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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)
[English]

PETITIONS

UKRAINE

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, a petition that comes from the members of the Holy Protection of the Mother of God Ukrainian Catholic Church in Guelph. It states that, whereas Bill C-57 is an important update to the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement that would assist Ukrainians in rebuilding after they defeat the illegal invasion of Vladimir Putin; that the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has called on the Parliament of Canada to swiftly adopt this legislation; and that misinformation regarding Canada's carbon pricing scheme having an effect on this agreement has widely been debunked, the members undersigned have asked for the House of Commons and all parliamentarians to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to Ukraine by swiftly adopting the updated Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to stand in this place and to present petitions brought forward by Canadians. Today, I have a petition that brings forward a number of issues, but specifically it is signed by Canadians who are opposed to the bringing back, like the Liberals promised in their 2021 election platform, of a values test for charitable organizations. To summarize, the undersigned citizens and residents of Canada call upon the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis.

It is an honour to present this petition in the House here today.

WELLNESS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a huge honour to rise today to table petition e-4568, which was signed by over 677 constituents from Vancouver Island. They cite

that recreation and wellness centres provide opportunities for communities to gather, to connect and to stay healthy through physical activity. The research shows that recreation and wellness centres promote personal health and well-being among users, that recreation facilities play a critical role in the rehabilitation of workers recovering from injuries in the workplace and that communities without adequate recreational facilities find it challenging to retain seniors, youth and families in the community, which limits the retention of highly qualified professionals and volunteerism and is a loss to communities. The benefits of recreation and wellness centres to individuals and communities have been well-researched and documented.

Petitioners cite that their communities need more facilities, such as the West Coast Multiplex, which has been in planning for over 20 years, to offer diverse programs, which would be accessible by all populations and that the investing in Canada infrastructure program's previous partnership with federal and British Columbia governments provided funds need to be replenished with significant sustained increase in the capital to meet recreational needs of their communities. There is a need for expanding, creating or replacing recreational facilities on the west coast, in Port Alberni and Ocean-side.

The petitioners are calling on the federal government to invest heavily in infrastructure and recreational facilities to help keep people in communities and to keep them healthy.

● (1005)

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of a substantial number of Yukoners. The petitioners and signatories call on the House of Commons to support Motion No. 86, calling for a citizens' assembly on electoral reform. The petition also states that the Yukon signatories would also like to draw the House's attention to the following: The need for electoral reform continues to be a fundamental issue for citizens of all political persuasions. Therefore, they call for a new approach to developing a citizens' consensus on electoral reform where citizens would be given a voice on the subject of electoral reform and a right to make recommendations.

Business of Supply

NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the direction of the Liberal government, the Correctional Service of Canada is offering the prison needle exchange program, or PNEP, in federal correctional institutions, effectively encouraging illicit drug use in prisons.

Illicit drugs in federal institutions are contraband. Equally, any item used for injecting drugs is also contraband. The presence of needles for illicit drug use in correctional institutions presents a severe safety risk to both inmates and correctional officers. The already hazardous workplace of the correctional officer is made more dangerous by the presence of the PNEP, and the Canadian drugs and substances strategy should focus on helping Canadians recover from addiction and on receiving treatment, not on supporting these addictions.

Therefore, petitioners in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon and surrounding ridings, who are Canadian citizens and permanent residents of Canada, call upon the Government of Canada to cancel the prison needle exchange program operations, to stop permitting the use of illicit drugs in Canadian prisons and to focus the efforts on helping inmates recover from their addictions through new treatment policies.

HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I table a petition in regards to health care.

Health care professionals, in particular, our nurses, are often undervalued, whether it is by the provinces or other stakeholders not recognizing the potential and the harm we do by not properly supporting them. That would include everything from not recognizing credentials to retention-related issues, as well as the anxiety and stress put into the profession.

The petitioners are calling on all members of Parliament to ultimately recognize the reality of our health care professionals and to do what we can to support and to work with the other jurisdictions to make life better for our health care workers.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to give a voice to a significant number of constituents in Simcoe North who care about the issue of electoral reform.

The petitioners believe that the need for electoral reform continues to be a priority and that we need a non-partisan approach to this, including a citizens' assembly. They are therefore calling on the House to give a voice to the subject of electoral reform by supporting Motion No. 86.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1010)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AUTO THEFT

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

(i) after eight years of soft on crime policies, this Prime Minister has created the auto theft crisis,

(ii) according to the Liberal government's own news release, auto theft in Toronto is up 300% since 2015, and Statistics Canada data shows auto-theft is up 190% in Moncton, 122% in Ottawa-Gatineau, 106% in Montréal, 62% in Winnipeg, since 2015,

(iii) the Port of Montreal, a major hub for stolen vehicles to be shipped out of Canada, only has five Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA) agents to inspect the 580,000 containers that leave the port each year, according to the *Le Journal de Montréal*, with one law enforcement agent saying, "CBSA has no resources to check the containers, they check less than one per cent of containers",

(iv) it is the responsibility of the federal government to reduce auto theft as the primary prevention tools, including the Criminal Code, the RCMP, the CBSA and our port systems, which are the federal government's jurisdiction,

(v) the increase in auto theft is costing Canadian drivers as insurance premiums are increasing, and in Ontario, insurance companies are able to increase premiums by 25% this year,

(vi) a report by Équité estimates \$1 billion in vehicle theft claims were paid out in 2022, and these costs are being passed down to drivers,

in order to stop the crime and reduce auto theft to lower insurance premiums, the House call on the government to:

(a) immediately reverse changes the Liberal government made in their soft on crime Bill C-5 that allows for car stealing criminals to be on house arrest instead of jail;

(b) strengthen Criminal Code provisions to ensure repeat car stealing criminals remain in jail; and

(c) provide the CBSA and our ports with the resources they need to prevent stolen cars from leaving the country.

He said: Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

After eight years of the Prime Minister, Canada is becoming less and less safe. Violent crime, car theft and gun crime have unleashed chaos and disorder in our communities. Crime, chaos, drugs and disorder are common in our streets now, and the Liberal government is responsible for making this situation even worse.

Since the Liberal government was elected in 2015, there has been a 34% surge in car thefts across Canada. The Insurance Bureau of Canada says that auto theft has become a national crisis, with more than 200 vehicles stolen, on average, every day.

Business of Supply

The explosion of car thefts is making life even more unaffordable for Canadians. In 2022, car thefts cost the insurance industry over \$1 billion, resulting in higher insurance costs for every Canadian on their insurance premiums. In Toronto alone, auto theft crime is up by 300% and in other Canadian cities, it is over 100%.

While the NDP-Liberals say that they care about the safety of Canadians, they have had no real solutions to the rising auto theft crime across the country. In fact, their only real solution we have heard so far is to host another fancy meeting in Ottawa. They are calling it the auto summit. That means more meetings and no solutions.

The Prime Minister let this auto theft crisis happen under his watch. His reckless policies have allowed car thefts to explode in our communities and right across the country. His only action to fix this is to hold another summit. Last week, in his own press release, the Prime Minister admitted it was not like this before the Liberal government took office in 2015. We can all agree on that one.

Canadians do not feel safe in their communities and on the streets, but the Liberal justice minister and Attorney General told Canadians that this is just in Canadians' heads and that the increasing crime is empirically likely. Here are the facts. Violent crime is up 39%. Gang-related homicides are up over 100%. Violent gun crime has steadily increased every year and now, it is over 100% since 2015. Murders are up 43%, the highest in 30 years. The crime wave that the Liberal government has caused is not imaginary. It is real, and Canadians are experiencing it in every way.

We continue to see news stories of violent crimes committed by repeat offenders who are out on bail. According to a report published last week by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, violent crime is only getting worse and "Canada's violent crime severity index", which tracks changes in the severity of violent crime, is "at its highest [level] since 2007." During the last Conservative government, the violent crime severity index, decreased by 24.66%. Under the Liberal government, it has increased by basically 30%. A recent Statistics Canada report shows that the rate of firearm-related violent crime in 2022 was at the highest level ever recorded, a nearly 10% increase from 2021 alone. According to Edmonton police, the number of shootings in 2023 went up by 34%.

After eight years of the Prime Minister, Canadian businesses across the country are now being extorted by international gangsters. In January, the Toronto Sun reported that the mayors of Brampton, Ontario and Surrey, British Columbia sent a letter to the Minister of Public Safety saying that they are "deeply concerned for their communities due to [these] threats" and that "recent reports from their provinces have confirmed links between...extortion attempts and violent acts, including shootings" and arson.

The Edmonton Police Service now reports it is "investigating 27 events related to an ongoing extortion series that has affected [a number of members of] the...community in the Edmonton region since October, including...extortions, 15 arson cases and seven firearms offences." Businesses and family homes are being shot at in Edmonton. Over a dozen houses that were under construction by different home builders were burned to the ground just since November. While the police are doing their job and are catching

these criminals, the Prime Minister's soft-on-crime legislation, such as Bill C-75, allows them to be released within hours of their arrest.

• (1015)

These reckless soft-on-crime policies benefit only the thieves, the criminals. In fact, only criminals are getting rich under the Liberal government. The Liberals' Bill C-5 eliminates mandatory prison time for serious crimes such as this. It allows them to serve their sentence in the comfort of their own home. The government has shown more concern for the criminals than for defending our communities. It has eliminated mandatory prison time for criminals who commit robbery with a firearm, weapons trafficking and drive-by shootings.

The reckless policies have made police powerless in stopping career car thieves and other criminals. In today's Canada, a convicted criminal can just walk out the front door and be on the streets again, stealing cars and terrorizing neighbourhoods soon after they have been arrested. It is no wonder that more and more Canadians are losing faith in our justice system. In fact, only 46% of Canadians still have confidence that their government will protect them. To make matters worse, the Liberal justice minister is failing to appoint enough judges to handle the cases, resulting in an increased number of cases that are being stayed or withdrawn. The Liberals are just not worth the cost.

The Liberals' mismanagement has allowed organized crime to turn our federal ports into parking lots for stolen vehicles that are then shipped overseas. The port of Montreal has become a major hub for stolen vehicles to be shipped out of Canada. Despite that, it has only five CBSA agents, who inspect 580,000 containers that leave the port each year. In a recent article out of Montreal, a law enforcement agent said that CBSA has no resources to check containers and that they check fewer than 1% of them. This is completely unacceptable given the current car theft crisis happening in Canada. I want to remind the Prime Minister and the government that the RCMP, the Criminal Code, the Canada Border Services Agency are all federal responsibilities. It is their responsibility to reduce auto theft as the primary prevention tool.

Business of Supply

Conservatives have a common-sense plan to bring back safe streets and protect our communities. We must hit the brakes on car theft with common-sense Conservative tough-on-crime policies. Our Conservative plan would make prison time mandatory for repeat car thieves. Repeat offenders should not be allowed to serve their sentence in their living room, watching Netflix. We would put a stop to house arrest for convicted car thieves, toughen sentences for gang-related car thieves and eliminate the Liberal soft-on-crime bail policies for repeat violent offenders.

Conservatives will go after the real criminals by restoring jail, not bail. The NDP-Liberals have allowed career car thieves back on our streets to continue spreading chaos and disorder. Common-sense Conservatives will ensure that repeat criminals are where they belong: behind bars. A Conservative government will not go easy on organized crime thieves. It would designate a new, specific aggravating factor where the offence of motor vehicle theft is committed for the benefit of organized crime. We would increase mandatory prison time from six months to three years for a third auto theft offence. Conservatives will not stand silently by as our communities are terrorized by criminals who should be in jail, not on bail.

A common-sense Conservative government will ensure that repeat violent offenders remain behind bars while awaiting trial and will bring back mandatory jail time for serious violent crimes, which was repealed by the Liberal government. Common-sense Conservatives will put a stop to auto theft, protect Canadians' property and bring home safer streets. That is just common sense.

● (1020)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will quote a Manitoba statistic from 2007 since the member referred to that year: “the province's 2007 rate remained the highest in the country...for the 11th straight year and was 24% higher than a decade ago”. I remember talking about the issue when I was an MLA. I will remind the member that Stephen Harper was prime minister then. Unfortunately for the people of Winnipeg, there are far too many victims. The member needs to recognize that in order to deal with an issue such as this, as we did then, there is an obligation to work with other jurisdictions such as provinces, and with law enforcement agencies, and to provide support where we can.

Can the member indicate why Stephen Harper was such a disaster during 2007-08 on the issue of automobile thefts in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Tim Uppal: Madam Speaker, the member wants to talk about stats. Here are some stats: Violent crime is up by 39% since the Liberals have been in government for the last eight years. Gang-related homicides are up 108% since they have been in government, and violent gun crime has increased. Murders are up, and yes, car thefts are also up. It is not just about the cars; it is also about the fact that the insurance industry is saying auto theft is costing over a billion dollars a year, which makes everybody's premiums more expensive.

The current government is just not worth the cost.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see that the Conservatives have finally realized that there is an auto theft crisis in Canada. I for one have been talking about it since October 2023. I moved a motion at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to study—

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester has anything to add, he can wait until it is time for questions and comments. In the meantime, he may want to respect the individual who currently has the floor.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I will start again. Unfortunately, I do not think anyone heard me. If the member would put his earpiece in, I think that would work even better.

I am pleased to see that the Conservatives have finally realized that there is an auto theft crisis in Canada. I for one have been talking about it since October. I moved a motion at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to study this issue. The Conservatives agreed to it. They thought it was a good idea, but all they have done since then is hold up the committee's work. That is what they did with Bill C-20 and Bill C-26.

Why are they doing that? The reason is that they do not think that the auto theft crisis is all that important after all.

Why do they want to talk about it today? Is it because it makes for a good campaign slogan? Is it because they want to crack down on crime? Why has this become a priority for the Conservative Party today?

[English]

Hon. Tim Uppal: Madam Speaker, Conservatives have been steadfast in supporting communities and calling for safer communities. We brought forward legislation in the past, when we were in government, to have mandatory minimums. These were actually repealed by the Liberal government, which has made it easier for criminals to get bail and to serve their sentence at home. We have opposed those measures all along the way, and we will continue to do that because Canadians want and need safer streets.

• (1025)

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I like the member, but he neglected to say a whole bunch of things around the issue of car theft that concern a lot of Canadians. First, when the Harper government was in power, it actually slashed \$600 million from RCMP funding. It also cut over 1,000 border officers and gutted the crime prevention programs that were so effective in stopping car theft. The House will recall that under the Harper government, the highest rates of car theft in our country's history were found. Five of the worst years for car theft over the last 15 years were under the Harper government.

