my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, and our entire caucus in supporting this one important change.

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● (1415)

*[Translation]***FORTIN-LAFRANCE TEAM**

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Under-18 Curling Championships kick off this week, and the riding of Jonquière will be represented in Ottawa by the Fortin-Lafrance team from Kénogami.

This team was named Curling Québec's team of the year for the 2021-22 season and are sure to do our region proud. This year is particularly special for the member for Lac-Saint-Jean and me, because the two teams representing Quebec in Ottawa are from our magnificent region, which just goes to show how much talent we have back home. We are so proud to see these young athletes come

here to represent Quebec and showcase the next generation of athletes from Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

I would like to close by wishing Jolianne, Megan, Mégane, Emy and their coach Brandon the best of luck in this tournament, on behalf of myself and everyone in Jonquière. Congratulations to the team. They have our full support.

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*[English]***CARBON TAX**

**Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-234 is asking for a carbon tax carve-out for farmers. The PBO has stated that this bill will save Canadian farmers \$1 billion by 2030. By fighting to keep the carbon tax on farmers, Liberals are voting to keep grocery prices high. Everyone knows that when we tax the farmer who grows the food and the trucker who ships the food, we tax the buyer who buys the food.

The Liberal government is sending two million people per month to food banks. The number of people eating at food banks in Toronto today would fill the Rogers Centre seven times. Seniors are the fastest-growing users of food banks. The Liberal environment minister admitted at committee that he called six senators and pressured them to cut the bill.

The Liberals want to continue with their plan to quadruple the carbon tax on farmers, from 14¢ to 61¢ a litre. Our Conservative amendment will reject the Senate changes and restore this bill to its original plan.

The Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

\* \* \*

**CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week, we learned that the Conservatives' top adviser, Jenni Byrne, is also a lobbyist for Loblaws. Maybe this explains why Conservative MPs have been blocking legislation to deal with predatory pricing. Six leaders and counting, but it is the same old Conservative Party that promised to stand up for Canadians. In reality, they are making deals behind closed doors to help their wealthy connected friends.

We know those Conservatives love a slogan, so here is one for Canadians to remember. The Leader of the Opposition will raise grocery prices in their homes, my home. They are going to bring higher prices home.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois.

The Bloc Québécois voted for the Liberal legislation that came out of Bill C-75, which allows car thieves to be released on bail the same day they are arrested. The Bloc Québécois voted for the legislation that came out of Bill C-5, which allows car thieves to serve their sentence at home. These laws have resulted in a 100% increase in car theft in Montreal and a 300% increase in Toronto.

Will the government reverse its policies and replace them with a common-sense policy to put an end to this problem?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week, the Leader of the Opposition is pretending to care about auto theft. Last week, he was pretending to care about the price of groceries.

Now we find out that his campaign director is in charge of lobbying for Loblaw behind the scenes, in the back rooms of the Conservative Party.

My question for the opposition leader is this: What did he promise his campaign director?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what I promised to do was axe the tax and lower income taxes.

We are also going to reduce the cost of auto theft. Today I announced a common-sense plan to end house arrest, to end automatic parole for auto thieves and to make three-year prison sentences mandatory after three auto thefts.

Will the government stop the crime it has caused with this common-sense plan?

• (1420)

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the opposition loves to talk about clarity in the House. Well, I have some questions for him.

What did his campaign manager tell him about the cost of living and grocery prices in Canada? What kind of feedback did he promise to give his campaign manager? After all, without her he would have no career in politics. He would not be in politics, were it not for her. What did he promise her? She speaks to his caucus behind the scenes. What is she saying to Conservatives about the cost of living and grocery prices in Canada? Talk about hypocrisy.

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what I promised was to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

The Prime Minister, with the support of the NDP, passed catch and release that allows career car thieves to be released the same day they are caught stealing cars, to have house arrest and to have

### Oral Questions

shorter sentences, many of which they serve in their living rooms watching Netflix. That has led to a 100% increase in car theft in Montreal and Ottawa, and a 300% increase in Toronto.

Will the Liberals reverse these disastrous and reckless policies so we can stop the crime?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, of course, this government has a comprehensive plan on auto theft. It is interesting, though, that the leader, last week, was pretending to care about food prices and about competition in the grocery sector. This week, he is pretending to care about auto theft.

We have found out that his campaign manager, the woman to whom he owes the leadership of his party, is addressing him and his caucus and advising them on food prices. What is her advice and what does he owe his campaign manager?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the advice is to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost and not worth the crime. We now are paying a billion dollars more in insurance premiums because he has led to a quadrupling of car thefts in Toronto.

I have a common-sense plan, which I rolled out today, to end house arrest and catch and release for career criminals, and bring in three years of jail for three stolen cars.

Will the government accept the common-sense plan?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that the Leader of the Opposition, after reading a government press release, has finally tuned into this issue, but I have a couple of clarifications.

First, mandatory minimums for auto theft for repeat offences already exist in the Criminal Code, so he is not changing something that already exists. Second, an aggravating factor for an auto theft that occurs with organized crime is already on the books too, section 718.2 of the Criminal Code, Mr. Leader of the Opposition.

Why do we not focus on things we can actually do, like getting tough with organized crime and anti-money laundering?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, they were opposed to mandatory minimums for auto theft. Furthermore, the minister claimed that he brought in bail reform that would stop auto theft, but the Liberals' bail reform does not apply to auto theft. Therefore, he has to read his own law before trumpeting it in Parliament.

*Oral Questions*

The Liberals have given us a 300% increase in auto theft in Toronto, a 300% increase in auto claims this year alone. That is their record. We have a common-sense plan to stop the crime. Why will they not implement it today?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition purports to be tough on crime. Who do I listen to about crime measures? Police officers. What do they tell me? They tell me that this is not an individual crime; this is backed by people who are organized criminals. How do we deal with that? We get tough on money laundering.

When he is asking me to read the law, I would ask him to read Bill C-59, which has measures that deal with money laundering, which you are voting against.

**The Speaker:** Before we continue with question period, I would like to remind members that all comments go through the Chair. I would remind the hon. minister that all comments come through the Chair as opposed to directly to another member of Parliament.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

\* \* \*

• (1425)

[Translation]

**IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to asylum seekers, the Liberals are laughing at Quebecers.

Not only has the Liberal government yet to reimburse the \$470 million it has owed Quebecers since 2021, but to top it off, it plans to give Toronto \$143 million to house future asylum seekers while allocating only \$100 million for the whole of Quebec.

This file has been nothing but one injustice after another. Ottawa is not reimbursing what it already owes Quebec, and now Quebec will not even get its fair share for the future.

Enough is enough. The Liberals have made fools of Quebecers long enough.

Where is our \$470 million?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is the only one who thinks that \$70 million, \$50 million and \$100 million is just small change. That money is very important to the asylum seekers who will end up in Quebec.

As the member knows full well, we have a good relationship with the Government of Quebec. We are going to act the way a responsible government should and work with them. Quebec's finance minister will speak with Canada's Minister of Finance today. Our great relationship will carry on.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that great relationship exists only in his imagination.

Toronto got \$143 million to house future asylum seekers, but all of Quebec got only \$100 million.

On top of that, none of Quebec's demands have been met: The \$470 million debt has not been repaid, there is no plan to distribute newcomers across the provinces, and there is no visa requirement for Mexicans, no promise to process claimants' files more quickly, no commitment to approving work permits within reasonable timeframes, no one answering the call when the Liberals are asked to do their job. They are always there to lecture, but never there to work.

When are they going to wake up?

**Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois members are acting like back-seat drivers, as they often do.

Quebec received \$50 million, along with another \$100 million to house asylum seekers, and that is this year alone.

The Bloc Québécois picks any old statistic it likes and draws whatever conclusion it chooses. The Bloc Québécois is just a bunch of back-seat drivers.

In the meantime, we will work with the Quebec government to do our job, and we will do that job of meeting the needs of asylum seekers properly and responsibly.

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[English]

**PHARMACARE**

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Loblaw and Manulife insurance teamed up to limit the coverage of 260 medications for Canadians, more profits for them and less coverage for Canadians. When they tried to do it, we fought back and they walked back the decision. However, the Prime Minister has an opportunity now to end this once and for all by bringing in pharmacare. This is something the Prime Minister has promised and he has broken that promise. The Liberals had promised this and failed for 30 years.

Therefore, the Prime Minister has a choice. Will he choose to stop working for big pharma, yes or no?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, of course, we share the member's objective to reduce drug prices for Canadians and to make sure that we have a competitive and fair environment in Canada. We are working together on pharmacare legislation. I look forward to continuing those conversations.

Of course, Canada, by engaging in bulk purchasing, has seen a reduction of about \$300 million in the cost of drugs for Canadians across the country. With many countries looking at how they can emulate that kind of practice to reduce drug prices in their countries, we are going to continue to do everything we can.

**Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep on choosing big pharma and Canadians keep paying the price.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

The Liberals are slinging mud about Loblaws, but they are very well connected too. They have met with Loblaws 60 times in the past two years, and they have received thousands of dollars from the Sobeys family. They have the power to lower prices but they are not doing it.

When will the Liberals stop governing for the Sobeys and the Westons?

**Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is crucial that we reduce the cost of living in general and ensure affordability. That is why we worked with all provinces and territories to co-purchase medications so we could reduce costs. With respect to the question about lobbying, I think that is a great question for Jenni Byrne.

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*[English]***CARBON PRICING**

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal-NDP government continues to scam Canadians with its carbon tax. It said it would reduce emissions; it did not. It said Canadians would get more in the phony rebates; they do not. It plans to increase the carbon tax scam in April, making the cost of everything go up as two million Canadians visit a food bank in a single month, a third of whom are children. After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Will the Liberals stop their plans to increase the carbon tax scam on April 1 that will make the cost of gas, groceries and home heating even more expensive?

• (1430)

**Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find it incredulous that opposition members are speaking about scams, when we think about the advice they are giving Canadians to invest in volatile cryptocurrency and to fire the Governor of the Bank of Canada, one of Canada's foremost institutions.

They have voted not once, not twice, but 120 times against supports for Canadians, including our armed forces, and against supports for Ukraine. That is the height of hypocrisy.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we will continue to vote every single time against all measures that make Canadians' lives even harder and even more expensive.

Conservatives are on the side of Canadians who are having to go to food banks more than ever before and for whom the cost of gas, groceries and home heating is more expensive because of the Liberals' carbon tax scam. The Liberal-NDP government is immune to the pain it is causing Canadians, because it is always working for Liberal insiders and consultants.

Why does the government not scrap the scam and axe the tax to bring down the cost of gas, groceries and home heating?

**Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after the news this weekend about insiders, I find it rich of the opposition members to criticize on that point.

I will ask the Conservatives this in return: What is it they would cut? Are they going to cut supports to Ukraine and the Canadian Armed Forces? Are they going to cut affordable housing? Are they going to cut the Canada child benefit and \$10-a-day child care? Let us hear it: What are they going to cut?

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that the first thing we will cut is the Liberal-NDP carbon tax, and we will make life more affordable for Canadians.

Canadians are paying more for food than they ever have before, with two million people relying on a food bank every month. The Prime Minister's solution is to make food even more expensive. On April 1, Liberals plan to increase the carbon tax by 23%, which is part of their plan to quadruple it.

Conservatives have a common-sense bill, Bill C-234, which would remove the carbon tax for farmers, making food more affordable for Canadians.

Why will the Prime Minister not cancel his plan to increase the carbon tax on April 1 to ensure that Canadians can feed their family?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is rich of opposition members to talk about food prices when we know that the member's campaign chair, campaign manager and senior adviser, the person who walks into their caucus every week and gives them advice, is the chief lobbyist for Loblaws in this country, Canada's leading food retailer.

Instead of talking about axing the tax, maybe they should axe the hacks?

**Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the desperation of the Liberals is incredible as they continue to avoid the real question.

Canadian farmers should be applauded for their environmental accomplishments instead of being punished by the carbon taxes from the Liberals. Why is that? The carbon footprint to produce a tonne of canola in Saskatchewan is 67% lower than that of European wheat. Canadian wheat could be transported three and a half times around the world before it has the same global footprint as wheat grown in Europe. However, the Prime Minister wants to punish farmers instead of rewarding them for their environmental stewardship.

Why will the Prime Minister not cancel his carbon tax increase on farmers to make sure we can grow food for Canadians?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I have heard Alberta MPs talking about the vulnerable, yet the leader of the Conservative Party claims to talk about freedom but is now showing every Canadian exactly the type of leader he is and what type of person he is. He is the one standing with the bullies. He is the one who is—

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

**The Speaker:** I am having a little trouble hearing the hon. member. I would ask all members to please quiet down.

The hon. Minister of Employment and Workforce Development.

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault:** Mr. Speaker, the member is the one standing with the bullies. He is the one picking on vulnerable people. He is standing with Danielle Smith instead of defending the most vulnerable youth in our country. He has shown Canadians who he is, and Canadians will not forget.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the costly Bloc-Liberal coalition will have the opportunity to vote on a Conservative motion to cancel the April 1 carbon tax increase.

With 800,000 Quebecers lining up at food banks every month, the Bloc Québécois and the Liberals think it is a good idea to raise taxes. What is worse, the Bloc members want to drastically increase the carbon tax, which has a direct impact on the cost of groceries in Quebec.

Who will have the courage to vote against the Bloc-Liberal ideology this afternoon in order to leave more money in the pockets of families and reduce the lineups at food banks?

• (1435)

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that federal carbon pricing does not apply in Quebec because the Quebec government has had a cap-and-trade system in place for over a decade. If he wants to speak with Premier François Legault, I would be happy to give him his contact information. This is not federal pricing

Let us talk about what the Conservatives are doing. Last month, they voted against the climate action fund to support sustainable agriculture, against the dairy innovation and investment fund and against funding to help supply-managed dairy, poultry and egg farmers. That is what the Conservatives have done.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, they are good at trying to distract us to better divide us and shift the focus away from their disastrous record, which is driving two million people to use food banks every month. People can laugh if they want, but there is nothing funny about two million Canadians having to turn to food banks every month because groceries are now beyond their means.

Who is going to do the right thing this afternoon? Who is going to vote against a tax that the Bloc Québécois wants to drastically increase and, instead, vote in favour of the Conservative Party mo-

tion to abolish the April 1 tax increase? Who will have the courage to do it?

**Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think that a lot of the people watching us just cannot understand why, in 2024, a party that wants to form the government someday, maybe, still cannot grasp the importance of climate change.

In 2021, drought caused a 27% decrease in Canada's grain production. Just two years later, in 2023, grain yields dropped by 13% across the country, again, due to drought. Over the past decade, 200,000 Canadian farmers have seen their costs increase because of climate change.

What is the Conservatives' response? They are going to make polluting free again.

\* \* \*

**SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there was a 41% increase in business bankruptcies last year, and 61% of those are in Quebec. It is the highest increase ever recorded. It is in that context that the federal government set the January 18 deadline for SMEs to pay back the emergency business account loan without penalty.

In a Radio-Canada news report, trustee Stéphane Leblond warned that insolvency cases have been on the rise for the past month. Of course the Liberals just added \$20,000 of debt to the SMEs most at risk.

Why not show these businesses some flexibility instead of continuing to kick them while they are down?

**Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Canada emergency business account, or CEBA, was to help keep businesses afloat during the pandemic and give them some room to recover.

Nearly 80% of small businesses have paid back the CEBA loan and were able to take advantage of the refundable portion of the loan. We are also reducing credit card transaction fees by up to a quarter to help small businesses keep more money in their pockets.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are bragging about the fact that 80% of SMEs paid back their CEBA loans on time, but that is not good news. That means that 20% of SMEs are at high risk of bankruptcy. We are not talking about multinationals. We are talking about small business and restaurant owners in our communities.

The government needs to do three things: Deal with each case on a case-by-case basis, guarantee loans from financial institutions and reinstate the \$20,000 subsidy. Why is it so hard for the government to be flexible in helping the business owners in our communities? It does not take a rocket scientist to figure this out.

**Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I would like to remind her that this was not the first but the second extension that we gave to all businesses, and that there is no business that cannot get support from the government. If they cannot pay back their loan, we will guarantee that loan for three years at an interest rate of 5%, which means that they have to reimburse about \$250 a month.

Not only that, but Canada Economic Development is looking to the future. I just made announcements in Drummondville, Sherbrooke and a number of regions in Quebec. We will continue to support businesses in making the much-needed green transition.

• (1440)

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last week I was talking to a restaurant owner in Trois-Rivières. When he applied for the emergency account years ago, he could not have foreseen that inflation would increase by 10 % every year. He could not have foreseen that business would decline to such an extent.

Before the January 18 deadline, he asked his bank for a loan to repay the federal government, only to be denied, precisely because of the uncertainty in the restaurant industry. The banks do not want the risk that the federal government should be taking on. Since he could not pay up, the federal government is now demanding another \$20,000.

How many restaurants like this do the Liberals intend to close?

**Hon. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, if the government had not been there to support them in the first place, these businesses would not have weathered the biggest pandemic crisis this country has ever known.

It is now time to look to the future. We need to support companies in meeting the challenges of the future. What are the challenges of the future? It is all about starting the energy transition and improving productivity to counter labour shortages. That is exactly what we are going to do on this side of the House. We will continue to support all businesses.

\* \* \*

[English]

### CARBON PRICING

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister is costing Canadians more than they can afford. His punishing carbon tax is already driving up the cost of groceries, heating and gas. On April 1, the NDP-Liberal government wants to increase it once again.

Conservatives introduced a common-sense motion to cancel the planned carbon tax hike that would cost Canadians even more on gas, groceries and home heating. Will the Liberals support our motion and cancel their April 1 carbon tax hike?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again we hear misleading rhetoric from the other side of the House.

Folks in Canada know that 80% of Canadian families get more money back than they pay. It is an affordability measure as well as

something that actually addresses the climate crisis in front of us. It is something that helps the poorest Canadians.

In fact, what he wants to do is take away the rebate. He wants to take away, from poor and modest-income people, money that actually helps to pay for groceries, rent and transportation. Shame on you for trying to target those folks and benefit only the wealthy in Canada.

**The Speaker:** I know there are many things I must regret; I am hoping this is not one of them. I would invite ministers to please make sure that the answers are directed through the Chair.

The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister can manipulate the facts all day long, but that is not going to change the painful reality that Canadians across this country are experiencing.

Let us not forget that the PBO has said that Canadians will still be paying hundreds of dollars in carbon tax even after the rebate. Canadians who are already struggling to afford gas, groceries and home heating cannot afford the NDP-Liberal government's carbon tax increase.

Will the Liberals show some compassion and cancel their April 1 carbon tax increase?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives are truly concerned about the price of groceries, why do they not just ask their top adviser to pick up the phone and talk to Loblaw's, or perhaps the next time she goes to pick up her paycheque, she could just ask Loblaw's to join in our work to bring down grocery prices, to bring in more competition and to get rid of predatory practices.

If the Conservatives are truly concerned for Canadians, I know just the person they can have give their buddies at Loblaw's a call.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, Canadians have had enough of this government's inflationary policies and excessive tax rates.

The Bloc Québécois fully supports the Liberals when it comes to drastically increasing the carbon tax. Two million Canadians are using food banks each month. Farms are going out of business because the carbon tax is crushing them.

Will the government wake up, do the right thing and cancel their April 1 tax hike?

*Oral Questions*

● (1445)

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is a whiff of hypocrisy wafting over from the other side of the House today. Perhaps it has not been translated into French yet for the member opposite, but the Leader of the Opposition's campaign manager, his spiritual leader, is the chief lobbyist for Canada's largest grocery retailer, and yet he has the nerve to talk about prices. He should call her to—

[English]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. member from Wellington—Halton Hills is an experienced member and a very respected member. He knows full well that he should wait his turn before he is able to address the House.

The hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Danielle Smith is denying trans kids their basic human rights by denying their access to life-saving health care. It is not the role of politicians to tell doctors how to treat patients. Meanwhile, the leader of the Conservative Party remains shamefully silent on attacks on trans rights. The hate and prejudice of some should never override the fundamental rights of others.

Will this government commit to using the powers of the Canada Health Act to intervene in any denial of life-saving care for trans youth?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a warm fuzzy video hiding daggers at my community in Alberta came out last week on social media.

I spent hours on the phone consoling people who were crying on the phone and who were asking how we can stand up for the rights of 2SLGBTQ people in Alberta. We are going to continue to work on this, and I have one message for Albertans and people across the country.

Legal challenges notwithstanding, the one way we can stop this is to kill the bill before it gets to the legislature. Write to one's UCP members. Get fired up. Mobilize, because kids' rights matter.

\* \* \*

**CHILD CARE**

**Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, parents deserve affordable, quality child care, and child care workers need livable wages, but the Liberals are letting the \$10-a-day child care program fail by not giving workers fair pay and benefits, leaving parents without child care spots. What about the Conservatives? They want for-profit child care. This means—

**The Speaker:** I hate to interrupt the hon. member, but, colleagues, sometimes we can clearly hear the question and sometimes we cannot. This is one of the opportunities where the Chair cannot

hear the question. I ask all members to please keep their conversations private so that I can hear the hon. member.

Could the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre start her question again from the top?

**Ms. Leah Gazan:** Mr. Speaker, parents deserve affordable, quality child care, and child care workers need livable wages, but the Liberals are letting the \$10-a-day child care program fail by not giving workers fair pay and benefits, leaving parents without child care spots. What about the Conservatives? They want for-profit child care. This means higher fees for parents and lower wages for workers. Liberals and Conservatives do not care about care workers.

When will the Liberals finally enforce livable wages and benefits for child care workers so they can live in dignity?

**Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our national child care program is making life more affordable for thousands of Canadian families, as is the Canada child benefit. We continue to work with the provinces and territories to ensure that the five-year agreements are upheld and that we do see improvements to wages and benefits for the essential caregivers who we all rely on for the child care that our kids need.

On this side of the House, we continue to do the hard work that we continue to see the Conservatives oppose every step of the way.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, it pays to commit crime in Canada. Stolen cars now cost Canadians over \$1 billion a year in insurance rates. Car thefts are up 300% in Toronto. That is thanks to the catch-and-release legislation that turns violent offenders loose onto the streets, allowing them to commit more crime.

When will the Liberals reverse their disastrous policies and put the bad guys in jail so that Canadians can keep their cars?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I remind the member that she represents a part of the greater Toronto area, as do I. What I hear from my constituents, and people throughout the 905 area code, is that they are concerned about criminality. They applaud the fact that we have taken steps to ensure that, with bail reform, serious violent repeat offenders are being kept off our streets.

The other thing constituents applaud is that we work hand in hand with the police to keep our communities safe. Therefore, when I am standing with the chief of the Durham police and the Progressive Conservative premier and giving them \$121 million to help with law enforcement, they are saying that is a step in the right direction. There is more to come.

• (1450)

**Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know why we have to explain this to the Attorney General, but bail reform does not apply to auto theft.

It is thanks to Liberals' policies that people can get arrested in the morning and go back to committing crimes in the evening. If they happen to get sentenced, they can serve the sentence in the comfort of their own homes while watching Netflix or even Disney+. That is Canada's justice system after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government.

When will the Liberal government listen to common-sense Conservative policies, repeal the catch-and-release and the stay-at-home sentencing, and finally put offenders in jail where they belong?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the interventions from the member opposite, but if we are going to talk about the Criminal Code, let us talk about the mandatory minimum that still exists for repeat auto theft offenders under paragraph 331.1(1)a). Let us talk about the fact that when people commit an auto theft crime and they are involved with organized criminality, that is already an aggravating factor on sentencing, subparagraph 718.2(a)(iv). I would ask her to please take note.

The important piece is that we are bringing together stakeholders, auto industry and every actor who is involved in this system to ensure we tackle this at every dimension. That conversation is happening this week. It is too bad the Conservatives will not be there for it.

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**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

**Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to wish every member in the House a happy Black History Month.

February is a time when we can remind ourselves of the contribution of Black Canadians in our country, contributions that go back hundreds of years to help build a beautiful Canada. It is also a time for us to remind ourselves that there are still barriers in place that we have to remove.

Could the Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities please tell us more about Black History Month?

**Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this year's theme for Black History Month is "Black Excellence: A Heritage to Celebrate; a Future to Build". It is about telling the stories of thousands of incredible Black trailblazers who made Canada the country it is today. It is about recognizing the resilience of Black Canadians in the face of injustice. It is about celebrating the fact that Black history is Canadian history. Our government will continue to be deliberate about investing directly into Black communities so we can continue to build a more inclusive and equitable future for all Canadians.

Happy Black History Month.

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[Translation]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years under this Prime Minister, auto thefts have increased dramatically in Canada. They have gone up by more than 100% in Montreal alone.

Our ports, the RCMP, the Canada Border Services Agency and the Criminal Code all fall under federal responsibility. Instead of taking action, however, the Liberal government has committed to holding a summit to discuss this further. What a waste of time. We already know that this increase is because the Liberals are soft on crime.

Does the Prime Minister acknowledge that he is responsible for the increase in auto theft?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the increase in auto theft affects us directly. The reality is that organized crime is connected to this type of theft. Here in the House of Commons, we have tabled a bill that tackles money laundering.

The Conservatives are opposed to Bill C-59. If they are really serious about fighting auto theft, I invite them to change their mind about how they are voting.

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we know right now is that under this Prime Minister, Canada has become the biggest exporter of stolen cars around the world. This morning, our leader proposed solutions to undo the damage caused by Liberal legislation. For example, we are going to deter car thieves by putting an end to house arrest and increasing jail time for these criminals. That is just common sense.

Will the government pledge here and now to support our efforts to combat auto theft?

*Oral Questions*

● (1455)

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly, mandatory minimum sentences for auto theft and for repeat offences, for example, already exist in the Criminal Code. If the offence is related to organized crime, this can result in a harsher sentence. That is already in the Criminal Code.

What is not in the Criminal Code is the fact that we need to do more to fight organized crime, which we are addressing in a bill currently before the House, but the Conservatives are going to vote against it.

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**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Americans are still unfairly attacking our softwood lumber industry. Just last Thursday they officially announced plans to increase their illegal tariffs to almost 14% starting next summer.

Obviously, Ottawa needs to stand up for Quebec's forestry industry, but it will take more than mere words to end the crisis. Ottawa has to provide a loan and loan guarantee program sufficient to cover the amounts unfairly withheld by Washington.

Will Ottawa agree to our proposal, to protect our businesses and our workers?

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have consistently stood up to say that the tariffs against softwood lumber, particularly the very important forestry sector, are unjustified and absolutely unwarranted. We have been working with the Americans to make sure that we are using the dispute settlement mechanism to make sure there are panellists who can look into this.

We will always stand up for Canadian workers, the Canadian softwood lumber industry and the forestry sector. I look forward to working with my hon. colleague to keep doing that.

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the time for talk is over. We need loans and loan guarantees to cover the illegal duties. We need to better oversee the CUSMA litigation process to prevent unfair delay tactics. We need to demand a tax exemption for private forests that have nothing to do with the Americans' allegations. We also need to obtain recognition from Washington that Quebec's forestry system is in compliance with free trade requirements.

We are willing to work with the government, but it will have to take action. What is it waiting for?

[English]

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague. Those tariffs are unwarranted. They are unjust. We need to keep standing up for Canadian forestry workers and the sector.

I appreciate the suggestions from my hon. colleague. I think what members have seen the government do, time and time again, is to work in support of the sector, particularly through our trade commissioners, where we have helped Canadian forestry companies expand and diversify. We need to keep doing that.

However, I welcome the suggestions from my hon. colleague and look forward to working with him.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost and the crime. Auto theft is up 300% in Toronto and 100% in Ottawa and Montreal in the last eight years of his catch-and-release policies, but his minister says not to worry. There's already a mandatory jail time provision in 333.1(1)(a) of the Criminal Code. Yes, but it is only for six months.

Today, we propose a mandatory three years for three cars stolen. Will they support this common-sense change, yes or no?

**Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this issue is an important one. It is really important to understand the full complexity of the issue. This touches on the auto industry. This touches on ports. This touches on the Criminal Code. This touches on the CBSA.

What I would note for Canadians is that under that party's watch, when that member was a cabinet minister, front-tier agencies like the CBSA were actually cut. In terms of providing resources to keep Canadians safe, it is an interesting record they have. I would not be too proud of defending it.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, his main criticism is that when we were in government, we delivered safe streets at a low cost. That is right; we spent less. There was less crime and less costs. That is a good thing. With them, we get more costs and more crime.

Why will they not follow our common-sense plan to bring down costs and crime by keeping repeat car theft criminals in jail now?

● (1500)

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what we have on display again today is the hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition. This week, he pretends to care about auto theft. He is getting comprehensive answers from the Attorney General and Minister of Justice on what we are doing.

He just has empty slogans, and I will give him some empty slogans. What does the member's campaign manager tell him about food prices? What does she tell him about her lobbying activities with Loblaws? He comes in here shouting slogans, such as "axe the tax". He needs to axe the hacks.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have right here an announcement from the king of lobbying, Hill & Knowlton, which brought on a special national leader of financial communications. It is that member right there who was just speaking; the kingpin lobbyist over there is trying to distract from the fact that crime is raging out of control.

Today I announced a common-sense plan to end catch-and-release and house arrest for repeat car theft criminals. Will they adopt this common-sense plan to stop the crime?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is pretty clear that the Conservatives are off their game today. What has happened here is that their campaign manager, the woman who has contributed and to whom the Leader of the Opposition owes his job, has been exposed as the lead lobbyist for Loblaw, Canada's leading food retailer. He—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

Colleagues, it is in everyone's interest that the Speaker be able to hear the questions and the answers that are being put forward in the House. I ask members to please restrain themselves, so I can do so.

The hon. government House leader has the floor.

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon:** Mr. Speaker, the leader likes to ask specific questions, so I will ask him: What has been the advice on food prices given by his campaign manager, how much is she getting paid to do that and what has he promised her? What does he owe this woman for her lobbying for Loblaws?

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#### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the weekend Nova Scotia was hit with some of the worst snowfall amounts in recent memory. In Cape Breton Regional Municipality, over 100 centimetres of snow fell. The municipality has declared a local state of emergency. There are over 3,000 people without power. There are communities that have been cut off, and there is a concern about people being able to have access if they need to actually leave their homes.

Can the Minister of Emergency Preparedness update the House on the work he is doing alongside provincial and municipal governments and members of this House to make sure people are safe in Cape Breton and, indeed, all across Nova Scotia?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (President of the King's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the members of Parliament who kept me updated yesterday on the significant snowfall in Nova Scotia. We received a request for assistance from the Nova Scotia government late last night, which is something I ap-

proved. I am happy to report that search and rescue crews have been working all weekend. Heavy equipment for snow clearing from Parks Canada has been made available, as well as transportation support from the Coast Guard. Our humanitarian workforce will provide additional support as well.

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#### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, it is clear that well-connected insiders have never had it as good as they do under the NDP-Liberal government. The arrive scam watchdog report found a made-for-insiders process for this \$54-million spend, where qualified companies were cut from contracts if they did not have the right connections and experience. High-priced insiders were paid every time. This was not a bug in the system; it was a feature in a process designed to drive up costs and reward insiders. It is clear the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

The only explanation for this insider protection scheme is incompetence or corruption, so which is it?

● (1505)

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that, when I was listening to the member opposite's question about insiders, collusion and corruption, I thought he was talking about their chief adviser, who is also serving as Loblaws' lobbyist. Is it not interesting how they are blocking legislation to reduce grocery prices?

When it comes to our government's record on issues of Arrive-CAN, all procurement policies must be followed. We have made this very clear. Any reports of wrongdoing will come with consequences. Can the members opposite say the same for their own house?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that response had absolutely nothing to do with the question. There was a sham investigation. The government's investigator admitted that he is not independent; his job depends on the government's pleasure.

We have with the arrive scam that, when whistle-blowers criticize the government, they are suspended without pay. When witnesses defend the government, they are protected. It is a \$54-million arrive scam.

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost in spending or in corruption. After eight years, why is the government continuing to protect its arrive scam, arrive sham insider friends?

*Oral Questions*

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this House time and time again, we expect that all contracts to be issued follow the rules and procedures set out. CBSA is conducting audits and internal investigations. The police are being called in when necessary. Let me be very clear: Any reports of wrongdoing will come with consequences.

The ArriveCAN app was created to keep Canadians safe at a certain time, and we expect contracts to be issued following the rules.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the Liberal-NDP government would not know accountability if it was hit over the head with it. Today, the government operations committee heard from the Border Services Agency's head of professional integrity. The lesson is as follows: This is a kangaroo court for the government to investigate its own department.

Minh Doan, the chief information officer when ArriveCAN was in use, has been accused of deleting key emails, but the investigator reports to the senior officials at the same department that bought ArriveCAN. Will this coalition government hold those in charge accountable, or does it plan to hide the dirt as it usually does?

**Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have said time and time again that we support the work being done at committee. The minister has instructed the president of CBSA that she should be very clear and open with the committee on the work they are doing. There are initial interim reports. There are more investigations happening.

Once again, we put in place the ArriveCAN app to help Canadians during an extraordinary time. We expect contracts to be fulfilled following all the rules and procurement practices.

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**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week, every MP in the House will have a chance to vote in solidarity with Ukraine by voting in favour of the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. It is important to remember that the Ukrainian people are not just fighting for their own security; they are also fighting for our security, and we need to be fighting for them.

Our government has been unequivocal in our support for Ukraine, but under their leader, the Conservatives have abandoned Ukraine. They voted against Operation Unifier and military aid, and they used their climate change denialism as an excuse to vote against this free trade agreement.

Could the Minister of International Trade clarify the environmental provisions in this agreement and explain why it is so important that everyone vote in solidarity with Ukraine?

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for his strong advocacy for his constituents and for Ukrainians and Ukrainian Canadians.

For months, the Conservative leader claimed that the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement would impose a price on pollution on Ukraine. Last week, in this House, the member for Sarnia—Lambton confirmed that, in fact, Ukraine has had a price on pollution since 2011.

I would ask the Conservatives to join everyone in this House, vote in support of Ukraine and vote for the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. President Zelenskyy wants it and Canadians want it. Conservatives should support Ukraine.

\* \* \*

● (1510)

**HOUSING**

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have learned that the Conservative housing strategy is to browbeat so-called municipal gatekeepers and to force density near transit hubs. Now, neither of these things is relevant for rural Canada. In fact, in northwest B.C., we do not have transit hubs; we barely have public transit.

People deserve affordable housing, but mayors in my region tell me that they cannot build it without infrastructure. Here is where the Liberals come in: Why are communities having to wait so long to hear back about vital infrastructure grants?

**Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member talks about affordable housing. There have been 500 applications from across the country, and 30 deals have been completed thus far. That will continue.

What do we see as a result? It is adding to supply, which, of course, underpins the housing crisis in front of us. The housing crisis is ultimately a crisis in supply, which is why we are working with municipalities, particularly mayors, so that zoning changes can take place in return for federal dollars. The Leader of the Opposition continues to denigrate mayors. In this way, more building can happen. Duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes and mid-rise apartments are all a part of that.

I will deal with the member after question period if he wishes to take up the concern.

ELECTORAL REFORM

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, we all remember this: “2015 will be the last election under first past the post.” Without access to a time machine, it is simply not possible to keep that promise anymore, but this House has an opportunity to reach out to the disillusioned and frustrated Canadians who so desperately want fair voting. We have a chance to pass Motion No. 86 on Wednesday.

Will the Prime Minister support this motion, which would allow a jury of our fellow citizens to help him find the consensus he so desperately wants?

**Ms. Jennifer O’Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Canadians’ right to vote, this is a trusted system that there must be consensus on. We are working with Canadians on how to ensure that every Canadian has more opportunities to access their right to vote. I know the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is working hard on recommendations as well. The Conservatives need to end their filibuster and get down to the real work of this Parliament to ensure that our democratic institutions are strong and accessibility to vote is also strong.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CARBON TAX

The House resumed from February 1 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** It being 3:13 p.m., 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.

Call in the members.

• (1525)

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

(Division No. 625)

YEAS

Members

Aboultiaf	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d’Entremont	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)

Falk (Provencher)
Findlay
Généreux
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Leslie
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
Maguire
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLean
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Patzner
Perkins
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Soroka
Stewart
Stubbs
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer — 119

Business of Supply

Ferreri
Gallant
Genuis
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Khanna
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Majumdar
Mazier
McDonald (Avalon)
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Ruff
Schmale
Shields
Small
Steinley
Strahl
Thomas
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bergeron
Bérubé	Bibeau
Bittle	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)
Collins (Victoria)	Cormier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies

*Business of Supply*

DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Gainey
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gill
Gould	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
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)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Michaud	Miller
Morrice	Morrissey
Murray	Naqvi
Ng	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
Pauzé	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Powlowski	Qualtrough
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	Trudel
Turnbull	Valdez

Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Weiler
Wilkinson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zuberi— 209	

**PAIRED**

Members

Blair

Fast— 2

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

\* \* \*

● (1530)

**CANADA–UKRAINE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023**

The House resumed from February 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-57, An Act to implement the 2023 Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of the member for Dufferin—Caledon to the motion at third reading of Bill C-57.