In December, with vote 3, we saw Conservatives vote again to cut CBSA funding. In vote 76, they voted to cut FINTRAC funding, and in votes 103, 104 and 105, proposed by Conservatives, they voted to cut over \$100 billion in RCMP funding. Why are Conservatives so contradictory on issues like crime?

Hon. Tim Uppal: Madam Speaker, we have already proposed ideas for legislation that would bring in mandatory minimums for those who have committed car theft for a third time. Currently under the Liberals, the minimum sentence is only six months. Our proposal would bring it up to three years. We are going to get tough on criminals and make streets safer for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, after eight years of Justin Trudeau, one word keeps coming up over and over: trust. After eight years of Liberal governance, people no longer trust this government or this Prime Minister. The latest example could not be clearer. The Globe and Mail is reporting that the Nazi who was invited here and honoured in the House was also invited—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia on a point of order.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, you may not have noticed, but at the beginning of his speech, the member called another colleague in the House by name. I believe we are supposed to call our colleagues by their titles. Perhaps he should be reminded of that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Thank you. I did not hear it. I want to remind members not to use the names of members who sit in the House when making a speech. I also want to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms something. I notice it is getting a little noisy in the lobby. Someone really should go and see what is happening and ask people to lower their voices.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, after eight years of this Prime Minister whose name we cannot say anymore, the trust is gone. Unfortunately, the trust is broken. We saw this in the most recent incident. The Globe and Mail is reporting that the Prime Minister provided disinformation, at the very least, to the House concerning his office's knowledge of the presence of a Nazi who was honoured here. Each of my colleagues was asked to applaud this Nazi on the recommendation of the former Speaker of the House of Commons.

Business of Supply

For weeks, the Prime Minister denied any knowledge of this situation. He denied his office had been involved. However, we learned this week that not only did the Prime Minister's Office know, but that the PMO itself invited this Nazi to a reception. This was a personal invitation from the PMO. For this reason, when the time comes to talk about crime, to stop the crime and find solutions, every word from this Prime Minister must now be taken with a grain of salt, unfortunately.

It is unfortunate because, after eight years of this Prime Minister, Canadians no longer trust him or his announcements, like the summit on auto theft he announced. For the eight years this Prime Minister has been in power, he had the tools at his disposal. For eight years, he has had the power to act, yet the only solution he can think of is to call everyone together so he can share the blame with them instead of taking responsibility for his actions, just as he refused to do when he himself invited a former Nazi to a reception hosted by the Prime Minister and attended by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

A Conservative government will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and, above all, stop the crime. That brings us to today's motion. Auto theft is a serious issue across the country, mainly in big cities, but also in rural areas. I will talk about this in my speech.

In Quebec alone, 10,595 auto thefts were reported in 2022. This figure comes from the Groupement des assureurs automobiles, an auto insurance group that represents virtually all Quebec insurance companies.

That is a 37% increase between 2021 and 2022 and a 138% increase since 2016, or since this Liberal government came to power. It amounts to an average of 29 vehicles stolen per day. In 2022, auto theft cost insurers \$372 million, up \$130 million in one year alone.

People are going to wonder why their car insurance costs are going up. It is simple: Insurance companies have to pay for all these stolen vehicles. Why are more of them not being recovered? Why can the police not stop auto theft?

I will share a couple of quick stories. I have friends in the Quebec City area whose vehicle was stolen. They have cameras set up at home. There was a nice vehicle on the property. This happened in broad daylight. The footage clearly shows the thief going up to the vehicle with a forged key, getting in and just driving off. Minutes later, my friend called the police. The police told him that his vehicle was probably already on its way to the port of Montreal and that, if it was already there, unfortunately, they would not be able to get into the port of Montreal to seize it. The police suggested he call his insurer.

Business of Supply

No search is launched and no investigation is opened to find the guilty party. The police tell the owner to call their insurance company, and the thieves get off scot-free. The same thing happened in the Sherbrooke region, and I think similar accounts are cropping up across the country. The port of Montreal has become a hub for exporting stolen vehicles to other countries, wherever they can be sold. I saw a news report on that very topic this week. It was so odd. It reported that vehicles are turning up in a country not far from Saudi Arabia, I forget which one, and they still have Quebec flag stickers on their windows or other Quebec-related markings.

• (1030)

No one even bothers to clean them. Why should they? All this happens in broad daylight. This Prime Minister's federal government is doing absolutely nothing to stop auto theft. Vehicles are being stolen with impunity, considering that the federal government, which could and should have acted, is responsible for 95% of all the laws and procedures needed to stop these thefts. The Prime Minister has chosen to do nothing, other than holding a summit to talk about the problem instead of taking action.

Why is this happening? It is happening because of the government's choices. The government amended certain laws. One particular example is Bill C-5, which permits house arrest instead of jail time for car thieves. Because of these bills, repeat offenders do not go to jail. They can serve their sentences at home, watching Netflix, which is why we call them "Netflix sentences".

What is happening, as a result? There are no longer any consequences for thieves. Apparently, based on the information being provided and shared by police officers, thieves are simply no longer afraid of facing justice. It is so lucrative to sell these luxury vehicles abroad and the risk of getting caught is so low compared to the potential gains that they would rather carry on. Organized crime is involved. Meanwhile, people are watching as their vehicles are shipped off to countries all over the world, and the government does nothing.

After eight years of inaction by this Prime Minister, it is time to act. That is why a Conservative government will take action. It will immediately reverse the changes made by the Liberal government in its soft-on-crime Bill C-5, which allows car thieves to be placed under house arrest rather than going to jail. That bill was supported by the Bloc Québécois.

A Conservative government will strengthen Criminal Code provisions to ensure that repeat car thieves are kept behind bars. We will provide the CBSA and port officials with the resources they need to stop stolen cars from leaving the country.

Specifically, we will increase mandatory sentences from six months to three years for a third car theft offence. Three car thefts will mean three years in prison. There will be far fewer thieves on the street if we do things right. We will get rid of the Netflix sentences and create a new specific aggravating factor when the offence is committed for the benefit of organized crime.

Furthermore, just this morning, the leader of the Conservative Party was at the port of Montreal to announce other very important measures that the government could have implemented. Instead of holding a summit, it could have taken action. However, once again

it chose to give car thieves free rein and keep car owners in Montreal and in the regions living in fear of having their cars stolen at any time.

Today we announced we are going to fire the useless management consultants at the CBSA and use that money to fix our federal ports. We are going to invest in state-of-the-art X-ray scanners that can be used to quickly scan containers at the four federal ports of Montreal, Vancouver, Prince Rupert and Halifax. We are going to hire a special team of customs officers to use the scanners and intercept stolen cars so they do not leave the country. We are going to hire 75 CBSA officers to secure our federal ports.

We will do all that while adhering to our policy of saving one dollar for every dollar spent, particularly by saving money on the infamous ArriveCAN app, which cost \$54 million. If they had invested that \$54 million in customs rather than in an app that does not work, we would not be in this situation today. That sums up this Prime Minister's record over the past eight years.

• (1035)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could my colleague explain why, when I was in the Manitoba legislature and Stephen Harper was the prime minister, the province of Manitoba hit record highs in terms of automobile theft?

We are talking significant numbers. In fact, they were the highest in Canada for something like 10 consecutive years. They continued to be high well after 2007. It was not until the province actually started to take tangible actions in working with Ottawa that we saw the numbers go down.

Would the member not agree that, like for Stephen Harper, there is an obligation to work with provincial jurisdictions and other stakeholders to ensure that we minimize the number of victims and deal with the issue? Would he not acknowledge that?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, is there anyone in this government who will ever take responsibility for their actions and decisions?

The Liberals have been in power for eight years. In those eight years, the rate of violent gun crime has surged. In Canada, in 2022 alone, the rate jumped by 9%. Approximately 14,000 violent crimes were committed with the aid of a firearm in this country in 2022, which breaks down to 36.7 crimes of this type per 100,000 inhabitants. That is 8.9% higher than in 2021.

In Gatineau, just on the other side of the river, the number of violent crimes rose by 76% in one year. That is unacceptable.

Meanwhile, all the Liberals are doing is once again trying to find other people to blame for their inaction.

Points of Order

We, the Conservatives, have a plan. We will take action to fight auto theft and stop the crime.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, obviously, the Bloc Québécois agrees there is a serious auto theft problem. However, this is not the only problem right now.

There is an argument behind the Conservative motion, but it lacks a certain intellectual rigour. For example, it says the law arising from Bill C-5 is largely responsible for the surge in auto thefts, yet Bill C-5 only received royal assent on November 17, 2022.

I would like my colleague to explain how Bill C-5 can be the reason auto thefts have surged since 2015 when Bill C-5 was not even in force at the time.

• (1040)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois just has a tendency to support the Liberal Prime Minister.

The Bloc Québécois voted for the Liberal law arising from Bill C-75, which allows car thieves to be released on bail the same day they are arrested. The thieves are arrested, but the next day, they are free to start stealing again.

The Bloc Québécois also voted for Bill C-5, which allows car thieves to serve their sentence at home, watching Netflix in the comfort of their living room.

The Bloc Québécois does not want a solution that will stop criminals and stop auto theft. They proved it when they voted with the government for Bill C-75 and Bill C-5.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing at issue here is the fact that Conservatives have historically cut CBSA infrastructure. Detector dogs were reduced under their administration. The teams that worked with the United States, in terms of being proactive, were reduced by Conservatives. They implemented a new training program that did not hire workers until they had spent 18 weeks away from their families, getting \$125 a week just to be trained for a potential job. Therefore, we are short thousands of workers.

They mention five workers in the port of Montreal in their motion. Why do they not specifically outline what they will do for the CBSA officers they refer to as “agents”, who do not get the respect they deserve and do not have the infrastructure to stop the vehicles from being stolen?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I can see the NDP is confused, because, during the Harper years, it was indeed less costly and there was less crime. Crime did not pay during the time of Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

I can see the NDP has trouble understanding this, but we Conservatives have decided to act. We will continue. We will stop the crime and take steps to reduce auto theft in this country.

Car owners will be able to sleep easy. The first thing they do in the morning will no longer be to look outside to see if their car is still where they parked it.

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to bring the attention of the Speaker to a very unfortunate incident that happened in Oral Questions yesterday in response to the Leader of the Opposition's very measured policy-oriented question, which I will read right now to provide some context:

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?

It was very focused on actual policy. No personal attack or insult at all was contained in that question.

The Minister of Justice, though, used an extremely unparliamentary word in his response. It was not captured in Hansard, but it was captured on the audio. At the end of his response, the Minister of Justice called the Leader of the Opposition “an effing tool”.

This comes from a government that loves to lecture everybody else about raising the level of debate, decorum and civility. Once again, we see Liberal hypocrisy on full display. The Minister of Justice completely lost his cool, lost his temper and hurled that offensive insult in this place, in the House of Commons.

The Speaker has issued several rulings in the last few weeks where he has indicated that he is going to try to address these types of comments made in the House. I ask the Speaker to examine the audio. It is clearly audible for all to hear. This offensive, unparliamentary remark needs to be withdrawn, and the minister needs to apologize.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to thank the hon. official opposition House leader for his intervention. We will certainly look into this and, if need be, come back to the House with the appropriate remedy.

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OPPOSITION MOTION—AUTO THEFT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the opposition and my colleague, the member for Edmonton Mill Woods, for presenting a motion with respect to auto theft, because it will give the government yet another opportunity to demonstrate our leadership on this important matter.

Obviously, we share the concerns raised by members in the debate so far today about vehicle theft in Canada. In fact, it is nice to see colleagues on all sides of the aisle agreeing on something for once.

As the Minister of Public Safety, protecting Canadians and their safety is at the very heart of my work every day. In pursuit of that goal, we have, as a government, passed historic gun control legislation to keep communities safe from deadly weapons. We have invested in policing and border services to crack down on crime across the country. We have bolstered our borders themselves to go after illegal smuggling, and further investments in both the Border Services Agency and the RCMP will be forthcoming.

This effort is about tackling the threat of organized crime to keep people safe and do so in a way that will actually solve problems like auto theft. It is this government that takes a thoughtful and effective approach to protecting Canadians, their families, our neighbourhoods and our businesses. We pursue solutions that work, ones that are grounded in evidence and collaboration, solutions that do not just sound tough on crime but actually are. We are taking that approach to the issue of auto theft.

Unlike the Conservative leader, who thinks he can score political points by playing into the fears of Canadians, we want to work with all colleagues and industry, police forces and the insurance industry on solutions that will be effective. We are working with police, car manufacturers, the insurance industry and provinces to solve this increasingly worrisome problem.

Preventing and cracking down on auto theft starts by helping police enforce the laws to keep people safe. To that end, we are also working with border services, law enforcement communities in municipalities and provinces, the RCMP and stakeholders across the country to ensure that Canadians feel secure in their communities and are not subject to what is an increasingly violent incidence of automobile theft.

Last week, along with my colleague, the Minister of Justice, and my colleagues from the Ontario caucus and Premier Doug Ford of Ontario, we announced another \$121 million to prevent gang and gun violence and combat auto theft in the province of Ontario. These investments will support, in a concrete way, efforts to address gun and gang violence and deal with the linkages to serious organized crime.

Later this week, as colleagues know, we are continuing to show leadership by bringing together federal ministers; our provincial counterparts; members of territorial and municipal governments;

insurance providers; automobile manufacturers; port, rail and industry stakeholders; and leaders in law enforcement, which is important, including police leaders from some of Canada's biggest cities and provincial police forces, at a national summit on combating auto theft to address this growing challenge in a collaborative and effective way.

● (1045)

[Translation]

We know that there is no one solution to such a complex problem. It is only through co-operation and joint efforts between governments, law enforcement and the industry, of course, that we will get the results that Canadians expect from us.

[English]

Participants at this important summit will discuss the scope and scale of auto theft in Canada and how best to collaborate on concrete solutions and actions that will address, in a real way, this increasing challenge. Solid, clear plans will emerge from the meeting on Thursday, and we will continue to work collaboratively with our partners across the country.

● (1050)

We will work on a wide range of solutions, from prevention to detection, enforcement and vehicle recovery. As my colleague, the Minister of Justice, said in Toronto last week, we are open to legislative and regulatory changes as well.

Auto theft is a complex challenge that increasingly involves links to organized crime, including transnational organized crime. For solutions to be effective, they need to focus on preventing crime before it starts, cracking down on bad actors by ensuring law enforcement has all the resources it needs and developing better means of tracking and recovering stolen vehicles. These efforts start from a federal perspective with the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA.

[Translation]

These federal agencies are looking at every possible solution, in collaboration with the Department of Justice, the Department of Innovation and Transport Canada and, of course, with the local and provincial police forces, car manufacturers and the insurance sector, to see how we all can work together on quickly reducing car thefts, which are causing so much grief and concern among Canadians.

The fight against auto theft also calls for deterrence and intervention at every step of the process.

[English]

From the factories that manufacture vehicles to insurance and security system upgrades, to the moment the crime occurs, we are pursuing effective solutions to prevent crime but also to hold accountable those who perpetrate these crimes. We are addressing the life cycle itself of that stolen car: fraudulent car ownership transfers; the movement of that stolen vehicle on roads or railways; and ultimately, in many cases, the export of that vehicle abroad from our ports.

Although criminal investigations for auto theft are led by the police of jurisdiction in the community where the theft takes place, we are actively supporting these important partners in their efforts to combat these crimes. The RCMP is working with the Ontario Provincial Police and the Sûreté du Québec in supporting provincial strategies that tackle this challenge, and is also supporting other local and municipal police forces in their efforts.

The RCMP plays a number of roles in helping to combat auto theft across the country. The RCMP works as the police of jurisdiction, and coming from New Brunswick I know this very well, in hundreds of communities as well. This means that it is responsible for investigating reports of crime, including auto theft.

Under contract to provincial and municipal authorities, the RCMP members who work in these communities across the country do exceptional work.

Second, the RCMP is responsible for federal policing. This is a core responsibility that is carried out in every province and territory across the country, and internationally as well. Under its federal policing mandate, the RCMP combats threats to Canada from transnational and organized criminal groups. These groups are increasingly benefiting from auto theft, and the RCMP is going after them in a very significant way.

As part of these crucial efforts, the RCMP works with international and domestic partners to dismantle criminal groups and disrupt illegal markets, leveraging operational partnerships it has with small municipal police forces, larger regional police forces and, in the case of Ontario and Quebec, the important provincial police forces.

• (1055)

Last, the RCMP is responsible for information sharing so that law enforcement officers across the country have the tools they need to go after criminals. Through the National Police Services, tools and databases essential for law enforcement agencies are available across the country to deter and investigate criminal activity, including automobile theft.

For example, the RCMP hosts the Canadian Police Information Centre. This is a key national information sharing system, one that is used by police every minute of the day.

[Translation]

The RCMP also heads the Criminal Intelligence Service Canada Central Bureau and supports the efforts to reduce the damage caused by organized crime by providing criminal intelligence products and services, including on auto theft. The bureau informs its partners, the government and other stakeholders about the criminal

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markets in Canada and helps those in charge of law enforcement to make decisions regarding the priorities for fighting organized crime.

[English]

At the border, the Canadian Border Services Agency is working closely with domestic and international partners to ensure we are disrupting criminal activity, including the export of stolen vehicles as well. This includes working in partnership with local police, provincial police, responding to intelligence reports and intelligence sources that the CBSA receives from these police forces, to intercept and interrupt shipments that may contain stolen vehicles.

I visited the Port of Montreal a couple of weeks ago to see firsthand the important work being done by the men and women who work for CBSA in this essential work to protect Canadians.

[Translation]

Through a variety of partnerships, we are actively contributing to joint efforts in the areas hardest hit by auto theft. We will continue to work across party lines to ensure we stay on top of this growing problem in communities across Canada and, of course, to combat the damaging impact it is having on Canadians.

[English]

We look forward to the discussions later this week and to the identification of concrete and effective actions that all governments can take to ensure that everything is being done and brought to bear to deal with what is understandably a source of concern to Canadians across the country, the rising level of automobile theft.

[Translation]

In closing, auto theft is a complex problem with no simple or single solution. We must all work together to address this challenge. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues in the House of Commons throughout the day, as well as the comments we will all hear later this week.

We will continue to do whatever it takes to protect Canadians and prevent these auto thefts that are causing so many headaches. I can assure my colleagues that I am very pleased to have the opportunity to discuss this important issue in the House of Commons today.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always interesting to listen to the minister's speeches.

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He is a well-known parliamentarian and well established here in the House, as well as in his riding and his province. Speaking of his province, New Brunswick, we know it is one of the places where, unfortunately, this auto theft scourge is the most glaring and devastating. We are talking about an increase of more than 120% in New Brunswick since this government was elected. Moncton has seen an increase in auto theft of over 190%.

Let us come a bit closer to home, in the province of Quebec. The minister said that a few days ago he went to visit the people working at the port of Montreal. That is great. He was impressed by the quality of the work. We too have been there. The problem is that there is quite a shortage of workers.

Could the minister tell us whether having five people work at the port of Montreal to analyze the content of the cargo is enough?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, obviously, I commend my colleague for his parliamentary service in the House of Commons and previously in the Quebec National Assembly. I am fully aware of the statistics that my colleague gave about the number of cars stolen in my province of New Brunswick and in Moncton. I do not disagree at all with the numbers that my colleague provided. That is why we are working to get those numbers down, since they are obviously alarming.

However, I do want to correct my colleague on something. I know that it has often been said that there are five border officers at the port of Montreal who are working to stop the export of stolen vehicles. That is not at all the case. As I said, I went there myself and I saw that there are a lot more than five assigned to that task. We are working with the Montreal city police and the Sûreté du Québec, and we will continue to deploy the personnel needed to do this work.

• (1100)

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to know that my colleague has convened a national summit to take place later this week to address this important topic.

Still, I would really like to know what the government, what the Minister of Public Safety did before that. Auto theft has always existed. However, since 2021 and 2022 it has skyrocketed. Police services themselves have created a special squad, an initiative led by the Montreal police service, or SPVM, with the Longueuil police service, the Sûreté du Québec and the RCMP.

Did the government participate in these efforts? Did it fund these initiatives? What has it done in the past few years to combat this scourge? What does it want to see come out of its summit? I have a specific question. Last week, I heard on the radio that the chief of the SPVM was not invited to this summit. Let us keep in mind that Montreal is a major hub. Has the government rectified the situation?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I believe that on Thursday my colleague will take part in the summit with us. I will be very happy to work with her.

One of the things we did when we came to power was restore the jobs that were lost as a result of the major cuts inflicted by Mr. Harper's previous government, for instance at the Canada Border

Services Agency, where 1,000 jobs were eliminated. Half the jobs of officers who worked in criminal intelligence at border services were cut by the Conservative Government. That is why it is ironic that today the Conservatives are talking about investing in our law enforcement services.

I spoke to Minister Bonnardel from Quebec, who will also be with us on Thursday, and I will continue to work with him. The chiefs of police in the major cities are of course invited on Thursday. I am eager to hear their suggestions. We are going to invest more in border services and the RCMP so that they can be the best partners possible.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the history of the culture and how we treat our workers at CBSA is terrible. The government has not improved it very much. In fact, there has been a constant problem with getting proper collective agreements on time. They are done just as the window of the agreement is done and they have to go back to negotiations.

We are short thousands of workers; some during COVID and even before. On top of that, the government would not even give vaccinations to our frontline workers, despite them being on the front line every single day. I think it comes from a culture. I would like to offer the minister an opportunity to apologize. The member Derek Lee from Scarborough—Rouge River got up in this chamber and called our CBSA officers "wimps". The Liberals have never apologized for that.

I would like the minister to apologize for that or have we gotten past that point from the minister? Are they wimps or not?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I was not aware of that comment by our former colleague in this place.

I can tell the member that my interactions with frontline CBSA officers have been extraordinarily positive. I have had an opportunity, with senior officials in Ottawa, to visit a number of CBSA facilities in the short time I have been Minister of Public Safety, including at the Port of Montreal as recently as a few weeks ago.

They are men and women who dedicate themselves to doing difficult work to keep Canadians safe, and intercept the importation of drugs and guns that have done so much damage in our cities and right across the country. Obviously, they are turning their attention to the export of stolen vehicles because one of the best ways we can work with local and regional police is to also bring a choke point at the end, as 60% of the vehicles stolen are, in fact, exported from Canada.

• (1105)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thought it was somewhat interesting. To the best of my knowledge, it was not until the minister actually announced that we were going to be having this automobile theft summit that the leader of the Conservative Party started to ask questions about the issue of auto theft in Canada.

I know it has been a concern for the government for a while now and we are addressing it through the summit. There is a lot of emphasis on border controls and theft that leads to the export of vehicles, but there is also a lot of local joyriding around automobile theft.

Can he provide the House a better sense of what they will be looking at during the summit?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for the work he has done in his home province of Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg to collaborate with local law enforcement, police and border services to bring every attention to bear on what, as he noted in an earlier intervention, has been a problem there for a long time.

The Canada Border Services Agency intercepted over 1,800 stolen vehicles in 2023 alone. Our government has invested to restore the more than thousand jobs that were cut from border services by the previous Conservative government. We have added 800 more officers above those who had been cut, whose jobs we restored, under that Conservative government.

We will continue to invest in the RCMP and border services so they can partner with local and provincial police forces to really do what is necessary to reduce the number of vehicles stolen in a significant way. Concrete outcomes and action plans are going to come from the meeting in a few days in Ottawa.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, as we are debating this issue that has hit so many Canadians and has been a source of real concern across the country, and mentioning who should get credit for raising it first, it occurs to me that the hon. minister might have a comment.

It seems to me that where we began to see some traction on the issue was not from a political party, but the investigative journalism of the CBC in finding that these car rings were taking vehicles from driveways in Canada and putting them on container ships. That is where I first saw this. Therefore, I thank the CBSA agents and the police, but I also want to thank the CBC for shining the light on this.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, obviously we share the view of my friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands on the importance of investigative journalism. It is a public broadcaster that is well financed and has the resources necessary to do the work in a democracy, which is essential for all of us.

[Translation]

We saw that with programs such as *Enquête*, for example, Radio-Canada has done a really good job of drawing the attention of all Canadians to the problems associated with organized crime in Canada. I agree with my colleague on how important it is that

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Canadians understand the magnitude of the problem. Our job, of course, is to put all the essential resources and effort required into fighting organized crime.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to have the opportunity to elaborate on this subject. As I was saying earlier, the Conservatives are finally paying attention. They now realize that this is an important topic and that it might be a good idea to add it to their arsenal of election slogans.

As my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands was saying a little earlier, it is true that investigative journalism brought this problem to our attention a few months ago. There are also organizations that come to Ottawa to tell us about certain issues and raise awareness about them.

Last April, I met with people from the Corporation des concessionnaires automobiles du Québec and the Canadian Automobile Dealers Association and they talked to me about this. It is wrong to say that they do not care about this phenomenon because they make money and they will be able to sell a car if a customer has theirs stolen, since they are reimbursed by the insurance company. It is not true that they do not care, because they are here in Ottawa to talk to us about it. They want the government to do something about this problem.

I first became interested in the subject a few months ago. I met with global car manufacturers, who also spoke to me about it. In October, following the feature story aired in *J.E.*, a television program on TVA, and after the numerous news reports of the Journal de Montréal's investigations bureau, I announced that I was going to move a motion at the public safety and national security committee. I talked to my colleagues about it, because we often see members of certain parties come totally out of left field with a motion on any given subject, thinking everyone is going to accept it as is. It is important to discuss these things with colleagues first and to make them aware of the issue. That is how I came to talk to my Conservative colleagues about the auto theft problem. They seemed to be very interested. When I moved the motion, all parties voted in favour of it. Everyone had a story to tell, everyone had a friend or colleague who had their vehicle stolen. A Conservative colleague even told me that he personally had his car stolen. There was definitely a consensus that this was something we should look into as soon as possible.

At the public safety and national security committee, we were looking at Bill C-20. That was significantly delayed by the Conservative Party for reasons we may or may not be aware of. The same thing is happening now with Bill C-26. The process has been delayed, and our committee agenda has us looking at the bill on auto theft after that. I do not really understand why the Conservatives are trying to delay this study as much as possible, when they are making it a priority today by talking about it. If it were that important to them, they would be working hard on the public safety and national security committee to finally get it done.

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With today's motion, they may be trying to get material for pre-election, or even election, slogans, because we get the impression that the Conservative Party may already be on the campaign trail. The Bloc Québécois did not get the memo. The Conservatives' new slogan is in today's motion, which states, "after eight years of soft on crime policies, this Prime Minister has created the auto theft crisis". Who knew? The Prime Minister himself created the auto theft crisis. He sure has broad shoulders. I am not saying this to defend him. It is true that the Liberals have not done much in recent years to combat this problem. However, that the Prime Minister single-handedly created the crisis is something we cannot take very seriously.

I would even go so far as to say that the entire argument laid out in the Conservatives' motion is completely disconnected from reality, despite the fact that the problem is all too real. If one looks at the problem with a minimum of seriousness, it is immediately clear that the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020 caused significant disruptions in the logistics chain around the world. One of the most hard-hit sectors was the industry producing the semiconductors needed for all microprocessors. The microprocessor shortage led to a world-wide reduction in auto manufacturing, which made demand go up. This increased the cost of used vehicles. Crime gangs jumped on the opportunity and quickly specialized in car theft and shipment to other markets. This was already happening on a smaller scale, but the pandemic and the impact it had on supply chains accelerated the phenomenon. Because of its geographical location, Montreal became an auto theft hub.

Why was that? Because Montreal is home to the largest port in eastern Canada that provides access to the rest of the world. Of course other ports are involved as well, such as those in Halifax and Vancouver. However, these ports have not been as affected as the port of Montreal. It is truly a gateway, a hub. As I was saying, the pandemic exacerbated the situation but, on top of that, new technological developments have made auto theft more appealing.

• (1110)

For example, consider the increasingly frequent use of smart keys, which make it easier to steal vehicles. Several news reports have shown how thieves go about it. All they have to do is use a relay to amplify the signal of a smart key inside a house by standing next to the front door. With an accomplice, the thief can then open the car door and start the engine.

They can also connect a computer to the onboard diagnostic port in the car, which enables them to use another key. All they have to do then is force open the door.

It is child's play for people who know what they are doing.

In Montreal, as in the rest of the country, we have seen people using Denver boots or steering wheel locks to make it harder for thieves to steal their car. I say harder, because thieves have found other ways to remove these devices and leave with a car in no time at all.

This phenomenon is truly becoming a scourge, especially in Quebec and in Montreal. Auto theft has increased over the years. According to Équité Association, roughly 70,000 vehicles were stolen in Canada in 2022. That is huge. Between 2021 and 2022,

the number of thefts increased by 50%, or half, in Quebec, by nearly half in Ontario, or 48%, by 34% in Atlantic Canada, and by 18% in Alberta. 2022 was a record year for auto theft. The numbers are not yet known for 2023, but by all indications auto theft has increased yet again.