● (1535)

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

*(Division No. 626)***YEAS**

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
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

*Business of Supply*

Majumdar  
Mazier  
Melillo  
Morantz  
Motz  
Nater  
Paul-Hus  
Poilievre  
Reid  
Richards  
Rood  
Scheer  
Seeback  
Shipley  
Soroka  
Stewart  
Stubbs  
Tochor  
Uppal  
Vecchio  
Vien  
Vis  
Wagantall  
Waugh  
Williams  
Zimmer— 117

Martel  
McLean  
Moore  
Morrison  
Muys  
Patzner  
Perkins  
Redekopp  
Rempel Garner  
Roberts  
Ruff  
Schmale  
Shields  
Small  
Steinley  
Strahl  
Thomas  
Tolmie  
Van Popta  
Vidal  
Viersen  
Vuong  
Warkentin  
Webber  
Williamson

Hanley  
Hepfner  
Housefather  
Hussen  
Iacono  
Ien  
Johns  
Jones  
Julian  
Kelloway  
Khera  
Kusmierczyk  
Lalonde  
Lamoureux  
Larouche  
Lauzon  
Lebouthillier  
Lightbound  
Longfield  
MacAulay (Cardigan)  
MacGregor  
Maloney  
Masse  
May (Cambridge)  
McDonald (Avalon)  
McKay  
McLeod  
Mendès  
Miao  
Miller  
Morrissey  
Naqvi  
Noormohamed  
O'Connell  
O'Regan  
Perron  
Plamondon  
Qualtrough  
Robillard  
Rogers  
Rota  
Sajjan  
Samson  
Savard-Tremblay  
Schieffe  
Sgro  
Sheehan  
Sidhu (Brampton South)  
Sinclair-Desgagné  
Sorbara  
Ste-Marie  
Sudds  
Taylor Roy  
Therrien  
Trudeau  
Turnbull  
Van Bynen  
Vandal  
Vignola  
Virani  
Wilkinson  
Zahid  
Zuberi— 211

Hardie  
Holland  
Hughes  
Hutchings  
Idlout  
Jaczek  
Joly  
Jowhari  
Kayabaga  
Khalid  
Koutrakis  
Kwan  
Lambropoulos  
Lapointe  
Lattanzio  
LeBlanc  
Lemire  
Long  
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)  
MacDonald (Malpeque)  
MacKinnon (Gatineau)  
Martinez Ferrada  
Mathysen  
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)  
McGuinty  
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)  
McPherson  
Mendicino  
Michaud  
Morrice  
Murray  
Ng  
Normandin  
Oliphant  
Pauzé  
Petitpas Taylor  
Powlowski  
Rayes  
Rodriguez  
Romanado  
Sahota  
Saks  
Sarai  
Scarpaleggia  
Serré  
Shanahan  
Sidhu (Brampton East)  
Simard  
Singh  
Sousa  
St-Onge  
Tassi  
Thériault  
Thompson  
Trudel  
Valdez  
van Koeverden  
Vandenbeld  
Villemure  
Weiler  
Yip  
Zarrillo

**NAYS****Members**

Aldag  
Ali  
Anandasangaree  
Arseneault  
Ashton  
Bachrach  
Bains  
Barron  
Battiste  
Beech  
Bérubé  
Bittle  
Blanchette-Joncas  
Blois  
Boulerice  
Brière  
Cannings  
Casey  
Chagger  
Champagne  
Chatel  
Chiang  
Collins (Victoria)  
Coteau  
Damoff  
DeBellefeuille  
Desilets  
Dhaliwal  
Diab  
Drouin  
Duclos  
Dzerowicz  
El-Khoury  
Fisher  
Fortier  
Fragiskatos  
Freeland  
Gaheer  
Garon  
Gaudreau  
Gerretsen  
Gould  
Guilbeault

Alghabra  
Anand  
Angus  
Arya  
Atwin  
Badawey  
Baker  
Barsalou-Duval  
Beaulieu  
Bergeron  
Bibeau  
Blanchet  
Blaney  
Boissonnault  
Bradford  
Brunelle-Duceppe  
Carr  
Chabot  
Chahal  
Champoux  
Chen  
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)  
Cormier  
Dabrusin  
Davies  
Desbiens  
Desjarlais  
Dhillon  
Dong  
Dubourg  
Duguid  
Ehsassi  
Fillmore  
Fonseca  
Fortin  
Fraser  
Fry  
Gainey  
Garrison  
Gazan  
Gill  
Green  
Hajdu

**PAIRED****Members**

Blair

Fast— 2

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment lost.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 24 minutes.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1540)

*[English]*

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### FINANCE

**Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Bill C-323, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act with respect to mental health services. The committee is requesting an extension of 30 days to consider Bill C-323.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, February 7, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

\* \* \*

#### FOSSIL FUEL ADVERTISING ACT

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-372, An Act respecting fossil fuel advertising.

He said: Mr. Speaker, last summer, 200,000 Canadians were forced out of their homes from toxic fumes. Children were unable to go outside, and there were asthma attacks in elderly people from toxic pollution caused by burning fossil fuels. There are more people dying every year from pollution caused by fossil fuels than from tobacco.

The big tobacco moment has arrived. We know that big oil has done years of disinformation and interference and false claims about the damage it is doing to the planet, but it is also killing people.

Today, I am proud to rise and introduce a bill that would make illegal false advertising by the oil and gas industry. The big tobacco moment has finally arrived for big oil. We need to put human health ahead of the lies of the oil sector.

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

\* \* \*

*[Translation]*

### CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-373, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (promotion of hatred or antisemitism).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me today to introduce this bill to amend the Criminal Code so that religious beliefs can

never again be used as a justification for hate speech or words meant to incite violence under the Criminal Code.

It is very unfortunate that people in positions of influence, whether in the religious or civil domain, use their status to incite hatred and violence and sometimes even enjoy a certain impunity in that regard. The recent actions of a Montreal preacher are a shameful example.

This behaviour is unacceptable and must be punished. That is the purpose of our bill. We think that we need to take action as quickly as possible on this, particularly since the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could exacerbate tensions.

I invite the elected members of all parties in the House to join forces and to debate and pass this bill as quickly as possible.

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

\* \* \*

*[English]*

### PETITIONS

#### FIRST RESPONDERS TAX CREDIT

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition. The petitioners indicate that volunteer firefighters account for 71% of Canada's total firefighting essential first responders, and that there are an additional approximately 8,000 essential search and rescue volunteers who respond to thousands of incidents each year.

The petitioners advise that the tax code allows these volunteer first responders to claim a \$3,000 tax credit only if 200 hours of volunteer service are completed in the calendar year. That comes out to only about \$450 a year, or \$2.25 an hour, but if the volunteers work more than 200 hours, the tax credit becomes even less. They add that these essential volunteers not only put their lives on the line but also play an important role in keeping property taxes low in communities.

The petitioners are calling on the government to support Bill C-310, which would amend the Income Tax Act by increasing the volunteer firefighting and search and rescue volunteer services credit from \$3,000 to \$10,000.

• (1545)

#### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present in both official languages a petition from the members of the Dublin Street United Church in Guelph that draws the attention of the House to their concern about the growing rhetoric against trans and non-binary people. They are calling on the House to issue a strong government statement supporting gender identity, gender expression and the protection of trans people, including children; to enshrine into the Charter of Rights and Freedoms the important rights for trans and non-binary children, youth and adults already cited in Bill C-16; and to implement other awareness-raising measures to help counter this dangerous anti-trans rhetoric.

I thank the members of Dublin Street United for their advocacy.

#### UNSOLICITED TELEPHONE CALLS

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition on an anti-spam strategy.

Just this morning, like many Canadians, I was awoken by a call from some random number in China. In fact, in 2020 alone, 68,000 Canadians fell victim to fraud from spam calls, costing them approximately \$379 million.

Constituents in my riding are demanding the government take this issue seriously. We all get annoyed by spam calls, and we all want them to stop.

#### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to table petition e-4517, signed by 1,140 Canadians who know that the use of parental alienation accusations in court is real and that it revictimizes abused women. The petitioners call on the government to make legislative changes to address the issue.

#### SENIORS

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition of deep concern for many of my constituents. Our tax system in many ways is a discriminatory system toward seniors who are single. Married seniors are able to take advantage of income splitting on pensions. Because of the treatment of RRSP with the death of one's spouse, that registered retirement fund or tax-free account can be rolled into the RRSP of the other spouse. Single seniors, at death, just have it added into income, and it affects their taxes in so many ways. The petitioners are begging the government to look at the reality for six million seniors in Canada. Over one-third of them are single seniors, and most of those seniors are women.

Fair taxation for seniors is the call of these single seniors. They ask for the government to review the situation, offer single seniors a reduction of 30% on their income to be taxed, and allow, upon death, single seniors with an RRSP, RRIF or TFSA to transfer it into one of their other savings accounts for the beneficiary of their choice. It is only fair.

#### Routine Proceedings

#### WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

**Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition that has been signed by almost 2,000 Canadians.

These petitioners are concerned about the security of women in women's spaces, including changing rooms, shelters and women's prisons. They are concerned about the trend across Canada of granting access to women's spaces based purely on self-identification. As such, they are calling upon the House of Commons to protect women's spaces through instituting guidelines and formulating policies that will protect the dignity and bodily autonomy of women and girls.

#### FIRST RESPONDERS TAX CREDIT

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from members of my riding.

The petitioners point out that volunteer firefighters account for 71% of total Canadian firefighting first responders. Canada allows volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers to claim a \$3,000 tax credit if 200 hours of volunteer services were completed in a calendar year. That amounts to only about \$450 for each member, which often does not cover the cost of their own gear.

Therefore, petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to increase the tax credit to \$10,000 and to support Bill C-310, which would do just that. I hope every member of the House supports the bill.

• (1550)

#### ELECTORAL REFORM

**Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

One of the things I really appreciate, regardless of whether I believe in a cause or not, is civic engagement. This particular instance of civic engagement recently came to me from about 185 of my constituents, who put forward the petition I have in my hand.

The petition is asking members of the House to consider electoral reform and to support Motion No. 86.

#### UKRAINE

**Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to present my first petition on behalf of constituents in my riding of Winnipeg South Centre.

The petitioners are asking for the House to swiftly adopt Bill C-57, the renewed Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

It is timely that the petition is being presented shortly after members opposite voted to disallow the bill from moving forward.

*Routine Proceedings*

**The Speaker:** As the hon. member knows, the Chair has made a ruling on what is permissible for presenting petitions. I will ask the hon. member to withdraw those comments and give a brief summary of the petition.

**Mr. Ben Carr:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw them and apologize. I draw the attention of the House to a remark I made earlier in the statement, which is that it is my first petition. I am learning the rules as we go.

I want to thank the constituents of Winnipeg South Centre who have put this petition forward. I represent one of the largest Ukrainian populations in Canada and am grateful they have chosen, alongside other members of my community, to engage in the democratic process through me by allowing me the opportunity to put the petition forward.

**Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my constituents of Etobicoke Centre to present a petition concerning Bill C-57, the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. It was signed by over 60 of my constituents just last week. They are petitioning Parliament, including MPs on all sides, to support the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement and pass it swiftly.

The petitioners note that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress have called on the Parliament of Canada to swiftly adopt the legislation.

They note that the misinformation regarding Canada's carbon pricing scheme's having an effect on the agreement has been widely debunked. They ask all parliamentarians to affirm their unwavering support for Ukraine by swiftly passing Bill C-57, the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition signed by residents of Winnipeg North, who are calling on all members of Parliament of all political parties to support the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement.

It is a very timely petition, and it is a pleasure for me table it.

*CLIMATE CHANGE*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is on behalf of members of my community who are calling the attention of the government to the warning by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that rising temperatures over the next two decades will bring widespread devastation and extreme weather, and that the climate crisis requires a drastic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

Therefore, they call upon the Government of Canada to move forward immediately with bold emissions caps for the oil and gas sector that are comprehensive in scope and realistic in achieving the necessary targets Canada has set for a reduction in emissions by 2030.

*FOOD SECURITY*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition today comes from students and the community of St. Thomas More Catholic School in my riding of Kingston.

The petitioners call upon the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to prioritize funding a national school food program for budget 2024, with implementation in schools by the fall of 2024.

● (1555)

The petitioners specifically reference data that says that one in four children in Canada lives in food-insecure households, that Canada is the only G7 country without a national school food program, and that school food programs are recognized around the world as essential to the health, well-being and education of students. Over 388 million children in at least 161 countries receive free or subsidized meals at school.

*FIRST RESPONDERS TAX CREDIT*

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I am pleased to rise on behalf of Nunavut with respect to petition no. 12799012. This is similar to petitions already tabled by other MPs, but I wanted to table it because 51 Nunavut residents signed the petition, specifically people from Iqaluit and Rankin Inlet, who deserve the same answer as others who might be seeking the same thing.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support Bill C-310 and to enact amendments to subsections 118.06(2) and 118.07(2) of the Income Tax Act in order to increase the amount of the tax credit for volunteer firefighting and search and rescue volunteer services from \$3,000 to \$10,000.

*ANIMAL WELFARE*

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from over 3,500 people concerned about the impact of rodent glue traps, which violate the principles of humane treatment and animal welfare. Oftentimes birds, bats and even pets are caught in these traps, undergoing immense suffering.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to implement an immediate ban on rodent glue board traps across Canada due to their inherent animal cruelty and environmental impact.

*FIREWORKS*

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a second petition, signed by over 2,000 people concerned about the impact of fireworks in Canada. The petitioners note the impact on animals, including pets, as well as on people who have post-traumatic stress disorder. They also note that there is an environmental impact and that the Government of Canada is responsible for air quality.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support the replacement of fireworks with light displays.

#### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today.

The first petition calls on the government to butt out of decisions that should be made by provinces and parents. The petition is in support of the rights of parents to have a role in their children's lives without the interference of the state. It notes that in the vast majority of cases, parents care about the well-being of their children and love them much more than any state-run institution does.

#### FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition is in support of a private member's bill, Bill C-257, that would add political belief and activity as prohibited grounds of discrimination to the Canadian Human Rights Act. There are prohibitions on discrimination of various kinds in federal jurisdiction, but no such prohibition on discrimination on the basis of political belief or activity. The petitioners note that it is a fundamental Canadian right to be politically active and vocal, and also that protecting this right benefits our democracy and leads to great vitality in our public debates.

The petitioners want the House to support Bill C-257.

#### WOMEN'S SHELTERS

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my final petition denounces the government's cuts to women's shelters. It notes that at a time when the government is wasting so much money in other areas, it has made a terrible cut to women's shelters. The petitioners ask the government to restore the funding.

\* \* \*

#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

• (1600)

[Translation]

#### REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

##### CANADIAN SOFTWOOD LUMBER

**The Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that I have notice of a request for an emergency debate.

I invite the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot to make a short statement.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 52, I request an emergency debate on the impact on the forest industry and its workers, but also on consumers, of the recent decision by the U.S.

#### Speaker's Ruling

government to raise anti-dumping and countervailing duties on Canadian softwood lumber.

On Thursday, February 1, 2024, the U.S. Department of Commerce announced plans to substantially increase the countervailing and anti-dumping duties it levies on Canadian softwood lumber. If the United States government maintains its preliminary assessment, the duties would almost double from 8.05% to 13.86% starting in August.

The software lumber dispute is a bad serial and the episodes have dragged on for decades. As their cash is being siphoned off by the United States, our forestry companies find themselves unable to modernize and slowly decline. The U.S. is causing considerable harm to our resource-rich regions, where hundreds of communities rely on the forest.

Despite losing all its cases before the various trade dispute settlement bodies, the U.S. continues to maintain hostilities. The traditional approach, where the government issues a press release to express disappointment and challenges U.S. decisions before trade tribunals, is not working because the U.S. is acting in bad faith on this issue. This is particularly true in Quebec, where stumpage rights are awarded in open auctions using a mechanism quite similar to what our neighbours do south of the border.

An emergency debate in which parliamentarians would have the opportunity to express their support for the affected populations and, above all, to propose innovative solutions, could make an essential contribution and allow us to resolve the impasse to which we were led by the U.S. government's stubbornness. The current context and the scale of the announced tariff increase call for an urgent debate; hence my request for such a debate, which I hope the Chair will convene at the earliest opportunity.

#### SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for his remarks, but I do not find that the request meets the requirements of the Standing Orders.

\* \* \*

#### PRIVILEGE

##### ALLEGED LIMITING OF MEMBERS' ABILITY TO SPEAK AT COMMITTEE— SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** The Chair wishes to rule on a question of privilege.

[English]

This is about a question of privilege raised on December 4, 2023, by the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan concerning proceedings in the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and the application of Standing Order 116(2).

In his intervention, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan referenced several events that had occurred during meeting no. 80 of the committee, which began on October 30, 2023. While the meeting was suspended on several occasions, it adjourned only on December 13, 2023.

*Speaker's Ruling**[Translation]*

The first concern raised by the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan was in relation to events surrounding the member for Peace River—Westlock who had sought to participate in the proceedings, though he is not a member of the committee. Secondly, he indicated that instead of giving him back the floor after giving a ruling, the chair of the committee had recognized another member to speak even though he was the one who had the floor prior to the Chair's ruling.

*[English]*

The member argued that both incidents had limited debate on the matter before the committee. Therefore, in his view, the chair of the committee violated Standing Order 116(2) and the Speaker should order that all subsequent proceedings to this be nullified.

*[Translation]*

The Standing Order states:

- (a) Unless a time limit has been adopted by the committee or by the House, the Chair of a standing, special or legislative committee may not bring a debate to an end while there are members present who still wish to participate. A decision of the Chair in this regard may not be subject to an appeal to the committee.
- (b) A violation of paragraph (a) of this section may be brought to the attention of the Speaker by any Member and the Speaker shall have the power to rule on the matter. If, in the opinion of the Speaker, such a violation has occurred, the Speaker may order that all subsequent proceedings in relation to the said violation be nullified.

● (1605)

*[English]*

The first element I would like to address relates to process. The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan elected to raise his concerns through a question of privilege, but he was in fact raising a point of order, in that he was asking the Chair to enforce a specific standing order. As such, I can already determine that it is not, in fact, a *prima facie* case of privilege.

Turning to the points raised by the member, I will attempt to deal with them separately, beginning with the matter that relates to the Chair's role in applying the provisions of Standing Order 116(2).

*[Translation]*

In a ruling from April 1, 2019, Speaker Regan explained the purpose of Standing Order 116(2), at page 26496 of the Debates, stating:

Essentially, it seems to the Chair that this new rule is intended to safeguard debate in committee from a procedural hijacking, so to speak, that would permanently end debate on a motion.

*[English]*

To answer whether the matter now before the House is one which Standing Order 116(2) intended to address, the Chair has scrutinized the blues from the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

It is the Chair's understanding that when the matter was raised in the House, the debate on the motion the member wished to speak to was still ongoing and that he did subsequently participate in debate on the same motion. Given that debate on the motion had not yet concluded when the member brought the issue forward and that

members could still participate, the Chair can only conclude that no violation of the Standing Order has occurred.

As for the member's contention that the member for Peace River—Westlock was not allowed to speak during the proceedings, I would draw the attention of all members to Standing Order 119, which reads:

Any member of the House who is not a member of a standing, special or legislative committee, may, unless the House or the committee concerned otherwise orders, take part in the public proceedings of the committee, but may not vote or move any motion, nor be part of any quorum.

Members need not be substituted to participate in the proceedings of a committee, unless the committee has adopted a motion to limit participation as is its right. I understand from the review of the situation that the committee chair's decision was challenged and was sustained by the majority in this instance. The Chair can therefore confirm that this element does not relate to the conditions outlined in Standing Order 116(2) under which the Speaker would normally intervene.

*[Translation]*

As outlined by former Speakers on many occasions, the Speaker's authority does not normally extend into committee matters, unless the committee sees fit to report the matter to the House. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, at pages 152 and 153 states:

Speakers have consistently ruled that, except in the most extreme situations, they will hear questions of privilege arising from committee proceedings only upon presentation of a report from the committee which deals directly with the matter and not as a question of privilege raised by an individual Member.

*[English]*

On March 23, 2015, one of my predecessors added, at page 12,180 of the Debates:

This is not to suggest that the chair is left without any discretion to intervene in committee matters but, rather, it acknowledges that such intervention is exceedingly rare and justifiable only in highly exceptional procedural as opposed to political circumstances.

Despite the concerns raised by the member, in the absence of a report from the committee on these issues, it is not for the Speaker to intervene in this matter as it remains within the committee's authority to manage.

I thank all members for their attention.

\* \* \*

● (1610)

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I wish to designate Tuesday, February 6, as the day appointed for the conclusion of the debate on the motion to concur on the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### CANADA-UKRAINE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-57, An Act to implement the 2023 Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine, be read the third time and passed.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to notify you that will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member of Parliament for Regina—Wascana.

The Conservative Party is the party of free trade in Canada. Former prime minister Brian Mulroney and former president Ronald Reagan signed the first free trade agreement in 1988. There was a lot of resistance at the time from a lot of nay-sayers who were saying things like we were going to lose our sovereignty as a nation.

People were saying that our agricultural sector would not be able to compete with the warmer States with longer growing seasons. Others said that our manufacturing sector would not be able to compete fairly against the bigger, more powerful, highly industrialized U.S. economy. I remember this one very well: Our wine industry was not going to be able to compete with wine regions in California. I can assure members that Okanagan Valley wines have only become better and better over the intervening years, because competition makes us better. We say to bring it on.