The reported losses are in the billions of dollars for insurers, and we have seen premiums go up for ordinary people. Le Journal de Montréal reported that between 2012 and 2022, the average car insurance premium increased by 50% as well. This increase is in part tied to auto theft.

Given these facts, one of the questions we need to ask ourselves is why there is this growing interest in auto theft.

It must be said that auto theft is one of the easiest and least risky sources of revenue for gangs, which then use part of the proceeds to finance other criminal activities, such as gun trafficking and human trafficking. Those are the two reasons. It is easy and low-risk.

I explained earlier why it is easy. One reason it is so low-risk is that sentences are so light. In an article in *La Presse*, Jacques Lamontagne, director of investigations for Quebec and the Atlantic region at Équité Association and a retired Montreal police force criminal investigator, explained—

• (1115)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are a couple of conversations going on in the House and the sound levels are rising. I would just ask members, if they want to have those conversations, to maybe step outside. Otherwise, they may want to listen because they may want to ask questions of or make comments to the hon. member who is delivering a speech right now.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I was just saying that this man, Jacques Lamontagne, is a seasoned professional and he said the following:

There are more legal consequences to crossing the border with four kilos of cocaine than with stolen vehicles. Both crimes pay big dividends [to criminal groups and] the criminal underworld. Young thugs run less of a risk if they steal a Jeep Wrangler than if they sell narcotics on the street....There's not much of a deterrent if people know that they'll probably be let off for a first [offence] or, at worst, serve four to six months for car theft compared to a sentence lasting years for selling illicit substances.

I will return to Mr. Lamontagne's use of the term "young thugs". The phenomenon is fairly widespread. Crime gangs often use young people who often have no criminal record and are sometimes minors. They are asked to steal cars or transport illegal guns because the punishment for first offences is rarely harsh. It is a kind of strategy that these people use. I am not saying that the thieves should not go to prison, but I think that we need to focus primarily on going after these criminal gangs and their leaders.

Where the Conservative Party goes wrong is in assuming that this entire crisis was created by the Prime Minister himself and by lax policies, like Bill C-5, as the Conservatives are claiming.

The motion specifically calls on the government to "immediately reverse changes the Liberal government made in their soft on crime Bill C-5 that allows for car stealing criminals to be on house arrest instead of jail." Reading the motion, it is clear that the Conservatives are trying to link the increase in auto theft since 2015 to Bill C-5. As my colleague mentioned earlier, Bill C-5 received royal assent at the very end of 2022. I have no idea how the Conservatives came to the conclusion that Bill C-5 is to blame, since auto theft has been increasing since 2015. I do not think there is one simple explanation. The Conservatives are trying to find simple solutions to complicated problems. They say that this Prime Minister has been in office since 2015, so he is responsible for all of society's problems. Again, I am not defending the Prime Minister, but at some point, members have to put forward serious arguments.

Contrary to Conservative claims, Bill C-5 did not do away with minimum sentences for auto theft. Subsection 333.1(1) of the Criminal Code provides for a minimum sentence of six months in the case of a third offence. The Conservatives may well say that is not enough, but there is one major problem with their assertion. Are they aware that subsection 333.1(1) was added to the Criminal Code by the Conservatives themselves in 2010 via Bill S-9? If they now find that that is not enough, they have only themselves to blame.

In this motion, the Conservatives also say that Bill C-5 allowed for conditional sentences for auto theft. These are also known as house arrest, or what the Conservative leader likes to call Netflix sentences. It is true that the Liberals repealed subparagraph 742.1(f) (vii), which prevented conditional sentencing for auto theft. However, the other paragraphs in section 742.1 set out conditions for conditional sentencing: The court must be convinced that there is no risk to society, and the term of imprisonment must be less than two years. The judge may also impose any conditions they deem necessary. In other words, there is nothing preventing a judge from saying no to a conditional sentence. A judge should be able to exercise judgment. The Conservatives are assuming judges are not capable of doing that.

A conditional sentence cannot be imposed for a sentence of two years or more, so it is not an option in the most serious cases, because the maximum sentence is actually 10 years.

The Conservatives are also forgetting that there is always a bail hearing to determine whether an offender can be released while awaiting trial. Unless there are aggravating factors, it is rare for a person to remain in jail while awaiting trial for auto theft. In other words, the Conservatives' claim that criminals are being caught and

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then immediately released because of Bill C-5 is unfounded, because that was happening long before Bill C-5 came into force.

Once again, it is up to the judge to decide whether an offender should be kept in jail while awaiting trial and what conditions the offender must meet, especially since, as I mentioned earlier, criminals often use minors because they are handed lesser sentences.

I agree with the Conservatives about one thing in every case. Part of the problem is that Ottawa has done absolutely nothing to control auto theft. Under the current conditions, even life in prison will not act as a deterrent, because the federal government is doing absolutely nothing to monitor the port of Montreal, where criminals can easily ship stolen vehicles overseas. I will come back to that later.

However, I want to close by talking about the second part of the Conservative motion, which seeks to "strengthen Criminal Code provisions to ensure repeat car stealing criminals remain in jail".

● (1120)

Once again, it was the Conservatives who created a specific offence for auto theft, with their Bill S-9 and section 333.1 in 2010. If they believe that sentences are not long enough, they have only themselves to blame.

The Conservative leader proposed that a third offence be punishable by three years in prison instead of the six months set out in the Criminal Code. The current six-month sentence in the Criminal Code was a Conservative initiative. What the Conservative Party is proposing today are changes to measures it put in place when it was in power.

The Conservative leader is also talking about eliminating house arrest, or conditional sentences, for thieves. As I said, a sentence of two years or more already cannot be served at home. That said, Bill C-5 did allow judges to impose house arrest if they deemed it appropriate, but not automatically, as the Conservatives like to claim. However, the bill did not make any changes to release pending trial.

Let us make one thing clear: The Bloc Québécois is entirely open to revising the Criminal Code to deal with auto theft. That is what the Montreal police department wants as well. This time, they believe that new sections should be added concerning the export of stolen vehicles and that there should be stricter penalties for ring leaders. I think that might be a good solution. I imagine that will come out in the discussions at the national summit on Thursday.

The last proposal in the Conservative motion concerns the Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA, and the export of stolen vehicles. It asks that the CBSA be provided with the resources it needs to prevent auto theft in Canada. I could not agree more with this proposal.

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I spoke about this a few months ago. I think that the CBSA, which is under federal jurisdiction, needs to do more. Some people say that it does not have the resources it needs to do more right now, that it is short on labour and funds. They need to figure out what the problem is. Clearly, the CBSA is not doing enough right now.

I spoke about auto theft and how thieves steal vehicles; that is the first step. The second step is exporting the vehicles. Like auto theft, shipping the vehicles out of the country is practically risk free. Clearly, for criminal gangs, it means higher costs and more organization, but it seems to be going well when you look at what is happening at the port of Montreal. That is because it is a sieve.

Around 700,000 containers leave the port of Montreal every year. According to the Customs and Immigration Union, only 1% of all containers are searched. According to the Montreal Port Authority, or MPA, the law does not allow employees or the port authority to open a container unless a person's life is in danger or there is a serious environmental hazard. According to the port's director of communications, when the containers arrive at the port, it is already too late to do anything. The containers remain sealed unless law enforcement intervenes for a specific reason. They need a warrant to open them, so they need reasonable grounds.

Police forces have access to the port and can intervene. However, they do not patrol there because the MPA already has its own security guards. The MPA does not intervene because the police can do it and the police do not intervene because the MPA has its own security guards, so that is just great.

As for customs, the CBSA is responsible for controlling goods for export. CBSA agents can open containers. However, in October, we learned from the Journal de Montréal that there are only five border agents to inspect the containers in Montreal, which makes the task practically impossible. Yes, the CBSA is responsible for overseeing exports, but its mandate is more focused on imports. It also needs to look at what is coming into the country. That is understandable. Do changes need to be made to the CBSA's mandate to ensure that exports are better monitored? I think that is something we need to think about.

Another reason why it is easy to export stolen cars is that anyone can rent a container by filling out a simple online declaration form for the shipping company. We could do it without any problem, just as a small business could. Anyone can change their form up to 48 hours after shipping, so that obviously makes it possible for thieves to cover their tracks once the goods are already on their way to Europe, the Middle East or Africa.

Finally, criminals use numbered companies to fill out those forms. They often use the same or similar serial numbers to defraud the CBSA on their export declaration form.

• (1125)

It should be easy for the Canada Border Services Agency to spot, easy to see that a vehicle serial number comes up repeatedly. At least, Le Journal de Montréal was able to do just that and identify the issue using a simple Excel document. However, for some unknown reason, it seems too difficult for the CBSA.

As early as the fall of 2015, an Auditor General's report stated that export control at the border is ineffective and that only one in five high-risk containers was inspected. Now, we are being told that there are almost no inspections and that, even when there is a concern that there may be high-risk contents, only one container in five is searched and checked. It is easy to understand why there are a huge number of stolen vehicles passing through the port of Montreal without anyone noticing.

I asked the customs union to come testify before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on Bill C-21. The union told us that a lot of illegal or stolen material is shipped in containers that travel in and out of Canada not only by water, but also by train, and that the agency performs almost no inspections. At the time, the government dismissed the criticism out of hand, saying that it did not consider this information important.

What Le Journal de Montréal's investigative bureau reported, in a nutshell, is that only five officers at the Port of Montreal conduct searches. They rely on a temperamental cargo scanner that is constantly breaking down. The agency refuses to second an investigator to a special stolen vehicle export squad. The same serial numbers come up again and again. Critical information is not being forwarded to port services or police in a timely manner, and the agency apparently omits to report high-risk containers to its partners.

We see that many organizations are involved, but, despite that, nothing is getting done.

I would be very pleased to answer my colleagues' questions and I hope the summit being held next week will contribute to finding solutions to address this scourge.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada was known as a safe country, but after eight years of Liberals and other parties that support them, such as the NDP and the Bloc, we are seeing an incredible increase in all sorts of crime, including auto theft. In Montreal, we have seen an increase of 100%. Everyone is paying the price. We are paying more for our automobile insurance.

Will the Bloc Québécois vote in favour of our common-sense motion to protect Canadians, including Quebecers?

• (1130)

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, one thing I really like about the Conservative motion is that it says we need to provide the Canada Border Services Agency with the resources it needs to operate. Something in the earlier discussions caught my attention. Liberal Party members said the Conservatives cut CBSA's budget when they were in power.

Why is there one single officer stationed at the Port of Montreal to conduct searches? Is it because of the Conservatives' budget cuts, I wonder?

Anyway, today they have changed their minds and they want to do more, but maybe they should not blame one government for this whole crisis when the previous government essentially did nothing or actually helped worsen the crisis.

[English]

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member opposite spoke a bit about the Conservative approach to finding solutions to this challenge and referred to those solutions as simplistic. Does she believe that the Conservatives' position on how to go forward in finding solutions actually would result in some real solutions in the long term to take on this issue?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I am concerned, and I do not think I am the only one. Most of my colleagues and the people in our ridings are concerned to see the Conservatives proposing such simple solutions to problems that are always a bit more complex. We need to take the time to analyze the situation. As my colleague said so well earlier, the argument behind the Conservatives' motion lacks intellectual rigour.

Auto theft is obviously a big problem, and we want to do more to stop it. The Bloc Québécois has been talking about it for months and has been asking the government to do more. It is baffling that the police themselves have joined forces to do more, which in itself is a good thing, but that the federal government, which is responsible for the Canada Border Services Agency and the country's ports, is doing absolutely nothing.

We need to examine the issue properly. There is going to be a summit, and that is good. As I was telling the minister earlier, I hope that the chiefs of Canada's major police forces will be invited, especially the Montreal police chief, because their organizations are already getting results when it comes to tracking down stolen vehicles.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the Conservatives are now saying "Oh, get tough on crime," yet when the Harper administration was in government, between 2010 and 2015, it cut close to \$600 million from the RCMP budget and laid off 1,100 CBSA officers. To boot, on crime prevention, it underspent \$28 million that had already been allocated. The Conservative leader now continues to call for cuts to the RCMP's budget, as well as to the CBSA's.

The member talked about the port, and I absolutely agree. The federal government disbanded the port police in my riding back in 1997, and we have seen the fallout as a result of that.

Would the member support what the NDP has been calling for all along, which is that the government should in fact ensure that the port police is restored?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question. If we had been able to study the subject at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, I think that my colleague from the NDP would have had a chance to tell me about that proposal.

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For months now, however, the Conservatives have been holding up our work so that we cannot get to it. I invited officials from the Port of Montreal. I invited police chiefs from the Montreal police force, the Sûreté du Québec and the RCMP to come talk to us about the situation and explain what they are doing. What should be restored at the ports? Why is there not enough surveillance?

All of these questions are important, but the Conservatives refuse to let us discuss them. If not for their stalling tactics, we would already be having these discussions at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. It is unfortunate that they tell the media that they want to be tough on crime and stop auto theft but that, when it comes time to get to work here in the House of Commons, they balk.

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things that are really interesting is the lack of training that is being provided for CBSA officers. Right now, people have to go through a recruitment process before they even get a job, and that is hard for women, who actually have to travel to one of two locations, away from their family members, including their children, for up to 18 weeks to get training to get into the service.

I would ask the member if she would support reforming this process to make it more friendly for families and for workers who have children to actually get the training necessary, because we are short thousands of officers.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, what I can say is that some housecleaning is definitely in order at the Canada Border Services Agency.

The Customs and Immigration Union has appeared before us a number of times and in a number of fora to underscore things that are happening that maybe should not be happening. Mr. Sabourin was recently in the gallery when the bill introduced by my colleague from Mirabel to protect whistle-blowers was passed. He had taken a stand and complained about what was going on at the Canada Border Services Agency, but no one believed him until a few months ago. While this may not be today's topic, I think it is important that we review what is going on at the Canada Border Services Agency, simply so that the people he mentioned are treated well.

[English]

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of discussion in the House on this important issue today. We have heard many comments about the Conservatives in past governments making cuts to mitigate the effectiveness of fighting auto crime, but we have also heard about the tactics they have used in the House and in the committee structure to stop the process of finding long-term solutions.

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The member hinted at some of the committee processes that have been taking place and how the Conservatives have delayed finding real solutions to this issue. Can she comment a bit more on what was really behind the delay tactics by the Conservatives?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, one of my Conservative colleagues was honest enough to tell me how he felt about this. These are tactics.

The Bloc Québécois is an opposition party. As everyone knows, the Bloc Québécois will never come to power in Ottawa. We are here to represent the interests of Quebecers. Even though the current government is not our favourite and we do not always agree with it, we try to study and improve each bill as much as possible and make gains for Quebecers.

My Conservative colleague told me that his party, as the official opposition, would oppose any bill introduced by the Liberal government to stop it from passing.

The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security is studying Bill C-26 on cybersecurity, which is extremely important, and the Conservative Party is doing everything it can to delay it. The Conservatives always have an issue or a concern that is more urgent, or a motion to move. They are always filibustering, which is unfortunate. People elected us to do important work here in Ottawa, and we are being prevented from doing it because of these tactics. I want people who may be watching at home to realize this, but it is extremely difficult to get the message across.

In any case, we in the Bloc Québécois continue to do our job, and we are very proud of that.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to split my time with the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, which is a beautiful place in Canada. I appreciate the member's work on this file, along with that of several others. He has had a long tenure in the House, so I will be looking forward to his comments after mine.

With regard to the Conservative motion in front of us, I come from Windsor, Ontario, which is the automotive capital of Canada. It is also a border crossing in Canada with a maximum volume of trade taking place. We have grown up with this as a part of our DNA in our area.

In this debate today, I want to tackle not only a little about the auto industry, but also some of the CBSA elements that are being put forward in this motion. It is a bit emotional for me because, in my community, we have seen the struggle of, as well as the lack of support for, the workers, the men and women who are on the front line of protecting our country from the United States. The longest, undefended border in the world is between Canada and the United States. At the same time, there are some very bad people who have tried to cross over with some bad intentions. Some of them are our own citizens, while others are American citizens. These instances have significant consequences, as any border MP would know, from Hamilton to Fort Erie and Niagara Falls, to other parts of Canada, even out to the west coast. I want to refer to that a bit later.

However, I want to point out one thing that we have not talked a lot about. We should not let the auto industry off for its lack of innovation in stopping auto theft. Billions of dollars have gone into the auto sector for innovations, and I have supported that because they are very important. At the same time, with the lack of a Canadian national auto policy, there is little we can do. There has been a carrot-and-stick approach to the issue.

Looking at this historically, my father was an executive for Chrysler for much of his career. I remember the days when we heard debates on a number of different issues that were brought to the auto sector, and it refused to put in innovations. One of the most obvious ones from the history books was the issue of seat belts. Those in the auto sector actually resisted having them for many years. There were also auto makers who did not want to stop having smoking devices and smoking elements in their cars. There were others who had innovations in their vehicles that turned out to be bad for the public, such as headlights that would pop up and recess at different times.

There have been a lot of great innovations and good things that have taken place within the auto sector, but the personal vehicle manufacturing industry does bear some responsibility. When there is massive public support to help transition this industry into a modern, safer place for all of us, then there is an expectation that public policy should be a part of that, and stopping auto thefts should also be a part of it. They have moved to automatic start devices as a competitive practice in the industry. At the same time, they have not kept up with the fact that someone can hack into these systems. There is a dual obligation in these matters.

I have worked with the auto industry over a number of years. I am sure that, if we put proper pressure on it and responsibility afterward if it does not do that, then we would get some achievements to help Canadians. We have to remember that losing a vehicle is not just a financial crime. The vehicles can often be used for a theft during that moment, with other victims, along with other types of crime that take place. We have focused on this a lot.

I am going to transition to the exportation issue because Canada has basically become a cottage industry for many of the organized crime elements that want to steal our vehicles to sell abroad. The reality is that auto theft in general has significant consequences, not for its individual crime, but for the subsequent crimes that take place once the vehicle is lifted.

I mentioned the history of the men and women who serve on our border. I want people to picture what it is like to be at the border. I have a busy community where there are tens of thousands of people who cross every single day. When I was growing up, many times there would be a summer student, rather than a border officer, in the PIL booth that we pull up to. Sometimes, people had to borrow bulletproof vests because they did not have enough vests at the border for our workers. I remember those days.

If one were to go to where they are right now, one would see that they are finally armed and have some support. In the past, they would have to rely on municipal, provincial or federal police forces when there were problems with Americans and others showing up with arms or other types of illegal weaponry, drugs and other things. We have to remember that, even under the best of circumstances, they could have somebody pulling up who is their friend, neighbour, family member, or somebody they know from their community who they are coaching soccer or hockey for. They have a job that is really hard in making sure that they do the proper scrutiny of every single person that crosses. They are making sure our country is safe.

● (1140)

That job is very much a strained job in many respects, and it does not get the support or understanding that it should. I believe this is what led to a famous quote in the House, for which I have yet to hear the Liberals officially apologize for, when Derek Lee called our border officers “wimps” because they walked off the job when armed Americans were coming. They had been identified as having criminal backgrounds, and border officers had to walk off because there were not proper supports at that time, even from law enforcement. This brought a lot of clarity to me on how far away this place is from the job that needs to be done at our borders to keep us safe.

We have seen successive Liberal and Conservative governments not even finish out the terms of collective agreements before they have to start bargaining again. That is just one thing. What I am trying to impress upon this debate is that this is a cultural thing. We can talk about finally restoring some of the cuts that took place under the Conservative regime, such as when it cut the detector dogs or when it cut back on officers, or under the Liberals right now and the poor training program that has left us thousands of workers short. We are short 2,000 to 3,000 border service officers right now.

We also have to change the culture of that organization itself, and it will be beneficial to hold a round table on that, but I wonder how much the union is being included in this.

I was included in a town hall meeting in Montreal on gun violence when Ralph Goodale was public safety minister, and sadly, all those efforts went nowhere because the government never followed up on the meeting. The subsequent government did not either.

When we talk about the specifics of what is taking place in Montreal, there are some very specific issues that can be resolved. It has limited space and a current team that consists of eight officers who look at the exportation of vehicles and whether vehicles are stolen or not. There are vehicles properly being exported and others that are not, and there is a limited number of officers looking at this. There is a fixation right now on making sure the imports are prioritized over the exports. Again, if we are putting the strain on the officers to get the vehicles out into our supply chain, we then need to reprioritize how we are doing it.

The Conservative motion does not really give us a whole lot on that. We also know the Port of Montreal is short on space. That area is short on space, so the vehicles get stacked up, even the ones that have been found to be illegal. The workers then need to call in the Montreal police force to help get rid of them because they do not have the right equipment. I talked about the bulletproof vests need-

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ing to be shared among workers back in the day. In this situation, they do not even have a tow truck or the capability to clear out the space. Management has not done anything to increase the space available, so they have rented space to look at these exports. On top of that, there has been no solution to increase that space or for them to get their own space. People are left with very practical problems that create problems for the inspections.

It is important to talk about the fact we have a management-heavy industry right in the CBSA culture and with hiring at the CBSA. In some areas, there are seven managers to six officers. There should be a better ratio of boots on the ground. The government has focused on the worst things it could focus on, such as the ArriveCAN app, where it focused on developing an app versus training officers. This is one of the worst things it could do.

We need to stop looking at technology as being the only silver bullet in dealing with this situation. The problem is that the technology we do bring in is so often broken. Right now, there is screening and other types of equipment in Montreal that had to be brought in from Windsor, Ontario, because the equipment in Montreal could not be fixed. If we are going to rely on technology, we need to have the proper and sustainable environment for it and we need to train the workers.

I want to complete with a very important point, which is about the training of officers. Currently, one has to come in as a recruit who does not get paid. We need to start hiring, training and supporting those people. We need to be giving better opportunities for the training to take place so we can make getting boots on the ground a reality.

● (1145)

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about facts. In York region, car theft is up 200%. In 2023, there was 4,294 vehicles stolen. Violent crime is up 39%.

I was out last weekend in my constituency visiting a couple of farms, and people are worried about creeping crime in my riding. They said to me that this country is just not the same anymore and that there is crime and chaos everywhere.

I am going to cite the latest, which comes from an article in *BradfordToday*, which states that a suspect who was arrested twice in less than six hours faces multiple charges. Within six hours, he went from stealing one vehicle to stealing another vehicle. I wonder if my colleague can comment on that.

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Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I do not know about the validity of the statistics that were put before me, but the question, to me, is why the Conservatives voted against the RCMP and CBSA funding, and other initiatives, in the last budgetary moment. They created a special process in Parliament, where they itemized all of the votes. They specifically made us vote on those allocations that they now complain about, including those for prisons.

That is a unique thing that I have not seen in my 20 years here. When we have done this before, one selects the things one supports and then one votes against the things one does not support. They voted against prison supports. They voted against RCMP supports. They voted against public safety supports. Why did they specifically create a parliamentary process to prove that they do not support those initiatives?

• (1150)

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have noticed that, over my last two years in the House, Conservatives use crime as a mechanism to anger Canadians.

The simple fact is that, yes, crime has shifted in the last few years, but there is no question that Canada remains among the safest countries on the entire planet. In fact, there was a report that just came out for travellers in Canada, and it said that Canada was the safest country on the planet to travel to as a traveller.

I wanted to maybe get a comment from the member. Does he believe that Conservatives are using crime as a way to create anger among Canadians to divide Canadians and pull more support to Conservatives?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, here is what we have: We have either aggressive behaviour with Conservatives using it as a hot-button issue, or we have what I would argue is passive aggressive behaviour with the Liberals, where they can create a summit and have all these meetings, just like the one I participated in that was related to gun violence and youth gangs, and then they do not do anything about it.

The reality is that we need action at the end of the day. Whether it is aggressive or passive aggressive, I do not really care. I just want to see action because Canadians deserve that.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have time for a brief question from the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I cannot make any promises.

As the member mentioned, there is also a technology factor involved. I have never had my car stolen, but I have had things stolen out of my car three times in the past two years in my riding. My key hangs two feet behind the door, and thieves hack the signal.

It seems to me that these technologies are quite advanced. They can be hacked. I cannot believe that no one can develop a system to block this signal, to prevent the system from being hacked. It is inconceivable to me that this is impossible. The member touched on this in his discussions with auto manufacturers. I wonder if he could tell us more about that.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, it would be really good to go back to the auto sector on this. They are launching vehicles with poorer technology for stopping auto theft.

As for the member's experience, I am sorry to hear of that. I can tell members that, at different times, I have found my car broken into. I am just happy that they were just instances of people basically taking what they wanted and not vandalizing the rest.

I have had other times where the windows have been smashed because they saw something. These things are not new. They have been happening for a long period of time, but the reality is that, with changing technology, and with the automation of vehicles starting remotely, we have not kept up with security, in how this is used to sell vehicles, maintain them and keep them in our driveways.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, in reality, as members know, we take the issue of auto theft very seriously. I want to start by saying that the NDP, unlike the two other parties, essentially has a five-point plan. I will be moving that amendment at the end of my speech, so that the Conservatives could incorporate elements that would actually make a difference in combatting auto theft. It is something that has impacted many Canadians across the country; my neighbourhood is no exception to that. The reality is that we see those numbers rising, and the Liberals have not done anything to combat auto theft.

I note that the most current figures show an auto theft rate of 271 per 100,000 Canadians. That is 271 thefts for a population of 100,000 people. We do not want to go back to the days of the Harper regime, when the numbers were almost twice that. There were 487 thefts per 100,000, or 443 in some years. The five worst years, in terms of auto thefts over the last 15 years, were under the Harper regime. Therefore, the Conservatives need to learn a lesson from their very bad record in terms of the rate of auto theft that existed under the Harper Conservatives. How the Conservatives responded is illustrative of how important it is for the NDP voice in the House, as adults in the room, to actually bring forward very thoughtful policy.

The reality is that the Harper regime cut \$600 million from RCMP funding. Why would that even make sense when, as I mentioned, there was a high crime rate? Why would the Conservatives cut and slash to that extent? It does not make sense. However, it is not just that; it is that over 1,000 CBSA border officers were cut as well. Therefore, the Conservatives gutted the CBSA services at a time when, as we know, the crime syndicates were increasingly international in nature.

There were cuts to the RCMP and cuts to the CBSA, but the most egregious cuts were to a program that ran across the country. It had a remarkable impact in British Columbia, and I worked very closely with it; that is the B.C. crime prevention centre, which invests in and works with local law enforcement to cut crime. We know that a dollar spent on crime prevention actually saves six dollars in policing costs, in court costs and in prison costs. Therefore, it is a remarkably effective investment. If the government invests in crime prevention in the country, it ends up achieving a lower crime rate, having fewer victims and, ultimately, saving money on policing, on prisons and on court costs.

What did the Harper regime do? Conservatives have never stood in this House and explained why they did this, but they slashed crime prevention funding to the point where centres such as the B.C. crime prevention centre had to close. None of this makes any sense at all.

If we go back to how Conservatives act now as opposed to how they acted when the Harper regime was in place, we see that we have to take action. For most of the years under Harper, the auto theft rate was higher than it is now. The Liberals have not taken action, and the NDP is pressing in this House of Commons that we adopt the five points we have raised. I hope to add them to the motion, if the Conservatives agree to act.

The Conservatives had an opportunity to provide additional supports for the RCMP, for CBSA and for FINTRAC, and I am going to come back to that in a moment. The reality is that FINTRAC plays a role in cutting down the financial transactions that, internationally, allow the crime syndicates to prosper. What did Conservatives do? In December 2023, they proposed and voted to cut the CBSA by \$23 million. CBSA is already underfunded. As I mentioned earlier, the Conservatives cut 1,100 positions when they were in government. What possible reason could Conservatives give for slashing the budget for CBSA?

• (1155)

There is more. In vote 76, they also voted to gut FINTRAC, which has the primary responsibility to actually track and catch those who are using the flow of money internationally to foster crime. Conservatives voted to cut that.

Perhaps the most egregious votes were votes 103, 104 and 105. Conservatives voted to cut over \$100 million from the RCMP. Conservatives would say that is a lot less than when we were in government and slashed \$600 million.

However, the reality is that, given their actions in December, their motion today shows huge hypocrisy, a contradiction that is difficult for any Conservative to defend. That is why they are choosing not to debate this in the House today. They are choosing not to respond to why they gutted the RCMP, CBSA and crime prevention programs, as well as why, over the last 15 years, they had the five worst years for auto theft. The Conservatives have not explained that or why they voted to cut FINTRAC, CBSA and the RCMP.

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• (1200)

[Translation]

Let us see what the Conservatives do in the House on the issue of crimes that affect all Canadians, from New Westminster—Burnaby to Montreal and Saguenay. We know that there is an international crime ring that makes money by stealing vehicles. The Conservatives' answer at the time, when they were in power, was to make significant cuts to the RCMP's budget, reduce the services of the Canada Border Services Agency and apply budget cuts to every program intended to prevent crime. That is what the Conservatives do. Right now, they are talking about common sense, but their actions in the past made no sense at all. There is very clear evidence that we cannot rely on the Conservatives. They do exactly the opposite of what they themselves are proposing in this motion.