Conveniently, in that free trade election in 1988, for all the nay-sayers, the protectionists and the Chicken Littles, who were saying this time the sky really was falling if we were going to remove protective barriers, there was the Liberal Party where they could park their votes. Its leader at the time, John Turner, said that a free trade agreement with the U.S. would Americanize us. Does that sound familiar? We hear the same today. The Liberal Party is always fear-mongering about what the Conservatives might do, cozying up too much with the United States. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Happily, the Conservatives won the election in 1988, and the free trade agreement, the FTA, came into effect on January 1, 1989. By all measures, it was a roaring success for both countries. Canada and the U.S. were both wealthier and had more powerful economies on the account of free trade. It turns out that Adam Smith and other classical economists were right and that the wealth of nations is built on the ability of free people to trade freely with each other and of free countries to be able to trade freely with other countries.

The FTA was just the beginning. Soon the Liberals, the great imitators, also became free traders, and they brought Mexico into the fold under the North American FTA, or NAFTA as we call it. However, it took another Conservative government, under the leadership of former prime minister Stephen Harper, to bring about an ambitious free trade agenda, which encompassed many countries around the world: in Europe, in South America, in the Asia-Pacific region and, of course, Ukraine, which is what we are talking about today. In 2015, late in former prime minister Harper's administration, we entered into a free trade agreement with Ukraine.

### *Government Orders*

Canada's relationship with Ukraine is very important, not only because of the 1.3 million Canadian citizens who claim a Ukrainian heritage, but also because of the half a billion dollars of trade annually between the two countries. That is a relatively small amount of money compared to our trade with some other countries, but it is growing, and that is important.

It is also important to recognize that coal has been part of that \$500 million. Of course, Ukraine, like many countries in the world, is trying to get off coal and to substitute it with cleaner-burning energy. Canada is conveniently situated for that as well because we have a lot of natural gas available. It burns much cleaner, and we want to make it available for countries like Ukraine to get off coal and for countries in the Asia-Pacific region as well.

Unfortunately, the Liberal government, under the current Prime Minister, thinks Canadian natural gas should stay in the ground. Many countries are looking for a reliable supplier of natural gas, and they have come to Canada asking us to come to the table. This includes Germany, which is looking for a way to cut its dependence on Russian natural gas. Yes, that is the Russia that, two years ago, invaded Ukraine in an illegal war and is indiscriminately bombing cities and killing its citizens. It is using sale proceeds, the cash it receives from selling liquid natural gas, to fuel that war. Indirectly, we are now helping President Putin build up his war chest.

• (1615)

Canada could be of real value here. What better way to help our Ukrainian friends than to do our part to cut off Putin's money supply.

Astonishingly, the Prime Minister told our friends in Europe, "Sorry, there is no business case for LNG." That is unbelievable. The Americans certainly saw a business case, and where Canada dropped the ball, they picked it up and ran with it. They are now building LNG export facilities and getting ready, and they are already starting to fill the demand for clean, ethical natural gas for countries that want to get off coal and get as far away from Putin as possible.

The Prime Minister did see a business case relating to the natural gas industry, and that was to actually do business with Mr. Putin. Canada's PM wants to keep Canadian natural gas in the ground, but he delivered a powerful turbine to Putin so that he could increase Russian natural gas production for sale to the world and, with that cash, could build up his war machine against Ukraine. That is just not what friends do.

Canadians are getting tired of the Liberal Party hypocrisy and are looking forward to the day when a common-sense Conservative government would stand up to dictators like Putin and would turn dollars for dictators into paycheques for our people. That is what the Conservative Party stands for.

### *Government Orders*

Today, we are talking about Bill C-57, an act to implement the 2023 free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine. The existing free trade agreement is now 25 years old and needs to be revisited and updated. We agree with that. However, in the meantime, the old agreement, the one negotiated by former prime minister Harper, is still in place and still functions.

Conservative members on the international trade committee have been working very diligently to improve this bill that is before the House today so that we could be in a position to vote on it unanimously and to pass it through. Here are some things the Conservative members on the committee wanted to improve. They wanted to include a commitment from Canada to provide weapons and munitions to help Ukraine in its defence against Putin's illegal invasion. That is what friends do in a time of war.

We want to include a plan to sell Canadian LNG to Europe so that it would no longer provide Putin with the cash he needs to fund that illegal war. That is a common-sense solution and a step forward.

Importantly, we also want to delete the provision in this revised agreement promoting carbon tax, because Conservatives want to axe the tax. I am sure everybody in the House has heard that many times already. We call it the inflationary tax on everything that Canadians do not need and that is ineffective, and that is exactly what we will do if we form government after the next election.

Sadly, all those common-sense recommendations were voted down by the other parties. Today, we now have before us a weaker, inferior product. We were hoping, until the vote earlier today, that it would go back to the committee for improvement.

I just want to touch very quickly on the history of the Conservative Party's support for Ukraine. It is important for people to understand this. Common-sense Conservatives, under our leader, have a long and proud history. We stood with Ukraine when President Zelenskyy asked the Prime Minister not to sign an export permit for that gas turbine that I talked about a minute ago. We stood with Ukraine when it asked for a reliable source of weapons and munitions, and we are still waiting for the Liberal government to deliver on that.

We stood with Ukraine when we asked the Prime Minister to impose Magnitsky sanctions on Putin and his oligarchs. Our history goes back many years. The Conservative government, in 1991, became the first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union. We stood with Ukraine when the Harper government undertook Operation Unifier to provide critical military training to Ukraine, which was very much appreciated. Of course the agreement that we are talking about today, which I already mentioned, was negotiated by a Conservative government.

We are very proud of our long-standing relationship with Ukraine. We will always stand with them because that is what friends do.

• (1620)

**Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it was interesting hearing the member opposite speak. He, like other members of the Conservative Party when they have been speaking

to this bill, spoke about nostalgia. They invoke what Diefenbaker did and what Mulroney did in 1991 or whatever the case may be.

What do the people on the front lines of Ukraine need right now? They need help today. Most of the people on the front lines were not born when Mulroney was prime minister. What they need is help today.

It concerns me that these Conservative MPs consistently vote against the free trade agreement, against military support for Ukraine and against Operation Unifier to train Ukrainian soldiers. These are things President Zelenskyy has asked for. These are things the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has asked for.

My question for the member opposite is this: Why will he not stand with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, with President Zelenskyy and with the Ukrainian people in their existential fight for their survival and our security?

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, the people the hon. member opposite is talking about were certainly alive when Canada shipped a gas turbine to Russia that, unbelievably, allowed Russia to increase its production of natural gas, which is sold to western Europe to raise more money to feed the war machine that is killing Ukrainian people today. Do they know that?

He talks about nostalgia. Of course many Canadians are nostalgic for the great days of Conservative governments, and they are looking forward to the day when another Conservative government will be formed in this House. We would fix a lot of the errors the Liberal government made, including ensuring the munitions President Zelenskyy is asking for will actually be delivered.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, it is a common misconception that liquefied natural gas is somehow good for the climate. The recent decision by the U.S. White House to pause LNG investments to protect the climate is an illustration of the point that, especially where LNG comes from fracked sources, the release of methane means LNG is not only not better than coal but also, on the entirety of its production life cycle, LNG has just as much carbon as burning coal. It is just that it is emitted at a different point in its life cycle.

I ask my hon. colleague from Langley—Aldergrove if he would not agree that it would be better to just call it fossil gas instead of pretending it is somehow a natural product that is distinguished from other fossil fuels.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, on the west coast, we know a lot about natural gas, and we now have the technology to convert it into liquid form, put it onto ships and ship it safely across the ocean. This is exactly what western Europe is requiring to get it natural gas coming from Russia. It just makes sense that friends should be helping friends out, particularly in a time of war. This is a missed opportunity by the Liberal government.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I enjoyed travelling with my Conservative colleague when the transport committee toured the ports of Canada, and I listened intently to his views on this subject.

I had a chance recently to meet in Edmonton with the consul general of Ukraine. We discussed this matter and what he called for was unanimity and the full-throated support of the House. He was a bit astounded that there are members who intend to vote against this free trade agreement.

I wonder if my colleague has had a chance to consult specifically with representatives from Ukraine about the content of this free trade agreement and what they have told him.

**Mr. Tako Van Popta:** Madam Speaker, what a lot of Ukrainians are concerned about is something I read in *The Globe and Mail* today, which is that apparently the Prime Minister's Office had specifically invited the known Nazi who was here when President Zelenskyy was in the House. The invitation read, in part, "Dear Yaroslav Hunka, The Right Honourable...Prime Minister of Canada, is pleased to invite you to a special event...September 22". This seems to have come directly from the Prime Minister's Office and Canadians, particularly those of Ukrainian descent, have the right to be concerned about that.

• (1625)

**Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to Bill C-57, an act to implement the 2023 free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine.

I have to admit that, when I first glanced at the title of this bill when it was tabled in the House of Commons last fall, I was glad to see it for a few reasons. The first reason was that Conservatives support Ukraine. Ever since Russia's illegal invasion of that country two years ago, it has become imperative that all countries support Ukraine to preserve the rules-based international order. Otherwise, the international community risks backsliding into a pre-World War II era in which large, powerful countries are able to invade and annex their smaller neighbours with no repercussions. This is a concern I have heard many times in my riding of Regina—Wascana, not just from the many Ukrainian refugees who have moved to Saskatchewan, but also from ordinary citizens with no particular connection to Ukraine. Therefore, anything that we can do to support Ukraine is a good thing.

The second reason I had high hopes for this bill is that Conservatives support free trade. Long gone are the days of economic nationalism when governments insisted on an unlevel playing field to protect domestic companies at the expense of consumers. Instead, Canadians and the international community have come to recognize the benefits of free trade. It allows Canadian companies to pursue new opportunities and to find new customers for their products and services, and it allows Canadian consumers to enjoy a variety of products and services from all around the world at the lowest possible prices. In fact, Conservatives' support for free trade goes back many years to the times of former prime ministers Stephen Harper and Brian Mulroney.

Finally, I thought that, if nothing else, the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement would give us something different to talk about.

### *Government Orders*

For example, we have had many, many debates in the chamber about the Liberals' carbon tax. I know I have received many emails and phone calls from my constituents about the carbon tax and how it is making life more expensive every time they fill up their tanks with gas, go to the grocery store to do their shopping and pay their home heating bills.

I thought that this bill would give us a break from talking about the carbon tax because a free trade agreement should have nothing to do with the carbon tax. Therefore, I have to say that I was surprised and disappointed to find that the Liberals' carbon tax has made its way into our free trade agreement with Ukraine. In chapter 13 of the agreement, which is the environment chapter, under article 10, Ukraine would be required to "promote carbon pricing and measures to mitigate carbon leakage".

Free trade agreements are supposed to be about trade and encouraging the free flow of goods and services between two countries. The free trade agreement should not be about imposing a carbon tax on Ukraine. The same Liberal carbon tax that has been making life more difficult for Canadians would soon be making life more difficult for Ukrainians, assuming this bill were to pass.

Not only is a carbon tax the last thing Canadians want, but it is also the last thing Ukrainians need, given that they are in the middle of a war. It would make infinitely more sense to help Ukrainians win the war first and remove every Russian soldier from Ukrainian soil before beginning any talk about a carbon tax and how to implement a carbon tax in the middle of a war zone.

I was also hoping that this bill would give us a break from talking about the Liberals' unrealistic net-zero emissions targets. Over the last eight years, the Liberals have come up with a long list of very expensive net-zero emissions targets, including phasing out fossil fuels, restricting fertilizers for farmers and ending the sale of gas-powered cars, which are all initiatives that would make life less affordable for Canadians. Therefore, I thought that this bill would give us a break from talking about these net-zero emissions targets because, obviously, free trade should have nothing to do with net-zero emissions targets. I have to say again that I was disappointed that the Liberals' net-zero emissions targets have made their way into our free trade agreement with Ukraine.

• (1630)

Under chapter 13, article 10, Ukraine would be required to "transition to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050." Transitioning to net-zero emissions has proven difficult enough for Canadians to do, and we do not have a war going on in this country. We do not have the Russians bombing us every day as the Ukrainians do. It is ridiculous to expect Ukrainians to meet this goal given what they are going through right now.

*Government Orders*

It has also been well documented that the Russians have been targeting the Ukrainian power grid to maximize human suffering. If the Ukrainian power grid is going to be in shambles for the foreseeable future, one can reasonably expect that they will have to rely on various backup diesel generators and gas-powered vehicles for some time to come. It is not realistic to expect them to switch to electric cars. It is not realistic to expect them to switch to electric tanks or electric armoured personnel carriers. It is not realistic to expect Ukrainian rockets to stop burning rocket fuel, Ukrainian jets to stop burning jet fuel or Ukrainian helicopters to stop burning fuel any time soon.

I was also hoping that the debate over this free trade agreement would give us a break from the debate over the phase-out of coal because a free trade agreement should have nothing to do with the phase-out of coal. However, once again, the Liberals' plan to phase out coal has made its way into the free trade agreement with Ukraine. In chapter 13, article 10, Ukraine would be required to "promote the rapid transition from unabated coal power".

It should be plain to see that imposing the phase out of coal will be a major burden to the Ukrainian people, who quite frankly, have more pressing concerns. Approximately 25% of Ukraine's electricity comes from coal, although that number is very volatile, given that they are in the middle of a war and that the Russians have been consistently targeting Ukrainians' power grid. It is very conceivable that Ukraine may have to rely on coal for quite some time to come.

When President Zelenskyy addressed Parliament last fall, he could not have been more clear that fighting and winning the war was his number one priority. There are questions that have to be asked. How would this free trade agreement help Ukraine to win the war? How would imposing a carbon tax on Ukraine help them stop more Russian soldiers from occupying Ukrainian soil? How would imposing net-zero targets on Ukraine destroy more Russian tanks? How would shutting down Ukrainian coal plants sink more Russian ships in the Black Sea? Of course, the sad answer is that these measures would not be helpful to the Ukrainian war effort. Therefore, they should not be in this free trade agreement, and they should not be supported.

Another topic that President Zelenskyy addressed in his speech in this chamber last September was Russia's weaponization of its energy exports. One of the best things Canada could do to help Ukraine win the war would be to increase Canadian oil and gas exports to western Europe so they can stop buying from Russia. Every dollar that western Europe spends on Russian oil and gas only enables Vladimir Putin to buy more bombs, planes and tanks to use against the Ukrainians. This Liberal government should be embarrassed for not doing more to increase Canadian oil and gas exports to Europe.

I think that I can best summarize the differences between the parties in their support Ukraine in this way: Conservatives support Ukraine unconditionally, while the Liberals support Ukraine with strings attached.

There is no reason for this free trade agreement to be pushed forward now. The current free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine, which was signed in 2017, can stay in place until after the Ukrainians have won the war and are ready to sit down with us. In

the meantime, Canada should continue to be generous in welcoming Ukrainian refugees to our country, and we should continue to be generous in our economic and military aid to Ukraine.

• (1635)

As for Bill C-57, I believe that we should not be in favour of the bill. The Liberals should withdraw the bill, and we should let the current free trade agreement stay in place until the war is won. After the war is over—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member is out of time by quite a bit.

The hon. member for Guelph has the floor.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member sits with me on the environment committee. During the committee discussions we have talked about carbon pricing mechanisms around the world. Something we have not talked about explicitly is that Ukraine has had a carbon price mechanism with a net effective carbon rate since 2018 and that the EU is working on carbon border adjustment mechanisms that Ukraine is aligning itself with so that countries that do not have carbon pricing mechanisms will effectively be charged a tariff as they export to countries with carbon pricing.

Could the hon. member comment on how, if we did not have carbon pricing in Canada, we would actually end up hurting our trade with countries that do have carbon pricing, such as Ukraine?

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Madam Speaker, I enjoy working with that hon. colleague on the environment committee as well. The last time I checked, Ukraine's carbon tax was about one dollar per tonne. Canada's carbon tax is \$65 per tonne, and is scheduled to increase to a \$130 per tonne by the end of the decade, so I think it is plain to see that expecting the Ukrainians to increase their carbon tax by 130-fold would have a very negative effect on their ability to win the war.

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am always amazed to hear that we support Ukraine, that they support Ukraine, that everyone supports Ukraine, yet we always find ourselves debating the carbon tax.

The Conservative Party's relationship with the carbon tax worries me.

Is my colleague's relationship with the carbon tax one of obsession, hyper-fixation, anxiety or insanity?

[English]

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Madam Speaker, I think we have to start by asking what the carbon tax is doing in the text of this free trade agreement. The hon. member says that we are the ones who are obsessed with the carbon tax, but we are not the ones who put it in there. What is the carbon tax doing in the text of this free trade agreement, if it has no benefit whatsoever to helping Ukrainians win the war? I wish I knew.

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would agree with some of the other questioners about this false narrative that the mention of carbon pricing in this free trade agreement has anything to do with forcing Ukraine to put a price on carbon, because Ukraine already has a price on carbon. It has had one longer than Canada. The member talks about what President Zelenskyy said. President Zelenskyy, in this place, said to please pass this free trade agreement quickly. It was signed when he was here. I met with the Ukrainian consul general in Edmonton, and he said to please tell my colleagues that they want unanimous support for this from all their supporters around the world, and especially Canadians, and he could not believe what the Conservatives were doing here.

**Mr. Michael Kram:** Madam Speaker, I remember when I was here last September for President Zelenskyy's speech. He talked about the need to help Ukraine to win the war and to push the Russians back across the border. He talked about the need to stop Vladimir Putin from weaponizing his oil and gas exports and his energy exports. He talked about the need to prosecute Russian war criminals, and he had a shout-out for the Holodomor memorial in Edmonton. He did not come here to say to please impose a carbon tax on them. He did not come here to say to please phase out their coal and impose net-zero emissions targets on us. I would encourage the hon. member to go back to the video from last September and re-watch President Zelenskyy's speech.

• (1640)

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of my constituents in Milton on Bill C-57. I have a thriving Ukrainian diaspora in Milton. It is also a privilege to be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I will start with a bit of a history on this topic here in the House of Commons. On November 21, the House of Commons passed second reading on this bill, which is intended to upgrade the current Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement to reflect changes that have come about since the deal was first implemented back in 2017.

Of course, the most notable of those changes has been the illegal and unjust invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The bill is now going to committee. The vote passed 205-109, with the NDP, the Bloc, the Green Party and the independents all voting in favour with the Liberals. However, all 109 Conservatives who were present for the vote opposed it back in November. Their official reason was that the bill would impose carbon taxes on Ukraine, but nothing could be farther from the truth.

### *Government Orders*

One does not have to take my word for it. Those are the words of New Pathway, that is, Marco Levytsky, an editorial writer. The title of that article is "Conservative Opposition to Free Trade Agreement Makes No Sense". I could not agree more.

As they go on to say in the article, "The text of the new trade deal does not commit either Canada or Ukraine to a carbon tax...As Marianna Kulava a spokesperson for the Embassy of Ukraine said in a statement e-mailed to the Globe and Mail, the 'modernized [Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement] does not include any specific instruments on decreasing carbon footprint, including specific taxation instruments.'" It is all just non-facts and fact-free rhetoric from the Conservatives on this.

This article goes on to say:

"[The leader of the Conservative Party] appears to be so hungry to win back the...People's Party of Canada vote, to placate elements within his own base, and to demonstrate his unwavering opposition to carbon taxes, that he would compromise on his support for a democracy whose very existence is under threat".

I could not agree more. It is absolutely shameful.

Additionally, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress was disappointed that the official opposition unanimously voted against legislation that would update the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. That justification was absolutely nothing more than a red herring. It is shameful to see the Conservatives, time after time, stand in the House to try to justify the unjustifiable position.

Again, one does not need to take my word for it. The Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association said, "Our Association is very concerned about the partisan politics displayed by the Conservative Party of Canada when voting on the Second Reading on Bill C-57, which intends to upgrade the current Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement."

Ukrainian Canadians and Ukrainians abroad have all been urging Conservatives to reconsider their lack of support for this bill. Canadians want to be able to say that support for Ukraine is unanimous in our country, both in the House of Commons and beyond. It would be great to say that but, sadly, the Conservatives are standing in the way of being able to say that support for Ukraine in Canada is unanimous.

Alberta Conservatives recently hosted an infamous far right Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson at a United Conservative Party fundraiser right before Tucker jetted off to Moscow.

Since the beginning of this debate, Conservatives have continually tried to tell Ukraine exactly what it needs to win this war, despite the fact that Ukrainian Canadians, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association and many other spokespeople have been saying exactly what we all know, which is that the support for Ukraine should be unanimous.

*Government Orders*

Conservatives keep “Conspaining” to Ukraine exactly what it needs and what it does not need. It is a new term, and I think it is probably going to stick because all of this fact-free Conservative rhetoric coming from the other side is really emblematic of the Conservative Party just thinking it knows better for Ukraine than Ukraine knows for itself.

It would be great to say that our support for Ukraine is unanimous in the House and all across Canada. It is frankly despicable of the Conservatives to continue to spread disinformation, “Conspain” to Ukraine and, frankly, join the ranks of Tucker Carlson in questioning the motives and the necessity of the west to support Ukraine.

This bill will go off to the other place, and we know that the only partisan senators in that place are Conservative. I am really hoping that the Conservatives will allow for the Conservative senators to vote with their conscience, vote for Ukraine, vote for democracy and support Bill C-57.

• (1645)

I hope there are still some rational Conservatives on the other side who will reconsider their shameful vote, and vote in favour of Bill C-57.

**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 Victoria, Environment; the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Public Services and Procurement; and the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Labour.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, there seems to be quite a bit of selective hearing going on on the Liberal benches.

The Liberals talk about listening to Ukraine, but Ukraine specifically asked us not to send the turbine to fund the Russian war machine. The Liberals did not listen to that. The Ukrainians asked for LNG, and the Liberals did not include that in the agreement. The Ukrainians have asked us to send munitions, and the Liberals voted against our Conservative motion. Over a year ago, the Liberals promised an air defence system that still has not been delivered.

Could the member tell us why the hearing over there is so selective, and when the Liberals are actually going to give Ukraine things that would help them win this war?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Madam Speaker, what Ukraine has asked us for is free trade and an updated free trade agreement between our two nations.

The President of Ukraine stood in this place and asked for our unanimous support. Apparently that was too much for the Conservatives. That was just asking too much of the Conservative Party. The President literally came to this place, stood here and said that he hoped Ukraine could count on Canada's unanimous support.

This is an honest opportunity for Conservatives to demonstrate that support, to stand in support of a bill that President Zelenskyy, himself, and Ukrainian Canadians, themselves, asked for. They are in the inboxes, and Conservative members know that Ukrainian

Canadians have been asking them to reconsider this shameful position on free trade with Ukraine for months now.

It is up to them. Yea or nay.

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague across the way for a very good speech that called out the quite inexplicable opposition that the Conservatives have to this bill.

The Conservatives talk about hearing only what we want to hear, but they are not hearing the President of Ukraine. I met with the Consul General for Ukraine. He asked why we could not pass this quickly and unanimously. He said that they need our support to show the world that Ukraine has unanimous support among its allies. It is the only the Conservatives that are blocking the support.

Could the member comment on why Conservatives are taking this stand, although I am not sure how he could explain this?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Madam Speaker, it is absolutely incredible. It is impossible to rationalize why the Conservatives have made this calculation.

I have gone on to their social media on occasion to see what the comments are like. It is really clear to me what those comments have led those Conservatives to believe is the right thing to do in this case. There are a lot of pro-Russia comments under the tweets and the Facebook posts of the Conservatives. None of those have been hidden by the Conservatives and none of those accounts have been blocked, despite the fact that many of them are definitely Russian trolls and people who are spreading more disinformation and misinformation.

We will not fall for it. We will not placate those far right trolls on the Internet, like some of these Conservatives are so eager and willing to do. We will vote with Ukraine. We will stand with Ukraine. We will support Ukraine until they win this war.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, to echo my colleagues' most recent comments, I think it is a shame to see the Conservatives sending such a negative message not only to Canada and Quebec, but also to the world by saying that we are not unanimous in our support of Ukraine.

This is a very simple agreement. In fact, it updates a temporary agreement that was already in place. It implements some important things, including procedures to combat corruption, which is a significant improvement. We know that there is corruption in that corner of the world too. Post-war reconstruction will be massive. It is important that this be implemented.

I would like my colleague to tell us about it.

• (1650)

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Madam Speaker, it is simple. Support for Ukraine is simple and easy. It is not very complicated or difficult to understand. Simply put, Ukraine is an ally and a friend of Canada. Supporting Ukraine is straightforward. For some reason, the Conservatives have a hard time understanding that. Why?

Right now, support for this bill should be unanimous.

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am glad that the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is so excited to hear my speech. I will try not to let him down.

Here we are again talking about a free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine. I think this is something that we never expected to be a contentious issue when we came back in the fall of 2023, at least for just about every member of each party, except for the Conservatives. However, here we are.

The Conservatives have drummed up this narrative. It took them a while to do it. If we go back and look at their record on speaking to this, they did not start talking about a carbon tax or pricing pollution until well into the debate. It was as though, at some point, they realized what their angle was going to be on it and then that became their trumpeting point.

I am here to tell them that nobody believes them. Nobody believes their false narrative; nobody, that is, outside of the base that they represent, the same people who went to see Tucker Carlson in Alberta. Nobody, outside of that hard-core base of all right-wing support that the Conservatives are trying to court, believes for a second that this is a real, genuine reason that they are against this.

I find it quite interesting how Conservative after Conservative, as we heard from the member for Regina—Wascana moments ago, get up to say the carbon tax that Ukraine has is only this percentage of this, and it was barely nothing compared to what Canada is trying to do or what we are trying to impose. There is nothing in this agreement that says anything about it. As a matter of fact, the agreement goes beyond saying nothing about it. Rather, it actually says that neither country can impose their environmental policies on the other.

What Conservatives have picked up on is a little reference to the fact that pricing pollution is something that will happen more in the future and that both countries are aware of this and will respond to it accordingly. That is it. It is in the preamble. The clause has no teeth. There is nothing. As a matter of fact, as I said, the agreement goes beyond that to actually say that neither country can impose its environmental policies or regulations. The Conservatives get up and talk about the Ukrainian people in Canada and their position on this as though they know better than President Zelenskyy and just about anybody else on this matter.

Let me read something to my Conservative colleagues, who are heckling me. This is from the League of Ukrainian Canadians, who wrote a letter to the Leader of the Opposition on December 21, 2023. It reads:

Not long ago, the [Conservative Party] was a global leader in support for Ukraine, as Operation Unifier was launched under...Harper...in 2015 in response to

### *Government Orders*

the annexation of Crimea and invasion of Donbas. Canadian Armed Forces trained over 40,000 Ukrainian soldiers, modernizing their military doctrine to NATO standards. In return, those Ukrainian soldiers did Canada proud by heroically repelling the Russian invasion forces from Kyiv in February 2022, when the world was predicting the capital would fall within days....

And yet, just weeks after voting against the renewal of the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement, the CPC voted to cut funding to Operation Unifier. Clearly, the 1.36 million members of the Ukrainian Canadian community see it for what it is: A vote against Ukraine's victory....

Many...constituents have spent nearly two years volunteering, advocating, working late nights packing medical supplies into containers, spending their rent money on drones and body armor to keep their friends alive. And some made the ultimate sacrifice by traveling to Ukraine to defend it against Russian aggression. They laid down their lives in the name of freedom for Ukraine and the West, including Canada. They understood that Ukraine must win the war against Russia, otherwise Europe, Canada and the United States will be next in defending themselves against Russian aggression, with soldiers from NATO countries, including Canada, shedding their blood.

If Russia is not defeated, it will be as much a threat to Canada in the future as it is to Ukraine today. We are not insisting you make Ukrainian independence your cause. We are just asking you to think through the war in Ukraine and the need to support Ukraine from the point of view of your own interests, as well as Canada's national interests.

Most Canadians understand that supporting Ukraine is in Canada's security interest, except apparently the Conservative Party of Canada.

• (1655)

That was a letter written to the Leader of the Opposition on December 21, 2023.

Conservatives will come in here and say that Ukraine needs what they say it needs. The only person I know who says that what Ukraine needs is what he says it needs is Vladimir Putin; Conservatives are acting just as he acts with respect to dictating.

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan is getting a good laugh out of this, but it was just two days ago that Tucker Carlson was in Alberta with his premier. Where is Tucker Carlson now? Reportedly, he is in Russia about to interview Vladimir Putin. One would think the member would at least understand that perhaps now is not the best time to be trumpeting these lines, yet he does.

I am going to end with this: I have spoken to this many times. It is time for us to finally vote on this.

I know Conservatives calculated how they would try to address this in the fall. It was very deliberate: How could they ensure that they would maintain the support of that alt-right movement against Ukraine?

Earlier today, I heard a Conservative talk about pining for the good old days of the Republicans and Conservatives, who came together to create these great free trade agreements. Comparing the Conservatives of today to the Brian Mulroney Conservatives is exactly like comparing Marjorie Taylor Greene, Matt Gaetz and Donald Trump to Ronald Reagan. It cannot be done. They are two completely different parties. Their logo might be the same colour as the one Brian Mulroney had, and they might have the same talking points, but they are certainly nothing like the Conservatives who brought in free trade, despite pining for those days, as though only they could ever protect free trade. It is quite the opposite.

*Government Orders*

Conservatives are going down the exact same route as are the alt-right Republicans I previously mentioned. That is where they are going. That is the base they are trying to protect. I will remind them that nobody believes this narrative they have created around a price on pollution and not supporting Ukraine, even after the President of Ukraine himself stood five feet from where I am standing and asked us to support it. Nobody believes their false narrative on this, because they are wrong.

**Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I remember when President Zelenskyy was addressing Parliament last September. I paid very close attention to his speech. When I checked Twitter that evening, it seemed that the member for Kingston and the Islands was not paying attention to the speech; rather, he was recording a video of the leader of the official opposition and making fun of him for the way he was clapping.

Could the member for Kingston and the Islands explain to Parliament how his actions have helped promote public support for Ukraine?

• (1700)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I can confirm that I definitely shared that video. However, I did not record it.

I will say this: I find it very interesting that the member wants to talk about what the Leader of the Opposition was doing at the time when the President of Ukraine was here.

Do members know that the Leader of the Opposition never once mentioned on his Twitter, Facebook or Instagram feed, or anywhere, that the President of Ukraine was here? He did not make a single reference. As a matter of fact, it was almost like an act of defiance. The member for Calgary Nose Hill had to go back a year to retweet and repost what the Leader of the Opposition had said when the President of Ukraine appeared before us virtually.

This is the narrative I am talking about, of trying to deceive and suggest something else is going on. I am sure that, within their caucus meetings, they have had to battle the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman on it. He is in the front row now, but he was not before Christmas. I am sure that was the trade-off to get him to be quiet.

The reality of the situation is that Conservatives have been against Ukraine because they do not support Ukraine.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I share my colleague's disdain for the Conservatives' position. It is deplorable. However, as long as we are discussing the free trade agreement, we should discuss its contents.

I would like to hear him comment on a section of this agreement that still allows private companies to sue governments on the ground that they are preventing these companies from fully capitalizing on their investments. The Bloc Québécois considers this problematic, and we believe that a committee should be struck to work on it.

Would the member agree that we should study this issue in detail to prevent private companies from being able to sue governments under free trade agreements?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I would say that, with the amount of time that the Conservatives have spent holding up this piece of legislation, we have had the opportunity to study it thoroughly.

The member is right about one thing: It is going to provide private companies the opportunity to work on and to build infrastructure in Ukraine. That is why the Ukrainians and the President of Ukraine are so interested in this deal. He knows he is going to win this war, and he wants to have the necessary tools in place when that happens to start rebuilding the country. This is going to involve investment from outside countries in terms of rebuilding infrastructure. That is where we have the opportunity. This is the trade-off for Canada that will position us well to be part of that rebuilding process of Ukraine.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, if Parliament were to swallow the amendment like a pill, what would the member say the side effects would be?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, we voted on the amendment earlier today. The amendment the Conservatives tried to put forward was defeated, and now we are back to talking about the bill without the amendment. I am sorry if that is not what the member was referring to.

However, we need to pass this legislation, and the only thing that is really troubling when it comes to it is the fact that it is not unanimous. It should and could easily have been unanimous. This narrative about a carbon tax in here and how that is somehow impacting it is a complete red herring, nothing more, nothing less.

It is very unfortunate that the House will not pass this bill unanimously. However, I think that Canadians will remember and that the Conservatives will be held accountable for their vote on it.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, sometimes when I rise in the House I say I have a tough act to follow. However, that is not the case today.

I am speaking to Bill C-57, which would implement the agreement that the government negotiated with Ukraine. As has been the case throughout this debate, I will make some general reflections on Conservative support for Ukraine, but it is important to underline that these are two distinct issues. There is the question of whether and how we should support Ukraine, and Conservatives are firmly in favour of supporting Ukraine, and then there is the question of the particular provisions of Bill C-57.

Bill C-57 is not a kind of in-a-vacuum endorsement of a relationship with a particular country. Bill C-57 would implement a specific trade deal with specific provisions. Members opposite have said virtually nothing during this entire debate about the provisions in this legislation, about what this deal would actually commit Canada and Ukraine to.

*Government Orders*

I will read the section that is a matter of contention directly from the agreement. It states, “Consistent with Article 13.24, the Parties shall cooperate bilaterally and in international forums to address matters of mutual interest, as appropriate, to”, and then a list follows. I will jump to item (h), which says, “promote carbon pricing and measures to mitigate carbon leakage risks”. That is right in the text of the agreement, “promote carbon pricing and measures to mitigate carbon leakage risks”.

In speech after speech, members of the government ask where the carbon price is. It is right in the deal that they signed, so let us not pretend that it is not in there, because any Canadian can go online, find the agreement and find this provision, “promote carbon pricing and measures to mitigate carbon leakage risks”.

I have a sense that Liberals do not actually take their word or commitments very seriously. We have seen that over the last eight years. The way they approach this deal is to say that it is only words. They ask why Conservatives care so much. Conservatives take our word seriously. We take documents we sign on to seriously, and we aspire to be people of integrity, so when we see something in a trade agreement that we profoundly disagree with, that is going to impact how we vote on that agreement.

When we are committed to a national campaign to axe the tax, when one of our key priorities is axing the tax, when we have assured Canadians that we will axe the tax, it would be a bit of a problem if we just shrugged off a line in an international agreement that would oblige us to “promote carbon pricing and measures to mitigate carbon leakage risks”. It seems fairly basic that we would note what is in the agreement, evaluate the agreement on the basis of what is in it and then make a decision accordingly while, on the separate point of support for Ukraine, being very clear that the Conservative Party strongly supports Ukraine.

It is true that the Government of Ukraine takes a different view of this agreement than Conservatives do, but there are innumerable issues on which the government has previously taken a different view from the Government of Ukraine, including in the midst of the war, in which it has ignored the express priorities of the Government of Ukraine. In fact, as I will get to, there is one instance in which the Government of Ukraine was so upset about a decision of the Prime Minister's that the Canadian ambassador was summoned. That is an unprecedented step. I think it is the first time in the history of Canada-Ukraine relations that the Canadian ambassador to Ukraine was summoned as a result of displeasure about the way the Government of Ukraine believed the Liberal government was undermining a global united front in support of Ukraine. The Liberals want us to forget about that by saying this is the most important issue.

It is fairly obvious, listening to what the Ukrainian government says, that although we do have a disagreement over certain provisions of this trade agreement, the most important thing to the Government of Ukraine is not the free trade deal but the provisions that we need to undertake to support Ukraine in its victory. Conservatives have been clear and consistent in our support for Ukraine. Let me underline the things we have done and advocated for in the process.

● (1705)

Of course, the invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime did not start in February 2022. It began back in 2014, when Conservatives were in power, and then prime minister Stephen Harper led the G7 in isolating Russia and applying critical sanctions. Canadian leadership, under then prime minister Stephen Harper, was recognized and was critical to driving a consensus that, as then prime minister Harper said, “Whether it takes five months or 50 years,” we would defend the territorial integrity of Ukraine. This is a commitment Conservatives carry forward.

As soon as Liberals took office, they started backing away from that commitment. I recall in this place challenging then foreign affairs minister Stéphane Dion, who made the decision to cancel the sharing of satellite imagery associated with RADARSAT. Members will remember that Ukraine was still then at war with Russia, and Canada, under then prime minister Stephen Harper, was sharing satellite images with Ukraine that were useful as part of the war effort. In an effort to appease the Putin regime, Liberal minister Stéphane Dion cancelled the sharing of those satellite images.

Where was the member for Kingston and the Islands when that happened? He was more silent then than he is now. Frankly, I would prefer a more silent member, compared to what we get now, but the point is that all of these members who are now eagerly wrapping themselves in blue and yellow had nothing to say when Liberal foreign affairs minister Stéphane Dion cancelled RADARSAT image sharing.

We consistently advocated for tough sanctions against the Putin regime. We were standing up in this House for stronger measures prior to the further invasion of two Februaries ago. We were saying that pre-emptively, if the government was ready to apply tougher sanctions, it could be a force of deterrence against the Putin regime. We were calling for the sharing of lethal weapons with our Ukrainian allies prior to the invasion, so they could get ready.

One does not have to take my word for it. One can find the quotations of members opposite speaking against that. The member for Edmonton Strathcona, the NDP foreign affairs critic, explicitly opposed the sharing of lethal weapons prior to the further invasion of February 2022. We were calling for tougher sanctions earlier, and Liberals and New Democrats were opposing those measures. That is the reality; it is on the record.

There were other initiatives. We put forward a motion in this House after the further invasion started, to allow visa-free travel for Ukrainians fleeing the war. Actually, at that time it was the Conservatives, the Bloc and the NDP who came together and adopted that motion calling for visa-free travel, but the government refused to implement that proposal. We were calling for more generous immigration measures.

*Government Orders*

Of course, one key area where we have led on this side of the House is energy calls. We have long recognized that Canada has a special vocation in the democratic world. Many of our democratic allies and partners, in both Europe and the Asia-Pacific, are geographically small and densely populated nations that need to import energy resources. Canada is relatively unique in the democratic world as a geographically vast, more sparsely populated nation with an abundance of natural resources. We need to develop and export those resources, not merely as a matter of our own economic interest but as a matter of providing the democratic world with the energy security it requires.

We have made this case consistently. We have said that Canada has a role and a responsibility, again, not only to create jobs and opportunity for Canadian workers but, in this new cold war reality, to provide our allies and partners with the energy security they need, so they can stand with us for the long haul, defending freedom and justice. When our European partners and our Asia-Pacific partners are reliant on energy from dictatorships, from hostile regimes that do not share our values, it has the effect of weakening our collective resolve and it pours money into the coffers of hostile anti-democratic regimes.

It is a security imperative for Canada to develop our energy resources, but the Liberal government has said there is not a business case for that. Of course there is a business case, but there is not, in its mind, an ideological case. It is far more concerned about according with its ideology than it is with the realities of the business case.

What the government has done since the further invasion of Ukraine by Russia, rather than support the rapid increase and development of Canada's energy resources to fuel the efforts of our European allies to find energy security, and rather than develop Canadian resources, is to grant a sanctions waiver to allow the export of turbines from Canada to facilitate the export of Russian gas to Europe.