To conclude, this is serious business. The Liberals have not acted as they should have. The Conservatives are contradicting themselves because they made budget cuts to all essential services aimed at preventing auto theft across Canada.

[English]

As is our practice in the NDP caucus, as adults in the room, we are actually going to propose something that would mean real action to counter auto theft and take out the parts of the Conservative motion that are disinformation. I hope they agree to the following amendment.

I move that the motion be amended by replacing the words “changes the Liberal government made in their soft on crime Bill C-5 that allows for car stealing criminals to be on house arrest instead of jail” with the words “cuts made to crime-prevention programs and to frontline border officers made by the previous Conservative government”, and adding the following after paragraph (c): “(d) require auto manufacturers to improve security features in the cars they sell”, and “(e) put in place tough new measures to crack down on organized crime and money laundering linked to auto thefts.”

This is actually a five-point plan that would make a difference in auto thefts. We certainly hope that the Conservatives accept this amendment, which would fight auto theft in Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion, or in the case that he or she is not present, consent may be given or denied by the House leader, the deputy House leader, the whip or the deputy whip of the sponsored party.

Since the sponsor is not present in the Chamber, I ask the acting whip if he consents to the amendment being moved.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

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Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, I have read the amendment the NDP is trying to put forward to a motion to make sure we address crime in this country. It seems to be putting the onus of the crimes onto the car companies and their workers. We reject that wholeheartedly.

We ask the NDP to stop hiding behind the government and stop supporting it in everything it does. It is a preposterous amendment. We ask that—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. House leader for the NDP.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, it says, “put in place tough new measures to crack down on organized crime and money laundering linked to auto thefts.” The member has obviously not read it, so I do not believe he should comment on it. Conservatives should just accept the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: This is not the place to actually have a debate. There is a lot of opportunity for people to have debate in the House. Therefore, I will ask the hon. acting whip whether he consents or does not consent to the amendment.

• (1205)

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, I think it is pretty clear that the words the New Democrats are putting in here are a deflection to try to continue to cover up what the government is doing here, as they have finally become aware of it. We reject the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no consent. Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment cannot be moved at this time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Don Valley East.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been an elected member for 20 years, whether on the school board, provincial government or here. Fighting crime has always been connected to what I have worked on in my life, and there has always been a correlation between good investments in programming and preventative measures.

Crime cannot be dealt with entirely through policing. The Conservatives seem to have a very narrow perspective on crime, which is to throw people in prison and throw away the key. I have always looked at preventative measures as one of the solutions to fight crime. How does the member think Conservatives would approach preventative measures for crime mitigation in this country?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, they do not. Conservatives are absolutely appalling when it comes to crime. We have talked about how high the auto theft rate was under the Harper Conservatives. They just said no to putting in place crime prevention programs, reinforcing frontline border officers, requiring auto manufacturers to ensure that there are security features in the cars they sell and putting in place tough new measures to crack down on organized crime and money laundering linked to auto thefts.

We know that Conservatives are soft on money laundering and organized crime. They will not take on corporate CEOs who are spending \$10 on a car door for a \$100,000 automobile. They are not putting in place any of the measures that would address the issue.

Of course, when we look across the country at which provinces have the highest crime rates, they are the Conservative provinces. In every single case, they have policies that are designed to fuel crime, not cut it. Therefore, for Conservatives to say no to this common-sense amendment just shows complete and utter hypocrisy.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that, under the Liberals, supported by the New Democrats, auto thefts and crime have skyrocketed. The New Democrats need to bear some responsibility.

New Democrats have pointed to the government confidence motions on funding that we have voted against. That is because we have no confidence in the government, unlike the New Democratic Party, which is supporting the incompetency of the Liberals. Canadians are paying the price.

Under our plan, we will see some major investments and changes in ports regarding security. Will the New Democratic Party support our motion?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, we have seen the Conservative plan, and the Conservatives voted in front of the entire country. Every Canadian saw they wanted to cut over \$100 million from the RCMP budget. Every Canadian saw they wanted to gut CBSA; they did it when they were in power and they are doing it again. Every Canadian saw they wanted to gut FINTRAC, which is supposed to be ensuring that criminal financial transactions are caught at source.

I think every Canadian saw in December how a Conservative government would act. We lived through the Harper regime. We know that, when it comes to crime, Conservatives simply do not have any smart-on-crime policies at all. The NDP offered a way to fix their motion, and they rejected it. They do not want to tackle organized crime. They do not want to crack down on money laundering. They do not want to install the crime prevention programs that save so much money and make sure that Canadians are not victims of crime. The Conservatives do not want to restore what they gutted when they were in power. They do not want to compel automobile CEOs to put in place security measures to ensure that cars cannot be stolen easily.

They said no to all of those things, and it is on the record.

• (1210)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague and good friend, the member for Oxford.

Since 2015, the Liberals have pursued a systematic agenda of dismantling Canada's judicial system and undermining the rule of law in this country. They have not only done so with their repeated ethics violations and blatant disrespect for the charter but have also done so through more legitimate means, like through acts of Parliament. Thanks to Liberal bills that passed under a former justice minister, committing crimes has become easier and more common than before.

It seems that under the current minister, the streak will continue, given the responses we have heard in the House already, along with some colourful language of course. At every step of the way, Liberals have placed the rights of offenders over the rights of victims, and their woke, out-of-touch ideology over common sense and safety.

With respect to deterring crimes, the Liberals' Bill C-5 eliminates mandatory minimum sentences for dangerous crimes such as robbery with a firearm, sexual assault and drug trafficking. There are others. Not only that, but it also allows hardened criminals to serve their reduced sentence in the comfort of their own home, to serve time while watching TV in their living room, sleeping in their own bed and enjoying the privileges that all those who have not committed crimes enjoy.

With respect to arresting criminals, the catch-and-release practices now mean that it is nearly impossible to keep dangerous offenders in jail for more than a few hours. They are then released back into the world, free to commit crimes, sometimes even the same crimes and on the same day, over and over again. The revolving door spins, cycling through a rotation of hardened, merciless lawbreakers who face no accountability. They are free to break the law over and over again, putting the public at risk and propagating unnecessary harm on communities, innocent victims, families and neighbourhoods.

Finally, with respect to prosecuting criminals, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP incompetence, the government has decayed our justice system and made it just a shell of its former self. It takes months to get a court date. Resources have been stretched to the limit, which makes it harder to catch criminals, and it is harder to keep them accountable. Therefore it is no surprise that our streets are more dangerous and that Canadians are worried that their once-safe neighbourhoods are subject to crime, chaos, drugs and disorder. Every single day we see new, outrageous headlines about individuals who are putting communities in danger and about a system that is failing Canadians.

Just last week, a 43-year-old man stabbed a total stranger with a syringe in broad daylight in downtown Toronto. The man was out on bail for previous assaults and has had more than 40 convictions in his lifetime, including failure to comply with the court and failure to attend court dates. The incident was in the middle of the day in Toronto. However, thanks to the Liberal policies, we know he will get bail one more time and that the cycle will continue again and again.

Stories like these add up; that is what makes Canadians feel unsafe. It is not just a feeling; it is based on empirical data and evidence. The stories not only add up to broken communities, broken victims and broken families; they also a story about the state of our

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country. Since 2015, gang crimes have doubled and violent crime is up 37%. Canada's murder rate is the highest it has been in 30 years, since the last time there was a Liberal government in power, and nowhere is the story more out of control and more apparent than when it comes to auto theft.

Too many people wake up, look out the window and see that their car that was sitting in their driveway the night before is no longer there. It is gone. It was taken while they were sleeping in safe communities like mine, where, at one time, nobody locked their front door. Since 2015, car thefts have tripled in Canada. More than 100,000 vehicles are being stolen every year, including nearly 10,000 in Toronto alone. That means that every six minutes in Canada, a car is stolen. Gangs and criminals profit from the criminal activity and use it to finance even more criminal activities, like more car theft, arms trafficking, human trafficking and drug trafficking.

• (1215)

Do not listen to me; the Prime Minister actually admitted it in his own press release. It costs every Canadian who drives almost everywhere more to pay for this. It cost the insurance industry a billion dollars in 2022. Everyone in the province is now paying more to drive. In Ontario, car theft claims, just in the first half of last year, were up 329%. That accounts for \$700 million in losses. It means \$130 more for every Ontario driver on insurance.

Why is this happening? Let us lead ourselves back to the dangerous catch-and-release policies that unleashed crime and chaos in communities. Bill C-75 allows repeat violent offenders to be released on bail within hours of arrest. They then often re-offend. Last year, even Mayor Steven Del Duca, who is the mayor of Vaughan and probably a familiar name to many on the other side, wrote to the Prime Minister, calling on the federal government to urgently modernize Canada's bail system to ensure that dangerous offenders are kept off our streets for committing crimes ranging from gun violence to home break-ins and auto thefts.

The mayor wrote to Canada's then public safety minister, asking about auto theft specifically and asking that CBSA protocols be tightened for screening and inspection of exports leaving our country. It fell on deaf ears. There was nothing until last week from the government's member of Parliament who represents a riding in Vaughan. The letter was written in January, after the problem got so out of control that the council had to step in to demand action for something it had been asking for.

For what happens after offenders have been convicted, the government did not let it stop at Bill C-75. Bill C-5 gives convicts house arrest, even those with long, storied histories of stealing multiple cars. This means that they can just walk out their front door, be on the streets again and start stealing cars and terrorizing neighbourhoods when they are done doing whatever they do in the comforts of their own homes.

One last thing is that the federal government controls our ports, the places where organized crime is taking place: en route to federal ports and at federal ports. Stolen cars are waiting at federal ports to be shipped overseas.

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It is time for a new approach. It is time to start increasing mandatory jail time to deter the actual crime and not to have people keep doing it over and over again. We propose three years for three thefts, and of course ending house arrest for car thieves while also increasing sentences for gang-associated car thieves.

Police, insurance associations, community groups and business organizations have been sounding the alarm bell about this for years. Our own constituents send us videos of it happening right in their front driveway, but their concerns have fallen on the deaf ears of the Liberal government, which in the meantime still continues to stand with lawbreakers instead of with law enforcement.

Now the calls have reached a breaking point, and the Liberals are finally going to do something about it. What is that something? Are they going to increase the punishments? No, they will not. Are they going to end catch-and-release policies that turn repeat violent offenders back onto our streets? Are they going to crack down on the incompetence at Canadian ports that allows thousands of cars? Nope, they will not.

They are going to have a summit. They are going to sit around a table. They are going to have a meeting. They are going to come out with a press release. They are going to take some photos. They are going to talk about it, after eight years, this problem that has gotten out of control.

They had a summit on food prices; food prices went up. They had a summit on housing; housing prices have doubled. I can hardly wait to see the results from this summer. In fact, I think Canadians would beg them not to have a summit. Instead, they should start cracking down on the violent offenders, keep them behind bars when they re-commit, stop the house arrests and actually get serious about fighting crime in every single neighbourhood across the country.

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member started her speech by talking about woke policies. She used the word “woke”. I have always been a person who has invested into preventative measures, like acknowledging things like systemic racism and acknowledging that we need to invest into communities where there may be some disaggregated race-based data that would contribute to making those decisions.

Does the member opposite acknowledge that systemic racism is real in this country? Should we be making investments based on data collection?

• (1220)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, violent crime in this country has gone up by 32%. Gang-related crime has gone up by over 90% in this country. There needs to be something done about it, and that is exactly what we are talking about right here. We are talking about the solutions that we are going to put in place to keep repeat violent offenders in jail.

The member can talk about whatever he wants, but this motion today is about, frankly, keeping our cars in our driveway and putting the bad guys in jail. I do not know why that is such a novel concept in this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, of course, we could impose harsher sentences, but in order to be able to do so, we have to be able to bring down the organizations and catch the people who are committing these crimes.

Will the member do the honourable thing today and recognize that, by making cuts to the CBSA, the RCMP and ports, the Conservative government made a mistake that is having an impact on what is happening today?

[English]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, this is a constant refrain that has been coming up in the House. The Conservatives actually spent less money, and the rate of crime was lower than it is today. We have had a 300% increase in car theft in Toronto since the Liberals took power. Yes, we probably did spend less money as a Conservative government, but does the member know what is worse than failure? It is expensive failure, and that is exactly what we see from this government.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague did not answer the question.

The Conservatives, when they were in government, cut \$600 million to the RCMP. They got rid of the RCMP recruitment fund. They cut over 1,100 jobs at the CBSA, and we are still feeling the effects of that today. In fact, the NDP brought forward amendments today, common-sense proposals, which I would think the Conservatives would support, including getting CEOs to make sure car manufacturers change the way they are designing vehicles to make them harder to steal, but they did not do that. Also, we heard testimony from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. Again, the Conservatives, the law-and-order party, failed to listen to the experts.

The worst provinces for car theft are Conservative-governed provinces, so maybe my colleague can explain why that is happening in Conservative-led provinces, why the Conservatives cut so seriously and so deeply on the RCMP and the CBSA, and whether they regret those cuts.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, the member does have one thing right. We are the tough-on-crime party. We are the only tough-on-crime party in the entire House.

The truth is that I am not the one who needs to explain to my constituents why I am propping up a government, at every single opportunity and in every single confidence motion, that has let the rate of crime rise in this country to 32% higher on violent crime, to 100% higher on gang-related crime and to 300% higher on auto theft.

Hundreds of thousands of cars are being stolen in this country, and the member who just asked me the question is supporting a meeting and supporting tougher measures by car companies, placing the blame on car companies instead of the government that he supports at every single measure, no matter how hard it has failed in this country.

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Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the debate from the lobby, and I heard the member start by talking about “woke” policy. I wondered what she thought about when she used that word, and if “woke” to her means caring for vulnerable people, advocating for the rights of the LGBTQ communities, working on reconciliation, and making sure that people have a fair chance to succeed and young people do not find themselves in a life of crime or worse. I would like to know what she means when she talks about “woke”.

• (1225)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about repeat offenders doing the same thing over and over again. What is woke is allowing this to continue to happen in this country with absolutely no recourse, no punishment and no jail time, and I do not think Canadians will stand for it.

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a passionate speech by the member for Thornhill about this issue, the common-sense motion we have brought forward. Axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime: These are the common-sense priorities needed to get our country back on track. That is why it is an honour today to rise in the House on behalf of the good people of Oxford to speak to our fourth priority, stopping the crime.