• (1710)

Is that not incredible? This government, when it could have been creating jobs and opportunities for Canadian workers and securing energy security, chose to grant a waiver to allow turbines from Canada to facilitate the export of Russian gas to Europe. It was doing more to export Russian gas to Europe and increase that dependency rather than export Canadian gas. This was the instance in which the Ukrainian government and President Zelenskyy spoke out against what this government was doing. He spoke out clearly and decisively. He summoned the Canadian ambassador to Ukraine.

This was particularly important for Ukraine, not only because of the facts of the case, but also because of how Canada, in granting exceptions to sanctions, was seen as creating a dangerous precedent. As we heard at the foreign affairs committee, when we say we are imposing sanctions and then we turn those sanctions into Swiss cheese by granting convenient exceptions, and when every country says, "Well, we're going to impose sanctions but we're going to have this and that exception," very quickly we do not have a sanctions regime worth the name.

This government, then, was undermining that sanctions unity and undermining the opportunity to fuel European energy security, and

Conservatives fought back. Conservatives called for special hearings at the foreign affairs committee. We gathered in the summer, we summoned witnesses, we pressed the government hard and we pursued this matter in the face of Liberal filibusters through the fall until we were finally able to force it to reverse course. Conservatives are very proud of that accomplishment and of holding this government's feet to the fire. In every instance, where the government has been weak on supporting Ukraine, whether it has been cancelling rare sat-tech image sharing, whether it has been failing to apply the appropriate sanctions, whether it has been its rejection of our proposals on visa-free travel or whether it has been our championing of energy security, we have always been pushing the government to do far more to support our friends and allies in Ukraine, and this has continued to the present day.

When Bill C-57 came before committee, notwithstanding our concerns about the bill, we did try to improve it. Conservatives put forward many amendments that would add specific provisions to Bill C-57 to deal with getting weapons to Ukraine.

Ukraine has been very clear about this, that what Ukraine needs to win this war is weapons. Many have said, and rightly so, that we must be with Ukraine for as long as possible. I agree that we must be with Ukraine for as long as possible, and we must also help Ukraine win victory as quickly as possible, because when the Liberals say they will be there for as long as possible but then take as long as possible to actually deliver the support that is required, well, that is not doing much good, is it? Let us be there for as long as possible and let us deliver the vital, necessary aid as quickly as possible. Let us do both, as long as possible and as quickly as possible, so that Ukraine can secure a clear victory faster.

What we have seen throughout the course of this war is that delays in delivering essential weaponry have allowed the Russian army to further entrench its defensive positions. If only the western world had stepped up to quickly deliver vitally important weapons and defence systems right out of the gate, then Ukraine would be in a much better position. Of course, Ukrainians have fought heroically, but we must have their backs, not only with words but with deeds, not only with photo ops and announcements but by actually delivering Ukraine the weapons that it requires.

I put forward amendments to the bill at committee that would have done a number of things. The amendments that I put forward on behalf of the Conservative caucus would have established a legal requirement for the federal government to create a long-term plan to increase defence production, with a particular emphasis on defence supplies required by the armed forces of Ukraine and the Canadian Armed Forces.

The amendments would have established a legal requirement for the Minister of National Defence to periodically review Canada's inventory of military equipment and offer to donate to Ukraine any military equipment that is surplus or is no longer useful to Canada.

The amendments would have added Ukraine to the list of open-policy countries eligible for expedited review of arms exports, significantly reducing the time required for review before arms can be shipped to Ukraine.

• (1715)

Finally, through those amendments, we sought to require EDC and BDC to support investments aimed at developing Ukraine's domestic munitions manufacturing industries.

If Conservatives were in government, we would have negotiated a better free trade deal that would have included provisions like this to actually get Ukraine the weapons it needs, instead of putting the emphasis on “carbon pricing and measures to mitigate carbon leakage risks”. Whether it is on the issue of blocking Canadian energy development or putting divisive carbon tax measures into the agreement, we see how Liberal radical ideology seeps into everything they do and gets in the way of doing the right thing to support Ukraine.

Conservatives would have zeroed in on the essential needs of Ukraine. If we were in government, we would have negotiated and proposed a better deal that would have been good for Canada, good for Ukraine and that would have focused on delivering weapons. Sadly, all the amendments I put forward at committee were opposed and blocked by the NDP-Liberal coalition. They opposed our efforts to get those weapons to Ukraine through the amendments that we proposed. What a shame.

We have persisted. This past Friday, in fact, the Conservative leader announced a proposal calling on the government to transfer rockets to Ukraine. These are rockets that the government has slated for disposal. We think a better way to dispose of them is to give them to Ukraine so they could drop them on the Russians. In fact, our analyses show that giving these weapons to Ukraine would be less costly than disposing of them here. What has stopped the government from doing this? It is hard to explain.

We can see a myriad of announcements made by the government regarding Ukraine and no action. It is A for announcements and F for follow-through. The Liberals talk about solidarity, but they fail to deliver. This is consistent with the government's approach across the board. It wants to use this issue to create division in the House, but it has failed to actually deliver on the weapons.

I would like to briefly say a couple of additional things about support for Ukraine. It is so important that all of us come together to support Ukraine. When I have conversations with people about this, some of them ask questions. They ask if it is a complicated situation. It is not a complicated situation. It is an entirely uncomplicated situation. It is the most uncomplicated situation one could imagine.

The Government of Russia chose to invade another sovereign state in order to try to steal its territory. It did so after signing an agreement, the Budapest memorandum, that committed it to recognizing Ukraine's territorial integrity. It signed a binding international agreement recognizing Ukraine's territorial integrity. It broke that agreement by invading in order to steal territory.

### *Government Orders*

This is clearly the kind of precedent we cannot allow. If we allow it, it will create a more dangerous world. Ukraine can win and will win with the support of the west, the consistent, persistent, steadfast support of the west. We must be there to back Ukrainians up, and that does not just mean making announcements. It means delivering the weapons, because to win a war, one needs weapons, not announcements.

I challenge the Liberal government to put actions behind its words. This is not just about territory. The choice between living in Ukraine and living in Russia is not just a matter of what state they are in; it is a choice about the kind of political system they have. Ukraine is a free society, where people can choose who they associate with, what they say, what they believe and how they worship. In Russia, every person is completely beholden to and dependent on the state. In Russian-occupied Ukraine, we are seeing the mass stealing of children. It is a brutal story of the systematic abduction of Ukrainian children, forced into propaganda programs and, in many cases, used as soldiers against Ukraine.

The choice is not only about territory or what state people are in, but also about the kind of system they live in. That is why Ukrainians are prepared to fight and to die for their freedom for as long as it takes. Let us be with them as long as it takes, but let us help them win as quickly as possible with weapons.

• (1720)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, if we are to believe what the member just said, if we are to believe that this free trade agreement is only about the price on pollution and if we are to believe that, other than that, Conservatives completely and fully support Ukraine, can the member explain why, when his party separated 138 items on a budget, he and his Conservative colleagues voted against supporting Ukraine for Operation Unifier and Operation Reassurance? They voted against the military.

What people are going to hear from them is that those were confidence votes, and they always vote against the government on a confidence vote. I have news for them: They could have voted for just those two items and still could have had 136 other opportunities to vote on confidence.

Why could they not have brought themselves to vote for just those two issues with respect to supporting Ukraine if there was not more to it than what he is proposing?

• (1725)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, let us be clear: What the member opposite is doing is quite malicious. What he is trying to do is to exploit situations where people may not understand details of our parliamentary procedure to create a false impression about where Conservatives stand on the issue.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, he is saying that I am trying to be malicious, and members are not supposed to infer that any member is not acting in an honourable way. If the member is saying that I am being malicious just because I am pointing out what he did, then he should just answer the question.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** It is a point of order because it is an inference of intent. I actually did react right away to the hon. member's use of the word. Therefore, I recommend that a more judicious wording would be appropriate.

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, I would have expected a thicker skin from that member, especially given what he says about other members.

Here is the point: He is, through this line of argumentation, trying to exploit what may be a gap in some people's understanding of the mechanics of the parliamentary process. The way the process works is that when we are voting non-confidence in the government, we are voting non-confidence in the government. Through that vote, we are expressing the fact that we do not have confidence in the government.

Of course, if we go through the budget, we will find there are specific measures we would maintain, and there are specific measures we would change or alter in some way, naturally. We have been clear, and we will continue to be clear that we do not have confidence in the NDP-Liberal coalition. We do not have confidence in it because of the damage it is doing in this country and, in part, because of its failure to actually deliver the support Ukraine requires.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are being disruptive, and not necessarily in a good way. They are relentlessly harping on the carbon tax, almost to the point of obsession, and that makes me worry for the future.

If that party takes power in Canada, how is Canada going to be able to sign even the simplest little international treaty? What will international relations with the rest of the world be like? I am worried about that, because we have before us an incredibly simple bill. I wanted to comment on that.

[English]

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, the member is asking how a Conservative government would possibly carry out international relations if it does not sign agreements that include a carbon tax. It is very simple: We will not sign agreements that include a carbon tax. We will negotiate to ensure that agreements we sign do not include a carbon tax.

In this particular case, I think it would be very simple. I have no proof of this, but I suspect that this provision on carbon pricing and carbon leakage is only in this agreement because the Government of Canada wanted it to be in there for political reasons. If we had a Conservative government and a Conservative trade minister saying that we actually did not want a carbon tax in the agreement, I suspect the government of Ukraine would say it was no problem and let us focus on getting weapons into the hands of soldiers who need them to defend their country.

I think that standing up for our principles at home and abroad will be entirely uncomplicated for international relations.

**Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I keep coming back to something in these debates, and it is just so disheartening. I do not understand it. This is not a debate about the carbon tax. This is a debate about the fact that the leader of Ukraine has asked us to sign this agreement to see that Ukrainians get the help they need.

I am hearing from Ukrainians who are being forced to flee their country. They are coming to Canada. The commitment I made to them is that I would do all that I could, in my position, to fight for the rights of Ukrainians at this time.

Can the member share why this is turning into a political issue for the Conservatives, when Ukrainians and the leader of Ukraine are asking for this to be put through?

• (1730)

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question. If the member is serious about supporting Ukraine and all of its needs, I wish it were her and not her NDP colleague who had been on the committee at the time we considered my amendments. When I put forward my amendments, which would have facilitated more weapons going to Ukraine, the NDP joined with the Liberals in order to block those amendments from going forward. It was her colleague from Edmonton Strathcona who spoke out against giving lethal weapons to Ukraine. The NDP record, in terms of giving weapons to Ukrainian soldiers, is decidedly terrible. I would like us to come together in the House.

I would add as well that the NDP has a long history of opposing trade deals. In the past, the NDP has always opposed trade deals. I would never say that because it opposed a trade deal with another country, it does not like, does not support or does not want to have good relations with the country. I respect the fact that New Democrats have come to different conclusions than I have about trade in general, which is why they generally vote against trade deals. However, I think they would understand that anytime we consider a trade deal, we have to consider the particulars of what is in the trade deal. We cannot just say that we like the country with which it is negotiated, so we will pass it. We have to look at the details.

**Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the Conservative Party position has consistently been to vehemently oppose a carbon tax, so it is not surprising that we would oppose a carbon tax in a trade deal. What is surprising is the consistent and deliberate pro-Russian energy policy of the Liberal Party. Because we cannot build a pipeline in this country, we imported \$400 million of Russian natural gas into Canada in 2021 because of a pro-Russian Liberal energy policy.

I wonder if the member can comment on the impact that unwillingness to sell Canadian oil and gas to the international market has on Russian sales of oil and gas around the world.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right, of course, that Canada produces commodities that Russia also produces, so we are in a unique position to displace those commodities. We are in a relatively unique position to reduce the world's dependence on Russian oil and gas.

It is not just Russia. We could give many examples of dictator oil around the world. We could talk about the Burmese regime and how the government's failure to apply sanctions on the Burmese junta, consistent with what our American ally has done, is allowing investments in the Burmese energy sector, which are fuelling that country's campaign of aggression against its own population.

In many of these cases, we see how the Liberal government is willing to turn a blind eye to the advancement of dictator oil instead of supporting Canadian energy development. It makes no sense. Canadian energy development is good for Canadian workers and the Canadian economy, but, more importantly, it is good for the advancement of peace, justice and freedom around the world.

If we could do something that is good for Canadian workers and good for the advancement of peace, freedom and justice around the world, it is a no-brainer, yet the Liberals, because of their extreme green ideology, are opposing Canadian oil and gas development and are trying to insert carbon tax poison pills into trade deals. It makes no sense. We need a government that puts the Canadian national interest and the cause of freedom ahead of extreme green ideology.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is more shameless “Conspaining” from the Conservative member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan. It is incredible to watch Conservatives twist themselves into knots to try to justify their shameful vote against Ukraine.

My questions for the member are simple: Who does their vote against the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement satisfy or make happy? Who asked the Conservative members to vote against the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement? It was not one of their constituents. It was not the Ukrainian Canadian Congress or anybody else. Who asked them to vote against the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement?

**Mr. Garnett Genuis:** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Parm Gill on becoming a Conservative. I know he will ask very good questions in the House.

This is a matter of looking at the details of the agreement, which the member clearly is not even familiar with. I read out details that he claimed did not exist. I think it is the responsibility of legislators to know what is in legislation they are voting on. I doubt that the member has even read the agreement. If he read it, he would know that the section I read obliges Canada to promote carbon pricing and measures to mitigate carbon leakage.

Conservatives are opposed to that and are supportive of Ukraine. When it comes to supporting Ukraine, the Liberal government should be focusing on delivering weapons, not just making announcements, but actually following up and giving Ukraine the weapons it needs in order to secure victory.

• (1735)

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise here today to speak to Bill C-57, the new Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. I have already spoken at length about the bill, but I would like to speak once again, more briefly, about some of the highlights so far.

First, I would like to mention once again that the Canada-Ukraine friendship is very special. Over a million Canadians are very proud of their Ukrainian heritage. When Ukraine declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Canada was the first western country to recognize that act. Shortly after that recognition in 1995, Canada signed an early foreign investment protection agreement, or FIPA, with Ukraine, so we have always supported attempts to strengthen our trade with Ukraine.

The NDP supports this free trade agreement, and our primary concerns centre on the fact that negotiations began before Parliament had an opportunity to have input on our negotiation priorities and how quickly the bill came before us after the agreement was signed. Following accepted practices would not have delayed this agreement or the bill, but could have made it better for both parties. I am happy to say that the minister seems to have changed her behaviour by following proper protocols and practices of the House when announcing imminent negotiations for a new free trade agreement with Ecuador, so I hope that practice will continue in the future.

Returning to the Ukraine free trade agreement, we have heard repeatedly from Ukraine how important this new agreement would be to the country and how important it would be to rebuild Ukraine once Russia is defeated and this war is over. President Zelenskyy signed this agreement when he was here in Ottawa last September. Ambassador Yuliya Kovaliv, who came before the international trade committee, of which I am a member, emphasized repeatedly how beneficial this agreement would be to Ukraine and to Canada.

### *Government Orders*

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress, which brings together all national, provincial and local Ukrainian Canadian organizations, has pleaded for parliamentarians to support Ukraine by passing the bill quickly and unanimously. Instead, we have seen the Conservatives oppose the bill at every turn using all sorts of tactics to delay its passage. I sit on the Standing Committee on International Trade, and when we were debating the bill the Conservatives tried to introduce amendments that were clearly out of the scope of the bill and, indeed, out of the scope of any free trade agreement. They emphasized what we should be doing to give aid to Ukraine. This is a free trade agreement between two countries; it is not about giving aid to countries. Acceptance of those amendments not only would have delayed the bill, but would have required renegotiation of the free trade agreement, adding months to the process for no benefit when Ukraine is pleading for quick action.

We just voted on another Conservative amendment to the bill that would have removed a small mention of carbon pricing in the environment chapter, a mention that put no requirement on either party to bring in carbon pricing or raise carbon pricing. It simply mentioned the fact that both countries agreed that carbon pricing was a good thing, and Ukraine has had carbon pricing longer than Canada. Again, if the amendment had succeeded, it would have sent negotiators back to the bargaining table, all for no reason.

When the Conservatives forced all of us to vote in every line item in supplementary estimates in December, a vote-a-thon of over 30 hours that cost over \$2 billion to Canadian taxpayers, they voted against all other support for Ukraine, including Operation Unifier, where the Canadian Armed Forces are helping Ukrainian armed forces.

The Conservative opposition to support for Ukraine, including the delaying tactics on the bill before us, has not gone unnoticed by Ukraine. Two weeks ago I happened to meet with the consul general for Ukraine in Edmonton, who covers western Canada, and he specifically brought up his deep concerns with the actions of the Conservatives on this file. This is a representative of the Ukrainian government. He pointed out that Ukrainians are fighting and dying, not just for their own freedom, but for democracies all across Europe and around the world, and he pleaded with me to pass on the message that Ukraine needs the full support of all its allies.

• (1740)

Canada, because of its huge Ukrainian diaspora, is one of the most important of those allies. The consul general was mystified and dismayed by the lack of support from the Conservatives on this bill. Therefore, I asked to speak today to pass on his plea, from his government and his entire country to every member here, to pass this bill unanimously and to pass it quickly without delay. I am going to stop early in this speech because I am the last speaker and I hope that this debate will collapse so that we can get to the vote on this bill and pass it right away and help Ukraine by doing what Ukraine has asked us to do.

**Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having the chance to rise and ask the hon. member across the way about this agreement. I know we are generally in agreement in this House, with the exception of the Conservatives, on supporting Ukraine and supporting it through trade deals. What has not been talked about a lot in the House is the benefit to Canada of a deal

like this. Canada is importing animal fats and vegetable oils from Ukraine and iron and steel where they have expertise in heavy casting, which is used for our agricultural, rail and electrical equipment. Could the member comment on the benefit to the Canadian economy of having a free trade deal with Ukraine?

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** Mr. Speaker, free trade agreements, or fair trade agreements as we like to promote them in the NDP, are beneficial to both parties. They have to be, or nobody would sign them. The reason Ukraine would like us to sign this bill, as the ambassador put it when she was before the international trade committee, is that it would benefit Ukrainian businesses. It benefits Canadian business owners who are working to help rebuild Ukraine after this war is over. It benefits all of us, and that is the reason we negotiate free trade agreements with countries. This is a revamping of an earlier free trade agreement that was done in 2017. I remember speaking to it then.

Therefore, these free trade agreements are solely designed to be beneficial for both countries. We can disagree on minor details within those bills and the NDP has concerns about some of the investor-state dispute mechanisms in this bill, but we want to support Ukraine. We are voting very much in favour of it.

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, I wonder if the member can share with us what the international fallout might be if we were not to vote unanimously in favour of this agreement.

• (1745)

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** Mr. Speaker, I would simply say that Ukraine is looking to the world for support in its struggle against Russia. It is looking to the world for fighting the war now and rebuilding later. What is noticed around the world is when countries have divisions within their parliaments and legislatures with respect to support for Ukraine. We are seeing that in the United States. This is very concerning to Ukrainians and they are very concerned about seeing the same pattern here in Canada. They really want to see unanimous support to show the rest of the world that we are behind Ukraine.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, right now we are voting on a bill to implement an agreement. To my knowledge, members of Parliament are never included in the process of negotiating agreements. We are presented with a *fait accompli*.

*Government Orders*

Since we cannot amend agreements, what does my colleague think of the attempts that we are seeing in the House to amend agreements and policies, instead of voting on a bill?

[English]

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** Mr. Speaker, I would simply say that I would rather we have a culture in this place where Parliament is asked about free trade agreements and negotiations before they happen, which is what I mentioned in my speech about the minister telling us here in Parliament when her team is going into negotiations with another country, in this case Ecuador, so that we can look at that situation and say what our priorities should be for Canadians and Canadian workers. That way we can have an influence over the negotiations and give advice to the negotiators before things happen. As the member said, we are just simply presented with a *fait accompli*, and we have to vote yea or nay on that. I think we should have more say before negotiations start and we should have a proper amount of time to examine the bill before this debate happens, and that, I am hoping, will happen in the future.

**Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the reality is, as the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan argued before, that there is no other trade deal that Canada has that has implemented a carbon tax in it. I would argue, and it is a very reasonable argument that can be made, that what Ukraine does not need is a carbon tax; what it does need are weapons.

When Bill C-57 went to committee, the member Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan proposed amendments to the bill that would expedite the sending of weapons to Ukraine, and yet the NDP voted against that amendment to the bill. My question is: Why?

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** Mr. Speaker, there is a lot in that question.

I would first say that there is nothing in this free trade agreement that forces a carbon tax or carbon pricing on Ukraine. Ukraine already has that. However, there is a statement in the agreement that says that nothing in this agreement will force either of the two countries to change their environmental policies or laws. That is just a false argument from the start.

Second, we had an amendment about Canada providing more military support and armaments to Ukraine. I voted against that for two reasons. One, it was totally out of the scope of the bill and so we could not really listen to that; we could not hear it. Two, this is a free trade agreement. It is about setting the rules between two countries on how they trade with each other. It is not about sending aid to Ukraine.

Ukraine needs armaments. I remember the very first day of the war that President Zelenskyy said, “I need ammunition, not a ride”. However, this is a totally separate question. If we had voted in favour of that amendment, it would have sent the whole agreement back to the negotiating table, and it would have set it back weeks or months, who knows how long. Of course, I voted against that.

Ukraine wanted this bill passed as it was, it wanted it passed unanimously, and I am proud to say that is what I am doing.

• (1750)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I really enjoy hearing Conservatives say, “Mr. Speaker, what Ukraine does not need”. However, what Ukrainians do not need is the member for Barrie—Innisfil telling them what they need. Ukraine does not need that. What Ukrainians need is for the member for Barrie—Innisfil to actually start listening to them when they tell him what they need.

A lot of this discussion has been on the carbon tax specifically. I could not help but notice that yesterday even the darling of the alt-right, Elon Musk, tweeted out, “The only action needed to solve climate change is a carbon tax.” Even Elon Musk is jumping on board and saying the same thing.

When it comes to the carbon tax, how out of touch are these Conservatives?

**Mr. Richard Cannings:** Mr. Speaker, I saw that tweet from Elon Musk, and I would disagree with him in saying that it is not the only thing we need, but it is the first thing we need. It is the easiest, cheapest way to bring down our emissions and help solve the climate crisis. We will need to do everything else, but that is the first thing we need to do.

We have had it in British Columbia for over a decade and it has worked, despite what Conservatives say, and despite Conservatives telling my constituents that we should get rid of the federal carbon tax to help my constituents; we do not pay a federal carbon tax in British Columbia. However, it is an essential part of any country's fight and any jurisdiction's fight against climate change.

I am boggled by the fact that the Conservatives do not get that. I am happy that Elon Musk gets it, because I do not agree with everything Elon Musk says. It is certainly the easiest and cheapest way to fight climate change, and we need to do it and everything else.

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I fear I may disappoint my colleagues, because I will not be talking about the carbon tax.

It is often said that the desire to appear clever stops us from actually becoming clever. That is what I will try to show today. I want to comment on Bill C-57, which seeks to review the free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine, but I will talk about it in a different way.

For centuries, people around the globe have heard Hamlet asking one of the big questions: “To be, or not to be, that is the question.” That is the way he put it, but I will rephrase the question: “To be, or to appear to be, that is the question”. In other words, is it better to be or to appear to be?

When it comes to free trade, Canada seems to have made up its mind. It has chosen to appear to be. When I think of “appearing to be”, the word that comes to mind is “minimum”, meaning the very least, the bare minimum. The agreement does not say that this is the minimum that we want. It says it is the minimum that we are going to agree on.

### *Government Orders*

Last weekend, an article in *La Presse* caught my attention. The headline read: “Is Canada doing the minimum for Ukraine?” The article quoted authors Justin Massie and Nicolas-François Perron, who argued that Canada’s primary objective is to be perceived as a “reliable ally”. That is a quality it shares with golden retrievers. I am just throwing that in for those in the know.

The authors also proved that Canada was doing the bare minimum, favouring actions that look good over those that actually work. In their chapter of a book that is soon to be published—in French, I should mention—by the Presses de l’Université Laval, they scrutinize the help Canada has offered to Kyiv. The authors argue that, far from being a leader in the pro-NATO camp, Ottawa is content to echo the positions of its allies and offer “very modest” military support to Ukraine. They write that “Canada’s desired objective has more to do with being perceived as a reliable ally than any other consideration, including Ukrainian victory against Russian aggression”. We need to be clear on that. We are debating the free trade agreement, but it seems like much ado about nothing.

The authors also say that Canada’s policy is to project a certain image—surprise, surprise—and that waving the maple leaf flag is its main objective. That reminds us that Canada’s foreign policy is a bit half-baked. In terms of total aid provided to Ukraine as a share of GDP, Canada is basically a big Portugal. Well ahead of Canada are Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, the Netherlands, Finland, Czechia, Croatia, Slovenia and Portugal. So much for impressing others.

Canada has provided significant financial aid in the form of loans. However, if we consider overall aid, including financial, humanitarian and military aid, as a share of GDP, Canada ranks 31st out of 39 countries. Quite honestly, we are currently debating the smallest of details right now. As I was saying, Canada is basically a big Portugal, but we need to be careful. According to those experts, Ottawa is doing just enough in Ukraine to be perceived as a “reliable ally”. They say that this level of action will result in very few political consequences. Basically, that is all that is expected from Canada in its current state. This is not a government priority. One of the experts believes that the government is “more interested in provincial jurisdictions than its own”. That is a subject that the Bloc Québécois cares about. That expert also said that Canada does not have a very good track record.

There is nothing new so far. Since 2015, Canada’s foreign affairs policy seems to have been vague and opportunistic at best. All the same, there are a few things in the bill worth noting. Of the 30 chapters, 11 are new and were not in the 2017 agreement. I should point out that it was the Bloc Québécois that managed to get the only amendments to the bill adopted, thanks to my colleague, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. The agreement is supposed to help people try to curb corruption. They know a thing or two about that. It is no secret that, before Russia invaded, Ukraine ranked pretty poorly on that score.

• (1755)

In any case, the agreement aims to create voluntary codes of conduct and self-regulation so that people can set guidelines for themselves. Frankly, this is a pipe dream. It is not going to happen. The agreement says that it is inviting the countries to work together to-

wards respecting each other’s laws. Once again, this is the bare minimum, and no one is reinventing the wheel. Basically, this is the goal in the areas of labour, the environment, gender equality, human rights and corruption. Right now, labour, the environment and human rights are not the main concerns in Ukraine. Nevertheless, that is where we are at, and it comes off as a bit of a lecture.

Despite its statement of principle, there is no plan for Canada to meet its commitments, which is problematic, or at the very least unimpressive. It is important to understand that Ukraine is a marginal trading partner for Canada. We are talking about 0.2% of \$760 billion. In other words, we are talking a lot about very little in terms of trade. In reality, the revised agreement will have little impact on Canada and Quebec.

As I said at the start, everything I have just laid out over the past few minutes shows that we are still in the land of appearances. To appear is to be on show. Speaking of being on show, the Minister of Foreign Affairs made an appearance in Ukraine last weekend to talk about issues that matter to her. To be on show is the bare minimum of taking action. Nevertheless, the Bloc Québécois will support the bill. The risk is low. We are going to try to avoid pointless debates on the carbon tax, which our colleagues are so obsessed with, and focus on offering our assistance to the extent that the bill allows. However, I want to make it clear that, while we may be a reliable ally, reliability is the bare minimum required to be an ally.

**Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague’s speech. Even though I do not agree with everything he said, his speech was very eloquent. It is a pleasure to hear arguments and a speech that is well thought out.

In his speech, he demonstrated how one can be critical of a bill and still support it. I would like him to elaborate on that.

• (1800)

**Mr. René Villemure:** Mr. Speaker, the fact that the debate was hijacked, basically kidnapped by people in the Conservative Party who wanted to turn it into a debate on the carbon tax is deplorable. It is truly unacceptable.

We are talking about helping a country at war through a free trade agreement that we are revising. However, we have done everything but that. Frankly, they found problems where none exist, and I completely agree with the member that it is time to take action. Even if the action is minimal, we have to do it.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Trois-Rivières said, the only amendment made to the bill was our own. It aims to make the agreement a little less about appearances and a little more about obligation.

It is all well and good to include several chapters on responsible business conduct, but if there is no real follow-up mechanism, we are left with fine principles. That is why I am quite pleased that the amendment we brought forward in committee was the only one accepted.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

## THE ENVIRONMENT

I was against all of the Conservative amendments because I think it is extremely dangerous to include arms sales in a trade agreement. It is nonsense, in my opinion. Nevertheless, I always voted when it was time to accept their admissibility, because I do not think it makes any sense for us to always be presented with a done deal when it comes to trade agreements.

My colleague was apparently an ethicist in a former life. I have read his biography. Does he think it is ethical to have such a lack of transparency or such a lack of control in a so-called house of democracy when it comes to something as important as a huge agreement between countries?

**Mr. René Villemure:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's questions are always straight to the point and quite brilliant.

What enables trust in a given environment? I would say that it is the ability to understand. If people want to understand, they need to be informed.

Certainly, being presented with a bill, law, or treaty that is essentially a done deal does not allow us to engage with each other and make it our own. We can assess it, but we do not really own it. I believe that our aim here, in the house of democracy, must be to build trust. To do this, we need to be better at sharing information.

The risk is quite simple: If we do not build trust, we breed mistrust. If we do not address mistrust, we end up with non-confidence.

*[English]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** 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.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded division.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 45, a recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, February 6 at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:54 p.m., so that we can start Adjournment Proceedings.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

**Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a youth climate corps is an invitation to the youth in Canada to mobilize and confront today's gravest threat, the climate emergency.

On December 5 I presented a motion calling on the government to establish a youth climate corps, and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to explain what the youth climate corps is, but also to talk about how it has an essential role in fighting the climate crisis, building a better future and uplifting Canadian youth.

I have spoken to young people across the country, who have told me they are scared about their future. They know that the climate crisis is real. According to one study, 84% of youth aged 16 to 25 report being worried about climate change. Almost half of them said that their feelings about climate change negatively affected their daily life and functioning. This is extremely concerning, but it also makes sense. It seems like every summer we are facing unprecedented wildfires, extreme weather, heat domes and flooding. Every few months there are grim scientific reports published, saying that our elected leaders are not doing enough.

In the face of the climate emergency and government inaction, it is hard to have hope, but we owe it to future generations to give them tangible solutions and ways to engage in what is the existential crisis of our time. We can build a better future, with clean jobs and climate-resilient communities, and a youth climate corps could be one critical piece of making that a reality. The program would provide jobs and training in emergency response to climate disasters, in the clean energy sector, in green building and in reducing emissions, as well as in building climate-resilient infrastructure and restoring ecosystems.

This past fall, U.S. President Biden announced an American climate corps, which will employ 20,000 youth and set these young people on the path to good-paying union jobs, but here in Canada, Canadian youth are being left behind. We need a federally funded job training and placement program that offers a good, green job to any young person who wants one.

The Climate Emergency Unit has outlined how a youth climate corps could be implemented in Canada. It would be a large-scale, national program aimed at young people that would provide paid opportunities to work on projects that protect the environment, restore ecosystems, reduce our emissions, make communities more resilient and build the new climate infrastructure that they need. Then, when they complete their service, they would be able to access free post-secondary education or training in the sustainable jobs of the future.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

A recent poll showed that two-thirds of young people in Canada would consider enrolling in a youth climate corps. That is 1.3 million young people. If the Liberal government supports my motion and implements a youth climate corps, the next generation of young people, aged 17 to 35, would receive on-the-job training to participate in projects to fight the climate crisis and natural disasters and to build a better future for Canada and the planet. This program would not only provide employment for thousands of young people but also reduce our carbon emissions, incorporate environmental justice and set our youth on a path for success.

Will the government implement a large-scale youth climate corps program with the urgency and ambition that we need to fight the climate crisis?

• (1805)

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to be up this evening in Adjournment Proceedings. It is always nice to chat with my friend and colleague from Victoria with respect to an area of mutual interest and enthusiasm. That is how we fight climate change in this country.

I often say that it is refreshing to stand in the House and talk about how we fight climate change and all the great ideas out there that Canadians have for ways to lower our emissions and bring more attention to the issue of the climate crisis in Canada. Certainly, I would like to acknowledge that my colleague from Victoria is a leader in this way. Frankly, it is disappointing that the vast majority of the questions that we receive on environmental issues are based on misinformation with respect to how we price carbon and reduce our emissions; those are always from the Conservatives.

First, I would like to take my friend and colleague up on her offer. The last time I was up in the House talking to the member for Victoria, we discussed my personal involvement in the youth climate corps initiative, in March. There is going to be a meeting with members from, I hope, all parties; I am happy to let the member know that I will be the representative from the Liberal Party, and we are going to make this happen. Moreover, we are going to do it together. Good politicians find ways to work together, put our differences aside occasionally and work towards common goals. Fighting climate change is a mutual goal of the Liberal Party and the NDP and, I would say, some other members in this House too. Sadly, we do not see that same enthusiasm for fighting climate change from the Conservatives.

It is true: Young people are worried about the future, and they absolutely want to be part of solutions. I have witnessed their innovation, passion and dedication to combatting climate change. They are involved, and they have shown incredible climate leadership time and time again. Young Canadians are essential to helping Canadians build the green economy of the future. Right across Canada, young people want to be part of the solution; indeed, they already are. It is critical to amplify and elevate those voices.

Unlike what the member is suggesting, our government has not only listened to our future leaders but also worked with them to ensure their participation and collaboration. We want to make sure that they thrive in the world that we leave to them. We inherited a

vibrant and economically strong country from our grandparents, and I want to make sure that the country that we leave behind is even stronger from an environmental and climate resilience perspective.

The Government of Canada has policies, programs and funding in place specifically for youth and specifically to fight climate change. I can think of personal ways in Milton that I am able to direct some discretionary funding through the Canada summer jobs program to environmental initiatives and to organizations such as Conservation Halton, which finds ways to gather science, plant trees, fight climate change, educate young people and develop this environmental enthusiasm and a love of the natural environment. This would not necessarily exist if young people spent all day staring at their phones, as politicians do, rather than going outside, getting dirty and playing in creeks, rivers and valleys as we all did before cellphones took over our lives. The government's overarching youth policy reflects the values of young Canadians, and it represents a whole-of-government approach to improve youth outcomes and involve young people in federal decision-making.

On the point of a youth climate corps, I have the great privilege to announce that the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association is now accepting applications, via Parks Canada, to support a two-year green jobs program for youth. This is very similar to what my colleague has recommended, and I hope that we can continue to work on that. Through the CPRA, this program will provide direct financial support via wage subsidies to local governments, municipalities, indigenous communities and other sector organizations, reaching nearly 280 jobs over the next two years, at 140 jobs per year. They are going to focus on all sorts of green career-related activities.

The goals of the green jobs initiative are to provide opportunities and learning experiences for over 280 youth to build skills and become successful in the workplace, and it is going to generate much-needed support to local governments and other sector organizations to hire those young people. I am happy to elaborate on the CPRA's green jobs initiative in my follow-up.

• (1810)

**Ms. Laurel Collins:** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the member for his willingness to engage in this conversation.

I urge my Liberal colleagues to listen to young people and to address the climate crisis with the appropriate urgency and at the scale that matches it. I just have to say that this is 280 jobs; we have 1.3 million young people who would consider joining a youth climate corps.

Young people are relying on us. They are relying on the current government, and they have not seen the bold climate action required to keep temperatures below 1.5°C. Therefore, a youth climate corps could be a transformative program that gives young people a pathway to meet this moment. Will the government do the right thing and implement a large-scale youth climate corps?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, I think it actually speaks such volumes to our climate action initiatives that I cannot get through all of them in just a short response in an adjournment debate.

It certainly does not stop the Canada summer jobs initiative or the green jobs initiative with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. I hope to sit down with the CPRA and talk more about how those 280 jobs are going to improve climate literacy, and about action being taken by municipal governments and indigenous-serving organizations right across the country.

There is also the climate action awareness fund, which is investing over \$206 million over five years to support youth climate awareness and community-based climate action. It does not stop there; I simply do not have enough time to talk about all the great initiatives the government is undertaking to support youth and climate action.

#### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government, it is so distressing to see the state of disrespect the government has fostered for Canadians who have fallen on hard times. Canadians are lining up at food banks in record numbers; there are two million a month, and a third of food bank users are children.

The government is fighting in full defence of its \$54-million arrive scam. This is the scandal, of course, that saw the two-person shop, GC Strategies, pull in \$11 million with its operation that did no IT work, pocketing millions of dollars. They did it at a time of crisis in our country. A global pandemic had been declared, and there were a couple of yoyos in a basement forging the resumes of contractors to try to land a government contract. More than two-thirds, 70%, of the subcontractors they said they were going to use did no work on this \$54-million government boondoggle.

The scandal of the ArriveCAN app had senior government officials lying before a parliamentary committee. Contractors who worked on the ArriveCAN app are under RCMP investigation. We know that, in less than a week's time, the Auditor General will be releasing her findings on the ArriveCAN app. A parliamentary secretary in the House previously was talking about the tens of thousands of lives that were saved by this app. This was later admitted to be pure conjecture based not on fact but just on emotion and to defend the indefensible. The app wrongly quarantined and put people under house arrest, did not properly safeguard the biometric health data of Canadians, and, of course, did nothing to safeguard Canadian tax dollars.

The government spends wildly and blindly. The costs to Canadians are incredible, and the effects of those costs are devastating. The government is going to spend tens of billions of dollars more

just on servicing the debt this year than it does on the underfunded Canadian Armed Forces.

Canadians are rightly outraged by the scandal, and it is incomprehensible why the NDP-Liberal government continues to try to defend this. We know that the chief information officer for the government may have destroyed four years' worth of relevant information, seven gigabytes of data and 1,700 emails. It was not until Conservatives forced the issue to be studied at the government operations committee that we finally saw real action taken and real attention paid to this.

We want answers from the Auditor General. We want an apology from the government. When are we going to get back the money that the government misappropriated?

● (1815)

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government recognizes the gravity of the recent allegations, and the need to respond transparently and to uphold the highest standards of ethics and accountability. That is precisely why there is currently an ongoing RCMP investigation into the case.

I would like to clarify that there are also two separate matters at stake here. It is just not as simple as the member would like to suggest.

The first is the ArriveCAN app. I wish to remind the member, the House and all Canadians of the unique circumstances leading to its development. After the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic in March 2020, there was a need to replace the previous labour-intensive, paper-based processes in order to quickly pass information to provinces and territories so they could carry out enforcement activities. At the request of the Public Health Agency of Canada, the CBSA developed and launched a digital app as quickly as possible on an emergency basis during an unprecedented time.

ArriveCAN was a fast, secure and easy way to confirm that travellers met all public health requirements when crossing the border. It was a necessary and effective tool to support the government's efforts and reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Simply said, the ArriveCAN app was essential at the time, and it met its intended objectives.

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

This type of technology modernizes our border and ensures the flow of people and goods in a safe, secure manner. Currently, travellers can make their customs and immigration declaration using advanced declaration in the ArriveCAN app before flying in to one of Canada's participating airports. This saves a lot of time, up to 30% for some travellers.