After eight years of the Prime Minister, everything costs more. Work does not pay, and housing costs have doubled. Rent has doubled. Mortgages have doubled. The amount needed for a down payment has doubled. For the first time, the government has priced an entire generation out of owning a home.

Even if people are able to get a home, there is now crime in our neighbourhoods. Our families do not feel safe any more. Eight years of the Prime Minister’s soft-on-crime and dangerous catch-and-release bail policies have unleashed a wave of violent crime across our country, which has led to a massive increase in car thefts.

Looking at violent crime at large, homicides are up 43%, up for the fourth year in a row. Gang-related homicides are up 108%. Violent gun crimes are up 101%, up for the eighth time in a row. Aggravated assaults are up 24%. Assault with a weapon is up 61%. Total sexual assaults are up 71%. Sex crimes against our children are up 126%. Kidnapping is up 36%, and car thefts are up 34% across our country.

Every morning, Canadians are waking up and looking out of their windows, not to check the weather but to make sure their cars are still in their driveways. This may sound like we are being a bit dramatic about this issue, but the numbers do not lie. One in four Canadians either have had their car stolen or know someone who has. We as members all know somebody just down the aisle from here. The former justice minister had two of his government cars stolen. If that does not speak to how much of an epidemic this is, I do not know what will.

For the sake of clarity, let us review the data. According to the Liberal government’s own admission and press release, which came out a few days ago, since 2015 car theft is up 34% nationwide. It is

up by 300% in Toronto, 100% in Montreal, 100% in Ottawa-Gatineau, 120% in New Brunswick, 122% in Ontario and 59% in Quebec. However, this is no longer just an urban issue. After eight years of the Prime Minister’s soft-on-crime policies, even rural communities like Oxford are not immune to the rising crimes we are seeing. Crime and car thefts are trickling into our small, peaceful communities. While I was preparing for this speech I was in the habit of reading our local morning newspapers, and I could see that there are even pickup trucks being stolen in Beachville, Tillsonburg and Woodstock.

It was not like this eight years ago. Back in the day, a person could leave their car unlocked and leave their doors unlocked, and that was enough for them to stay safe, but the hard-working people of rural Ontario are now directly impacted by the Prime Minister’s reckless policies.

I recently spoke with someone who had two cars stolen from their driveway within a single hour. Local police detachments cannot respond once a stolen vehicle reaches a federal port, so Canadians are now forced to take these thefts into their own hands. Many are using air tags to track their stolen cars, which are now being shipped to the ports and, from there, out of the country. Recently I heard from a man who tracked his car from Ontario to Montreal and all the way to Dubai, and he was completely powerless to stop it.

It is at these ports that the Prime Minister’s absolute mismanagement of the RCMP and CBSA is highlighted. The port of Montreal, a major hub for stolen vehicles being shipped out of Canada, has only five CBSA officers to inspect the containers. They have 580,000 containers to inspect every year, according to media reports. One agent said that the CBSA has no resources to check the containers, so they check less than 1% of containers. They apparently have only one X-ray scanner, which constantly breaks down.

• (1230)

How on earth can we expect them to inspect 580,000 containers that will be leaving our country, with one scanner? Federal ports in Prince Rupert, Halifax and Vancouver all report the same thing. Is the Prime Minister working with CBSA to fix the problem? No; he has done the exact opposite. Despite rates of car theft skyrocketing, CBSA is seizing about the same number of cars today at the federal Port of Montreal as it was doing years ago, and it is frequently ignoring suspicious containers even when they are reported or even if there is somebody standing in front of the container, looking at their phone and saying that the tag is showing their car to be in that container.

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Just last year, the Prime Minister spent \$15 million on useless management consultants at the CBSA. Let us not forget the \$54 million the Liberals spent on the arrive scam app, which not only did not work but also is now being investigated by the RCMP for corruption. Common-sense Conservatives would use these dollars to put boots on the ground and support our CBSA officers. We would not pump more money into bureaucracy.

The CBSA has failed to spend \$117 million that had already been approved by Parliament. This is yet another example of Liberal mismanagement and the inability to deliver desperately needed results for Canadians. The failure of the current government and the CBSA allows stolen cars to be shipped abroad to Africa, the Middle East and parts of Europe. They are resold and used to fund organized crime and terror networks to profit evil globally. This is simply unacceptable. With federal ports, the federal CBSA, the federal Criminal Code and the federal Prime Minister, this is a federal responsibility, and we need to respond immediately. Car theft has become a get-rich-quick scheme for violent criminals and gangs, and hard-working Canadians are paying the price.

This rise in car theft has made Canadians less safe at a time when many are already struggling as a result of the Prime Minister's reckless debt and costly carbon tax. Car theft is an additional burden on Canadians. In 2022, car insurance payouts totalled more than \$1 billion. In Ontario, car theft claims were up 329% in the first half of 2023 alone, adding up to more than \$700 million in losses. The Insurance Bureau of Canada has estimated that auto theft will cost every single driver an extra \$130 a year.

The failure of the government is to respond to the violent crime crisis, costing more and more at a time when Canadians are hurting and life is unaffordable. Only a Conservative government would stand up for Canadians and bring home safe streets. We have a common-sense solution for the real problem.

A Conservative government would go after real criminals by restoring jail and not bail, increasing mandatory jail time and ending house arrest for car thieves, while also increasing sentences for gang-associated crimes. We would increase the mandatory prison time from six months to three years for a third offence of a motor vehicle theft. We would remove eligibility for house arrest for anyone convicted of a motor vehicle theft by way of indictment. We would create a new specific aggravating factor where the offence of a motor vehicle theft is committed for the benefit of organized crime. We would repeal the catch-and-release rules in the Prime Minister's Bill C-75 to ensure that repeat offenders would get jail and not bail. We would fire useless management consultants at CBSA and use that money to fix our federal ports. We would invest in state-of-the-art X-ray equipment to allow for rapid scanning of containers at our four major ports in Vancouver, Montreal, Prince Rupert and Halifax. We would purchase a total of 24 new scanners, and we would hire more CBSA officers.

After eight years of this Prime Minister, crime, chaos, drugs and disorder run rampant in our communities. People's homes are where they are supposed to feel the safest, and all Canadians deserve to feel safe in their homes. We need to do more to ensure our communities are safe places for our children to grow and for people to raise their families.

It is very simple: The Prime Minister's reckless policies have allowed car thefts to explode in our communities, and his only action to fix this is to hold summits. Canadians do not need more summits; they need a common-sense plan to stop theft and end the crime. Stop the photo ops, stop the talk and let us have more action. Let us put a stop to auto theft, protect our property and bring home safer streets for all Canadians. That is just common sense.

• (1235)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is hard to believe some of the things the Conservatives will say. He said they were going to increase supports and have more CBSA officers. It was the Conservative government that cut over 1,000 Canada border control service officers back in 2000. Then the member says that they will increase the penalty from six months to three years. Who do they think put in the six-month minimum? It was Stephen Harper.

Does the member not know what the Conservative Party has actually done? How can he stand and say what he has when the Conservative Party in the past did the absolute opposite?

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is obviously entitled to his opinions, but not to his own facts. The government has been in power for the last eight years. It has had eight years to fix this crisis. They are federal courts, federal CBSA, federal RCMP, federal Criminal Code and it is a federal Prime Minister.

The Liberals have been sitting on the sidelines watching this crisis unfold. Now that it has blown up, they are holding summits, they want amazing photo ops and they want a pat on the back. They have caused the chaos in our housing, in our judicial system and in our communities. We are going to stop that with our common-sense plan to get car theft under control.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is obviously concerned about the situation. My colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia wants to ensure that the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security conducts a study. Strangely enough, the Conservatives do not seem to want that study to happen. They would rather have an opposition day about it, which, by the way, will not do much to change what is happening in the country.

We are having an opposition day today and we will vote on a motion. Not much will change once we have voted on the motion, whether it is adopted or not. However, a study by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security could get results by making serious recommendations and hearing expert testimony.

Speaking of expert testimony, I would like to ask a simple question. The Conservatives are proposing a three-year prison sentence for a third auto theft offence. What expert proposed a three-year sentence as opposed to a three-and-a-half-, two-and-a-half-, four- or five-year sentence? What is the rationale behind the three-year duration? I am not for or against that. I just want to understand why. What expert recommended that? Why are they proposing a three-year sentence?

[English]

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, that is very rich coming from the Bloc when its members supported these catch-and-release, soft-on-crime bills, like Bill C-75 and Bill C-5.

Quebec alone has seen a 50% increase of auto thefts in the last few years. Instead of standing up, joining the common-sense Conservatives and supporting our motion to help those in Quebec, he is not. It is time that the Québécois stand with our party, stand with Canadians, and start putting the rights of victims first, not the criminals.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the most effective programs Canada used to have was our detector dog program. We still have some of it today, but the Conservatives cut it. In fact, this was brought in under the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act, working with our border officers

Why would the Conservatives oppose detector dogs and have they changed their position? They were very effective, not only to anti-terrorism but for smuggling as well. They were very effective in ensuring Canada would be well-known for its security.

Do he and his party regret this and will they change their position on detector dogs? Why do they not like detector dogs when they are effective against terrorists and smugglers?

Mr. Arpan Khanna: Mr. Speaker, we have seen time and time again that the New Democrats continue to prop up the Liberal government. They are part of the problem. They talk a big game of standing up for Canadians, but when they have the chance to do that, they are in lock arms with the Liberal government. They are part of the same problem.

Will they join us in voting for this common-sense Conservative motion to put the rights of victims ahead of our criminals?

• (1240)

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

I am pleased to rise to speak to this motion and to illustrate our action in taking up the fight against organized crime and auto theft. It goes without saying that Canadians must be able to live free from fear of crime in their neighbourhoods. Not only can auto theft cause

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financial devastation, but it also makes people feel unsafe in their own homes.

I know that auto theft is a top of mind issue for many. In fact, I expect most of us here know someone who has had their car stolen recently. In fact, one of my colleagues had his car stolen recently.

As a resident of the GTA, I understand the toll these crimes can take on individuals and communities. It disrupts our lives and it undermines our feelings of safety. It also costs Canadians significantly. According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, auto theft claims totalled \$1.2 billion in 2022. This is unacceptable. It puts on us an onus to work together to find ways to denounce this conduct.

This is why our government is throwing its weight behind the solving of this issue. We have been working on measures to tackle auto theft for months now. Most recently, we announced \$121 million in funding for Ontario to combat gun crime, gangs and organized crime, including auto theft.

Auto theft is a timely topic for discussion this week, as the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice have invited key players from across the country to come together and identify solutions to auto theft.

Political leaders, police, border agents, auto and industry executives will be among the attendees. I am confident that these productive conversations will lead to concrete suggestions for how we can better stop auto theft from occurring in Canada.

It is ironic that members opposite are highlighting the problems of auto theft when they refuse to support our solutions. The Conservatives have promised to vote against the fall economic statement and are delaying its passage. This critical legislation contains anti-money laundering provisions that will crack down on organized crime networks and contribute to fighting auto theft.

The vast majority of auto thefts are not spontaneous crimes committed by one or two individuals. Highly organized networks of criminals are involved at various stages, from targeting a vehicle to the theft itself to its trafficking through major ports destined for resale markets in Africa or the Middle East.

Criminals may use the proceeds of crime from stolen vehicles to facilitate other forms of serious crime like trafficking drugs, people and firearms. This is why I am sad to see my colleagues across the way opposed to the important changes with which we are trying to fight organized crime.

The Leader of the Opposition announced his so-called plan to combat auto theft the day before yesterday. We know it would not actually accomplish anything. He proposed measures that are either ineffective or already exist.

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We have real solutions.

The Criminal Code has a comprehensive framework that addresses motor vehicle theft along the spectrum of the crime. This includes preparatory offences, offences for the actual theft, trafficking and possession of stolen property offences, and proceeds of crime offences.

The Criminal Code also includes specific offences to address organized crime activities. It includes many offences that address the situation when violence is involved during a theft, such as the use of a firearm.

Many of us are aware of devices that thieves use to acquire a key fob signal and relay that signal to unlock or start a vehicle. These devices are illegal under the Criminal Code. It is also illegal to knowingly possess any instrument that can be used to break into a motor vehicle for that purpose. Both of these offences carry a maximum penalty of 10 years if proceeded by way of indictment.

The Criminal Code also has general provisions that address auto theft. For example, theft of property over \$5,000 is punishable on indictment by a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment or two years less a day imprisonment on summary conviction. Theft under \$5,000 is punishable on indictment by a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment or two years less a day on summary conviction.

The Criminal Code also has a specific motor vehicle theft offence, which is punishable by a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment on indictment and two years less a day on summary conviction. In the case of a third, or subsequent conviction, a mandatory minimum penalty of imprisonment of six months applies.

In fact, our government took action to crack down on auto theft in Bill C-75, by raising the maximum penalty for motor vehicle theft from 18 months to two years less a day. This is another example of our sustained focus on eradicating auto theft from our communities. This is the very legislation that the Leader of the Opposition wants to repeal. He would lower maximum sentences for auto theft. As always, the leader of the Conservatives would rather spread disinformation and spark fear across the country than focus on facts.

• (1245)

The Criminal Code also contains a comprehensive legal framework that targets criminal organizations, offences relating to criminal organizations, including participating in criminal organization activities; recruitment to a criminal organization; the commission of an indictable offence for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with a criminal organization; and instructing the commission of an offence for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with a criminal organization.

The organized crime provisions have specific sentencing outcomes. First, sentences imposed for any of the organized crime offences must be served consecutively with sentences imposed for other offences arising from the same transaction. Second, courts are required to consider, as an aggravating factor at sentencing, that an offence is committed for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in as-

sociation with a criminal organization. This is one of the measures the Leader of the Opposition has committed to enacting to solve the problem of auto theft. It is already in place; he is catching up. Again, he is not proposing real solutions.

There are also Criminal Code measures that aim to prevent offenders from benefiting from the proceeds of their crimes. This includes pretrial seizure or restraint of proceeds of crime and the possibility of forfeiture of proceeds of crime following conviction or a fine in lieu of forfeiture in certain circumstances when the proceeds are no longer available.

These are just a few of the offences that currently can be leveraged by law enforcement and prosecutors to address auto theft.

The Criminal Code is a helpful tool to penalize auto thieves, but we are also working on comprehensive solutions to prevent auto theft from occurring. On Thursday, key players will gather in Ottawa to discuss more solutions. The meeting will feature law enforcement, industry leaders and all levels of government coming together to identify short, medium and long-term actions to combat auto theft to continue to strengthen our initiatives that are already under way.