This brings me to the current state of affairs and issues surrounding the ongoing examination of ArriveCAN and the procurement practices, which, as we know, are fairly complex. What I can say is that a study is under way at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. We look forward to hearing its findings and its recommendations. In addition to that, CBSA and the Public Health Agency of Canada have been engaged with the offices of the Auditor General on a performance audit of ArriveCAN. We await the Auditor General's findings and recommendations and will take all necessary steps to respond appropriately.

However, I have been noticing lately, from the Conservatives, attempts to distract from current affairs and issues that are really affecting Canadians. The member opposite prefaced his question by talking about the affordability crisis and how difficult it is for Canadians right now. I would like to point out that I meet with food security experts, food bank representatives, poverty reduction researchers and folks who are committed to finding strategies and ways to support the country's poorest, most vulnerable and lowest-income families. Not one of them has suggested that cutting a carbon tax, or "axing the tax", as Conservative members continue to parrot in the House of Commons, would have even a marginal impact on affordability.

In fact, what they say is that it is actually an affordability measure because the lowest-income families in Canada receive far more back from the carbon price than they pay, because the lowest-income families in Canada do not drive bigger cars and heat bigger homes. We are making the biggest polluters in Canada pay, and a little bit of that money goes back to families so they can support a green transition, pay for groceries and support their families.

It is a tax-free benefit that comes out four times a year, but one will never hear the Conservative members acknowledge that there is a Canada carbon rebate. They do not want to talk about how we are actually supporting affordability for Canadian families. They just want to keep saying the exact same lines: "after eight years", "carbon tax this" and "carbon tax that".

They have not provided the House or Canadians with any reassurance that they have a plan for the future. In fact, all they are really doing is continuing to distract from the reality and to lobby on behalf of the very companies that are making life difficult for so many Canadians, from an affordability perspective. It was revealed this week that the deputy leader of the Conservative Party, the member for Thornhill, is lobbying for Walmart and that the campaign director for the Conservative Party has been lobbying for Loblaws.

The Conservative Party does not want to talk about problems in provinces and territories in Canada; it just wants to say the same line over and over again to drive up anxiety, to get Canadians all mad and to blame something simple like a carbon price, which actually sends more money back to families than it costs.

The Conservative Party is completely devoid of ideas and suggestions for affordability for Canadians, and it has just stayed on the exact same three or four topics for the last two years.

● (1820)

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to unpack there, but I will give a couple of quick numbers: 10,200 people wrongly and illegally quarantined by the broken app, which cost \$54 million, an absolutely failure not worth defence.

We are not going to take any lessons on lobbying from a government that has a minister, the hon. member for Oakville, whose husband worked for a company that received tens of millions of dollars while she sat in cabinet. We have seen the current government reward Liberal insiders for eight years on the backs of Canadians.

I have not heard a single Canadian in any of my meetings say, "Tax me harder." That is what the Liberal government seems to think: "We meet with everyone. Taxes are fine." That is absolutely preposterous.

Removing the carbon tax would help restore affordability to food prices and energy prices. People need to be able to heat their home and feed their family. That is why we are going to axe the tax, focus on technology and cut the Liberals.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, again, it is just slogans with no solutions. It is actually astonishing to see people who believe themselves to be a government in waiting come forward with absolutely no policy recommendations or ideas, just to get rid of something that is actually working.

Our emissions in Canada are down. It is absolutely the case that emissions in Canada are down and that a third of the emissions reductions are attributable to pricing carbon.

It was not even two and a half years ago that all of these Conservative members went door to door to profess to their constituents that they cared about climate change under the auspices of Erin O'Toole, and they had a carbon price plan, some sort of Zellers catalogue called "the more you burn, the more you earn" or something like that. These Conservatives are out of touch. They are not talking to regular Canadians. They repeat their slogans over and over again. They have no ideas to meet the affordability concerns of our neighbours.

● (1825)

LABOUR

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, across the country, close to 600 PSAC workers are on strike.

The Non-Public Funds workers have actually been on strike for 22 days. They are the too often unrecognized figures, the workers within our defence community. The employees of the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services serve those who serve. They staff our Canex stores, feed our soldiers and support them with financial services and countless other essential supports.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

At a time of unprecedented cost of living increases facing military families, we cannot forget that 40% of CFMWS workers are military family members. Those military family members have faced unnecessary burdens from the Liberal government. They are often underpaid and under-employed. They have dipped into their own pockets so many times to support our women and men in uniform, and they are proud to do so. They are proud to do this work.

Many are facing a rent spike this year to on-base housing. When military family members join the workforce, they are in a precarious position. Relocation and, at times, remote postings severely limit their employment opportunities. They need to be protected from employers that seek to take advantage of them.

However, that is not what they get from the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services. These workers are paid drastically less than their public servant counterparts. They are not being offered a national pay grid. They face serious workplace safety concerns as well. At the bargaining table, they are not asking for much: basic protections, a national pay grid and recognition of their essential role in our national defence.

I joined these workers on the picket line last week, and I heard from members that are struggling to make ends meet. When I asked the Minister of Defence about the strike last week, he said, "We support a resolution of this labour dispute at the table, and we will continue to support both sides coming back to the table."

It is this minister's department that has left the bargaining table and refused to return. Shortly after I was at the picket line, the employer served a trespassing notice to striking workers on the line. During the winter months, the employer has now demanded that workers remove the trailer they have on site by tomorrow. This trailer is being used for its washroom facilities and for workers to go back and get warm. It is February. It is cold out. This trailer helps to keep them safe. As an employer, the government should be aware of and concerned about that. Instead, the employer has said that, if they do not get rid of the trailer by tomorrow, the government would get rid of it at the workers' expense.

These workers are tired of the minister's lack of awareness of not only their issues, but also their basic function under his mandate. When workers wrote to their local Liberal MPs asking for support, they were told that the minister does not believe they are even within his mandate.

The minister cannot plead ignorance here much longer. Long before this strike, I told the minister, over and over again, about the plight of the Non-Public Funds workers. When he was first nominated to this post, I told him about their concerns. I outlined them for him. When he and his department officials appeared before the Standing Committee on National Defence, I repeatedly told them about the concerns facing the Non-Public Funds workers.

I want to give the government one more opportunity here. Will it tell the employer to get back to the table, bargain in good faith and support the workers who serve those who serve?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the important speech by my colleague. It was a real honour to

join the veterans committee earlier today. I appreciate highlighting this very important issue and cause.

Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services, or CFMWS, provides many vital programs and services in support of the Canadian Armed Forces. This includes deployment support, retail and financial services and fitness testing in classes. Employees of the CFMWS ensure that CAF members are ready to take on the crucial tasks we ask of them, both physically and mentally. We are so grateful that they are able to achieve those things for our freedom and peace.

As we all know, some of this organization's staff have been on strike recently. Between November 20 and December 14, 2023, bargaining units of the Staff of the Non-Public Funds, Canadian Forces, or SNPFCE, in Kingston, Petawawa, Ottawa, Valcartier, Montreal, Saint-Jean and Bagotville voted in favour of strike action. They have been on the picket lines since January 15.

During this time, work has been done to minimize the impact of the strike on military members wherever possible. Each base has an operational committee responsible for ensuring minimal disruptions to key operations and protecting personnel, as well as property and facilities.

Plans have also been put in place to continue providing certain services and lessen the impact on other services through reduced facility opening hours and scheduling non-essential events wherever needed.

While it is unfortunate that a settlement has not yet been reached, the Government of Canada acknowledges the importance of legal strikes as part of the collective bargaining process and respects the rights of employees to strike. The Minister of National Defence takes this strike and the bargaining very seriously, and I want the hon. member to know that our government does too, as I do personally, as we support collective bargaining rights.

There are no positions within the SNPFCE paid below the minimum wage rate. In April of last year, non-unionized positions of the SNPFCE received a cost of living increase to ensure that salaries are at a living wage and equivalent to other organizations. Some unionized staff also received wage increases because of the increase to the federal minimum wage, which are in line with the CFMWS collective agreements.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

We will continue working toward a fair contract with the members of the SNPFCF bargaining units. It is the minister's hope for both sides to come to a negotiated settlement as soon as possible. We hope the parties can reach a negotiated agreement at the table, and we remain dedicated to the collective bargaining efforts to achieve a fair contract for SNPFCF workers.

● (1830)

**Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen:** Mr. Speaker, although the hon. parliamentary secretary is not on this file, I appreciate his words, saying that the government is grateful to these workers. However, the government has to show it, not just say it. Why will it not get back to the table? Why would the employer threaten to remove their trailer when they need it in these winter months? Why, during the strike, would a government that stated it was so proud to introduce Bill C-58, the ban on replacement workers, now use Canadian Armed Forces as scab labour to do the work of the people of the SNPFCF? Why is it using scab labour in this situation? What is the explanation for that?

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services provides vital support to members of the Canadian Armed Forces every single day.

While it is unfortunate that a settlement has not been reached, we still respect the right of employees to strike. We are always seeking to ensure employees are paid fair wages. That is why no positions within the Staff of the Non-Public Funds, Canadian Forces are paid below the minimum wage. Some unionized staff of the SNPFCF received a cost of living increase in April of last year; some also received wage increases.

Since the strike began, in collaboration with the local chain of command, CFMWS have taken steps to minimize the effects of the strike on members of the Canadian Armed Forces. This work is essential; quite frankly, I would refute calling any member of the Canadian Armed Forces "scab labour". They are all heroes.

We remain hopeful that a fair contract for SNPFCF workers will be reached at the table as soon as possible.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** 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 6:34 p.m.)

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# CONTENTS

Monday, February 5, 2024

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

Motion .....	20583
Ms. Taylor Roy .....	20583
Mr. Cooper .....	20584
Mr. Therrien .....	20585
Ms. McPherson .....	20586
Mr. Scarpaleggia .....	20587
Ms. Collins (Victoria) .....	20589
Ms. Barron .....	20590
Division on motion deferred .....	20591

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### First Nations Clean Water Act

Ms. Hajdu .....	20591
Bill C-61. Second reading .....	20591
Ms. Michaud .....	20594
Ms. Collins (Victoria) .....	20595
Mr. Waugh .....	20595
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) .....	20595
Ms. Chagger .....	20596
Mr. Schmale .....	20596
Mr. Lamoureux .....	20599
Ms. Bérubé .....	20599
Ms. Idlout .....	20599
Mrs. Goodridge .....	20600
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) .....	20600
Mr. Lamoureux .....	20600
Mr. Lemire .....	20600
Mr. Lamoureux .....	20603
Ms. Idlout .....	20604
Ms. Michaud .....	20604
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) .....	20604
Mr. Trudel .....	20605
Ms. Idlout .....	20605
Mr. Badawey .....	20606
Mr. Lemire .....	20607
Mr. MacGregor .....	20607
Mr. Lamoureux .....	20607
Mr. Lamoureux .....	20608

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Conservative Party of Canada

Mr. Turnbull .....	20609
--------------------	-------

### Marina Larouche

Mr. Martel .....	20609
------------------	-------

### Conservative Party of Canada

Mr. Drouin .....	20609
------------------	-------

### Dany Laferrière

Mr. Blanchet .....	20610
--------------------	-------

### Aurora Black Community Gala

Ms. Taylor Roy .....	20610
----------------------	-------

### Liberal Party of Canada

Mr. Zimmer .....	20610
------------------	-------

### Conservative Party of Canada

Mr. Lamoureux .....	20610
---------------------	-------

### Royal Canadian Legion Branch 251

Ms. Koutrakis .....	20610
---------------------	-------

### Liberal Party of Canada

Mr. Mazier .....	20611
------------------	-------

### Ben Newman

Mr. Bittle .....	20611
------------------	-------

### Housing

Mr. Davidson .....	20611
--------------------	-------

### Public Safety

Mr. Baldinelli .....	20611
----------------------	-------

### Conservative Party of Canada

Mr. Gerretsen .....	20612
---------------------	-------

### Terrace Search and Rescue

Mr. Bachrach .....	20612
--------------------	-------

### Fortin-Lafrance Team

Mr. Simard .....	20612
------------------	-------

### Carbon Tax

Mrs. Roberts .....	20612
--------------------	-------

### Conservative Party of Canada

Ms. O'Connell .....	20612
---------------------	-------

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Public Safety

Mr. Poilievre .....	20613
Mr. MacKinnon .....	20613
Mr. Poilievre .....	20613
Mr. MacKinnon .....	20613
Mr. Poilievre .....	20613
Mr. MacKinnon .....	20613
Mr. Poilievre .....	20613
Mr. Virani .....	20613
Mr. Poilievre .....	20613
Mr. Virani .....	20614

### Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Mr. Therrien .....	20614
Mr. Miller .....	20614
Mr. Therrien .....	20614

Mr. Miller .....	20614
<b>Pharmacare</b>	
Mr. Singh .....	20614
Mr. Holland .....	20614
Mr. Singh .....	20614
Mr. Holland .....	20615
<b>Carbon Pricing</b>	
Mr. Hallan .....	20615
Ms. Anand .....	20615
Mr. Hallan .....	20615
Ms. Anand .....	20615
Mr. Barlow .....	20615
Mr. MacKinnon .....	20615
Mr. Barlow .....	20615
Mr. Boissonnault .....	20616
Mr. Berthold .....	20616
Mr. Guilbeault .....	20616
Mr. Berthold .....	20616
Mr. Guilbeault .....	20616
<b>Small Business</b>	
Mr. Garon .....	20616
Mrs. Valdez .....	20616
Mrs. Vignola .....	20616
Ms. Martinez Ferrada .....	20616
Mr. Villemure .....	20617
Ms. Martinez Ferrada .....	20617
<b>Carbon Pricing</b>	
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) .....	20617
Mr. Wilkinson .....	20617
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster) .....	20617
Ms. O'Connell .....	20617
Mr. Lehoux .....	20617
Mr. MacKinnon .....	20618
<b>Health</b>	
Mr. Desjarlais .....	20618
Mr. Boissonnault .....	20618
<b>Child Care</b>	
Ms. Gazan .....	20618
Ms. Suds .....	20618
<b>Public Safety</b>	
Ms. Lantsman .....	20618
Mr. Virani .....	20619
Ms. Lantsman .....	20619
Mr. Virani .....	20619
<b>Diversity and Inclusion</b>	
Mr. Coteau .....	20619
Ms. Khera .....	20619
<b>Public Safety</b>	
Mr. Paul-Hus .....	20619
Mr. Virani .....	20619
Mr. Paul-Hus .....	20619
Mr. Virani .....	20620

<b>International Trade</b>	
Mr. Savard-Tremblay .....	20620
Ms. Ng .....	20620
Mr. Savard-Tremblay .....	20620
Ms. Ng .....	20620
<b>Public Safety</b>	
Mr. Poilievre .....	20620
Mr. Virani .....	20620
Mr. Poilievre .....	20620
Mr. MacKinnon .....	20620
Mr. Poilievre .....	20621
Mr. MacKinnon .....	20621
<b>Emergency Preparedness</b>	
Mr. Blois .....	20621
Mr. Sajjan .....	20621
<b>Public Services and Procurement</b>	
Mr. Genuis .....	20621
Ms. O'Connell .....	20621
Mr. Genuis .....	20621
Ms. O'Connell .....	20622
Mrs. Kusie .....	20622
Ms. O'Connell .....	20622
<b>International Trade</b>	
Mr. Baker .....	20622
Ms. Ng .....	20622
<b>Housing</b>	
Mr. Bachrach .....	20622
Mr. Fragiskatos .....	20622
<b>Electoral Reform</b>	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) .....	20623
Ms. O'Connell .....	20623

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

<b>Business of Supply</b>	
<b>Opposition Motion—Carbon Tax</b>	
Motion .....	20623
Motion negated .....	20624
<b>Canada—Ukraine Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act, 2023</b>	
Bill C-57. Third reading .....	20624
Amendment negated .....	20625

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

<b>Committees of the House</b>	
<b>Finance</b>	
Motion for concurrence .....	20626
Mr. Fonseca .....	20626
Division deemed demanded and deferred .....	20626
<b>Fossil Fuel Advertising Act</b>	
Mr. Angus .....	20626

Bill C-372. Introduction and first reading .....	20626	<b>Request for Emergency Debate</b>	
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	20626	<b>Canadian Softwood Lumber</b>	
<b>Criminal Code</b>		Mr. Savard-Tremblay .....	20629
Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe .....	20626	<b>Speaker's Ruling</b>	
Bill C-373. Introduction and first reading .....	20626	The Speaker .....	20629
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) .....	20626	<b>Privilege</b>	
<b>Petitions</b>		<b>Alleged Limiting of Members' Ability to Speak at Committee—Speaker's Ruling</b>	
<b>First Responders Tax Credit</b>		The Speaker .....	20629
Mrs. Hughes .....	20626	<b>Business of the House</b>	
<b>Diversity and Inclusion</b>		Ms. Ng .....	20630
Mr. Longfield .....	20627		
<b>Unsolicited Telephone Calls</b>			
Mr. Vis .....	20627		
<b>Children and Families</b>		<b>GOVERNMENT ORDERS</b>	
Ms. Damoff .....	20627	<b>Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act, 2023</b>	
<b>Seniors</b>		Bill C-57. Third reading .....	20631
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) .....	20627	Mr. Van Popta .....	20631
<b>Women and Gender Equality</b>		Mr. Baker .....	20632
Ms. Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk) .....	20627	Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands) .....	20632
<b>First Responders Tax Credit</b>		Mr. Bachrach .....	20633
Mr. Cannings .....	20627	Mr. Kram .....	20633
<b>Electoral Reform</b>		Mr. Longfield .....	20634
Mr. Caputo .....	20627	Mr. Villemure .....	20634
<b>Ukraine</b>		Mr. Cannings .....	20635
Mr. Carr .....	20627	Mr. van Koeverden .....	20635
Mr. Baker .....	20628	Ms. Gladu .....	20636
Mr. Lamoureux .....	20628	Mr. Cannings .....	20636
<b>Climate Change</b>		Mr. Perron .....	20636
Mr. Gerretsen .....	20628	Mr. Gerretsen .....	20637
<b>Food Security</b>		Mr. Kram .....	20638
Mr. Gerretsen .....	20628	Mr. Perron .....	20638
<b>First Responders Tax Credit</b>		Ms. Idlout .....	20638
Ms. Idlout .....	20628	Mr. Genuis .....	20638
<b>Animal Welfare</b>		Mr. Gerretsen .....	20641
Ms. Collins (Victoria) .....	20628	Mr. Desilets .....	20642
<b>Fireworks</b>		Ms. Barron .....	20642
Ms. Collins (Victoria) .....	20628	Mr. Lake .....	20642
<b>Children and Families</b>		Mr. van Koeverden .....	20643
Mr. Genuis .....	20629	Mr. Cannings .....	20643
<b>Freedom of Expression</b>		Mr. Longfield .....	20644
Mr. Genuis .....	20629	Ms. Idlout .....	20644
<b>Women's Shelters</b>		Mrs. Vignola .....	20644
Mr. Genuis .....	20629	Mr. Brassard .....	20645
<b>Questions on the Order Paper</b>		Mr. Gerretsen .....	20645
Mr. Lamoureux .....	20629	Mr. Villemure .....	20645
		Mrs. Shanahan .....	20646
		Mr. Savard-Tremblay .....	20646
		Division on motion deferred .....	20647
		<b>ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS</b>	
		<b>The Environment</b>	
		Ms. Collins (Victoria) .....	20647
		Mr. van Koeverden .....	20648

**Public Services and Procurement**

Mr. Barrett .....	20649
Mr. van Koeverden .....	20649

**Labour**

Ms. Mathysen .....	20650
Mr. van Koeverden .....	20651



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