There are many ways we can address the problem of auto theft, and everyone has to be part of the solution. The Leader of the Opposition wants to boil things down to empty slogans that do not solve anything. We will be looking at regulatory change, what industry can do to help, how provinces and municipalities can help and how to improve enforcement. I look forward to working with everyone who is serious to solve this problem.

I am grateful for the efforts that are already under way to combat auto theft and I look forward to a productive day of discussion on Thursday for the next steps.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since York—Simcoe is now considered part of Toronto under the government's goofy carbon tax regime, I feel I can comment on Toronto and York Region. The facts are what they are. Auto theft is up 200% in York Region. There were 4,290 vehicles stolen in 2023.

I guess my hon. colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore hears different things. His speech makes it look like it is all good. When I travel through York—Simcoe, people tell me that our country is not the same. A recent newspaper article reported that a car was stolen and in less than six hours, the gentleman was stealing another car. He was charged with impaired driving and he was out on bail again. These violent crimes have to stop.

God help the people of Toronto with their property tax increase, but the NDP mayor of Toronto is cutting the Toronto Police Service budget.

Could my colleague comment on that?

Mr. James Maloney: Mr. Speaker, I think the member already knows where I stand on cutting police budgets. I disagree with any effort taken by a municipal government that will somehow limit or curtail the ability of the police forces to do their job.

This is a serious problem, and we do not deny it is a serious problem, but serious problems require serious solutions, not slo-gans. The Leader of the Opposition held a press conference in front of the Port of Montreal and said that he would impose mandatory minimum sentences. There already is a mandatory minimum sentence.

I have sat in rooms with people from the law enforcement community. I have met at other times with automakers and other levels of government. Each of them point fingers in other directions. This needs to be a collaborative effort where everybody gets together in one room and asks what each can do. That is going to happen on Thursday.

• (1250)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree that auto theft is a scourge and needs to be addressed.

I would like my colleague to comment on the rhetoric, the reasoning behind today's Conservative motion. They claim that the explosion in auto theft is because of the Liberal government. They say it is because of Bill C-5, even though that bill did not receive royal assent until late 2022. They also say it is because sentences are too lenient, but these sentences, which were added to the Criminal Code in 2010, were the result of Bill S-9. That bill was introduced by the Conservative Party, the government at the time. If the penalties are too lenient, the Conservative Party only has itself to blame.

I wonder what exactly my colleague is proposing. We know there will be a national summit this Thursday. There was talk of giving more resources to the Canada Border Services Agency and giving existing police forces the means they need to take action. In his opinion, what more should the government be doing to counter this scourge?

[English]

Mr. James Maloney: Mr. Speaker, the reason behind the motion is simple: It is politics. The Leader of the Opposition read something in the paper and thought, "Oh, here's something I can talk about and score a few political points". Let us be honest.

However, what more can be done is why we are convening this meeting on Thursday. As I said earlier, it has to be a collaborative effort by all parties involved. Auto manufacturers have to be at the table, and they have to be able to say, "This is what we can do to make our cars more safe and protect them against auto theft." We need law enforcement communities. My friend from Lake Simcoe said that they should stand up and tell us what they can do and what resources they need. The federal government needs to step up and correct some of the problems created by the previous Conservative government, including enhancing the level of resources that are available to CBSA. It is a group effort that has to be done with everybody at the table.

Business of Supply

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the issue of gang crime is serious, but we see that the Conservatives have voted against CBSA. Under Stephen Harper, all the tough-on-crime bills they brought proved unconstitutional. They had more recalls than the Ford Pinto, which shows that this is not a party that is serious about dealing with crime. It was all about stunts, it was all about fundraising and it was all about giving their no-name members on the back bench a reason to get up and holler and shout. Once again, what we see with these Conservatives is that they are doing it from the front bench, not the back bench, but it is the same old shenanigans.

Mr. James Maloney: Mr. Speaker, I would just say that there is no such thing as a no-name member in this House. However, anybody who stands in this House or outside this House and accuses any other member of being soft on crime is being disingenuous and it is disrespectful to the people who live in this country, because everybody in this House, regardless of political stripe, believes in law and order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the point of order raised earlier, I withdraw my comments and apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. minister for his comments. We will consider the issue closed.

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BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AUTO THEFT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start off by providing a thought in regards to the seriousness of the issue. I would like to think—

The Deputy Speaker: I believe we have a point of order from the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest.

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, it is not about the current speaker, but I wanted to catch it early so that I did not cut him off and I hope he will be given the chance to begin anew.

I missed the debate earlier, but I have been in this chamber before when the question of T-shirt wearing was raised and I want to press that again. I understand that you said there was an agreement that had been struck that if a member came in here wearing a T-shirt under a jacket, it is permissible. I have not heard of this before, and I would ask you to report back to this chamber when in fact that agreement was made or perhaps you can do it now. I find that a breach of the chamber's rules.

Privilege

The Deputy Speaker: I will read this again, because this has happened on a number of occasions. I think I erred this last time when I allowed the hon. minister to speak.

We either are going to allow T-shirts or not allow T-shirts. I would say that they are not allowed, and so I am going to make a bit of a ruling on the fly here.

There is no rule for women's attire, except we might say that the Standing Orders do not prescribe a dress code for members participating in debate. However, Speakers have ruled that all members desiring to be recognized to speak at any point during the proceedings of the House must be wearing contemporary business attire. The added point to that is when people speak to S.O. 31s especially and want to wear their team's shirts, that has been permissible on a number of occasions in this chamber.

I just want folks to be more judicious in their attire in the House. Falling short of prescribing what that attire should be, slogans on T-shirts should not be acceptable in the House of Commons.

• (1255)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, I appreciate that and I appreciate the intervention by my Conservative colleague.

I just want to be clear, because we have rules. A male who is not wearing tie should not be recognized. We have had rules where, let us say there was a hockey tournament and a team wins, members wear their jersey. However, we do not have a rule where someone, just because they are supporting a team or an issue, gets to come in and wear it. We have a very narrow window.

I just want to make sure that those are terms under which someone could wear something that is not business attire. It is in that specific instance that perhaps Regina has won or, God help us, the Toronto Argonauts finally win, on that day we give them that one moment. Other than that, we have to have respect for the Chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe it would be permissible or a good idea for PROC to look at attire in the House, just to make sure that we are all being judicious in following the rules as set forth within our Standing Orders.

I will let the parliamentary secretary restart after the hon. member stands on a question of privilege.

The hon. House leader for the official opposition.

* * *

PRIVILEGE**ALLEGED MISLEADING COMMENTS BY THE PRIME MINISTER**

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege about a very serious matter: the misleading comments of the Prime Minister concerning the invitation of Yaroslav Hunka, a former soldier of the Waffen-SS military unit in World War II, to attend events with the President of Ukraine during his recent visit to Canada.

As we all recall, last September this chamber was the epicentre of a grave international embarrassment for Canada when this individual, a former SS soldier, was recognized and given a standing

ovation during President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's address to our Parliament. This gave Vladimir Putin a major propaganda coup and caused significant pain for Jewish Canadians and all victims persecuted in World War II.

The government, and the Prime Minister in particular, were at great pains to distance themselves from any connection to this individual, claiming that they had absolutely nothing to do with his invitation and subsequent recognition. Lo and behold, Global Affairs Canada recently released, through access to information, a copy of an email sent to Yaroslav Hunka inviting him to a reception with President Zelenskyy, which was reported on yesterday afternoon by The Globe and Mail and, subsequently, other media outlets.

Here is the kicker: It was the Prime Minister's invitation.

On Monday, September 19, 2023, some four days before the President's address to Parliament, an email account called "RSVP Official Events/Événements officiels RSVP" sent an email with the subject line, "INVITATION FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA — SEPTEMBER 22, 2023". The body of the email begins, "Dear Yaroslav Hunka, The Right Honourable...Prime Minister of Canada, is pleased to invite you to a special event."

As members may recall, until the visit was formally announced a few days later, there was a lot of coded language being used, like in the case of this "special event", but the point remains, that the Prime Minister invited this former SS soldier to attend an event honouring the President of Ukraine. Of course, members will recall that the Prime Minister and his government were under sustained questioning in the House in the week following the visit about just how such a colossal mistake, with international reverberations, could take place.

There were questions like those asked by the Leader of the Opposition on the first occasion the Prime Minister appeared in the House after the scandalous events, such as, "did the Prime Minister's national security, intelligence or diplomatic officials vet the names of the people the Prime Minister allowed within mere feet of President Zelenskyy?"; and "the Prime Minister has just said that he allowed the president of a war-torn country, who is perhaps the biggest target of false propaganda and potential assassinations, to be surrounded by hundreds of people who had not been vetted for their security background, the potential risks they present or, in this case, the massive diplomatic disasters they could have brought to the event. Is the Prime Minister really saying he did absolutely nothing to protect the Ukrainian president from all those many risks?"

Repeatedly, we were assured that the blame lay exclusively at the then-Speaker's feet, as if the address to Parliament was the only opportunity for this former SS soldier to come near President Zelenskyy. For example, the Prime Minister told the House on September 27, 2023, "The Leader of the Opposition knows that not one parliamentarian was aware", and, later, "no parliamentarian knew the name or the identity of the person he welcomed to this House and recognized".

Now we know, that this is just not so. The Prime Minister invited this individual, by name, to an event with President Zelenskyy. The Prime Minister also said that day, "the Speaker of this House of Commons invited an individual without apparently doing that Google search, but it is not up to the government of the day to oversee or to have a veto power over those who the Speaker or, indeed, members of official parties choose to invite into this House."

Who does the Prime Minister blame for not doing "that Google search" for his own personal invitation?

Before the Liberals jump up and claim that these are two separate events, two separate guest lists and whatnot, let me quote an interview the former Speaker, the honourable member for Nipissing—Timiskaming, gave to CTV Northern Ontario two weeks ago, explaining the central role the Prime Minister's Office plays in guest invitations for major international events held on Parliament Hill, like President Zelenskyy's wartime address, stating, "normally it goes to the Prime Minister's Office and they go through it with a fine-tooth comb" and then the invitation goes out from protocol. "So who invited him? That's up for grabs...."

Besides the fact that there was no sign of a comb, fine-tooth or otherwise, to be found, yesterday afternoon's revelations add new context to the last words in that quotation: "who invited him? That's up for grabs".

• (1300)

According to news reports at the time, it is understood that this individual's son approached the then Speaker's constituency office about securing an invitation to the Ottawa address. Knowing on the Monday of the week of the visit that there was a personal invitation from the Prime Minister to attend the Toronto event, it is not hard to picture this invitation becoming part of the discussion in the North Bay constituency office.

One can put themselves in the shoes of the hon. member for Nipissing—Timiskaming. One is told about the individual's connection to Ukraine and is shown an invitation in the Prime Minister's name, the name of the leader of the party whose label one is elected under. Is one really going to sit there and think they better second-guess the judgment of the PMO, the PCO and the diplomatic protocol office? I sincerely doubt it.

As the member for Nipissing—Timiskaming said, "So who invited him? That's up for grabs". That statement makes a whole lot more sense in light of yesterday's Globe report.

I would respectfully submit it is now obvious that the Prime Minister invited Yaroslav Hunka to meet the President of Ukraine, and the then Speaker took it on good faith and, in turn, authorized his own invitation. At the very least, it shows us that the protocol

Privilege

office itself, in the Prime Minister's Office, had the name of this individual on its guest list.

Whatever happened between the Speaker's office and the Prime Minister's Office in terms of the invitation, we now know that this individual, this former SS member, was already on the protocol list. He was already on the list of people to be invited.

On September 27, the Prime Minister told the House, "we apologized today on behalf of all parliamentarians. For the past few days, we have been saying how sorry we are about the mistake made by the Speaker of the House of Commons." The only mistake, Mr. Speaker, was that your predecessor put blind trust in the fact that an invitation was issued by the Prime Minister.

I am aware the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs has agreed to conduct some form of a study on the matter; although, the Liberal-NDP coalition does not seem to consider the matter important given that no hearings have yet to take place some five months later.

However, these revelations and the obvious concern that the Prime Minister appears to have misled the House are of a whole new dimension, one which engages the privileges of the House and rises, in my respectful submission, to a contempt of Parliament.

Page 85 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, notes that cases of privilege have involved "the provision of deliberately misleading information to the House or one of its committees by a Minister or by a Member".

It is a well-established principle that to make out a prima facie case of privilege in relation to a claim of misleading the House, three elements must be established.

Firstly, it must be proven that the statement was misleading. Knowing what we know now from the Global Affairs Canada access to information release, we can see it was misleading. There is no doubt that members of Parliament, of all opposition parties, were trying to find out exactly what interaction, what role, was under the purview of the PMO or the Prime Minister for inviting this individual.

There were multiple questions coming from many different angles, and the government always gave the same explanation that it had absolutely no knowledge of this individual's background and that it had nothing to do with his invitation. We now know, through this access to information release, that is false and, therefore, misleading.

Secondly, it must be established that the member making the statement knew it to be misleading. The invitation that was released is in the name of the Prime Minister. To claim he had no knowledge of this individual is now absurd.

Thirdly, the misleading statement must have been offered with the intention to mislead the House. The House was engulfed in a massive international scandal, one which saw our own Speaker resign, falling on his sword for the Prime Minister, so there is little doubt that the Prime Minister was eager to deflect his own role and responsibility and to lay the blame elsewhere.

Business of Supply

Of course, before the Prime Minister might stand up and assert that he was blindsided by his own officials' denials, let me quote Bosc and Gagnon at page 116:

Misleading a Minister or a Member has also been considered a form of obstruction and, thus, a prima facie breach of privilege. For example, on December 6, 1978, in finding that a prima facie contempt of the House existed, Speaker Jerome ruled that a government official, by deliberately misleading a Minister, had impeded the Member in the performance of his duties and consequently obstructed the House itself.

No matter how one cuts it, the House was misled. Its privileges were breached, and action should be taken immediately.

Should the Speaker agree with me that the Prime Minister's words amount to a prima facie contempt, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

• (1305)

The Deputy Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for the information. We will take that under advisement and come back to the House as soon as is practical.

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BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AUTO THEFT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I started by acknowledging that crimes of the nature we have been talking about today affect all our communities. As much as we banter back and forth, I would not want to take anything away from the impact it has on victims. I wanted to amplify that point because I truly believe that all of us have a right to feel safe and comfortable in the communities where we live.

As the justice critic, when I served in the Manitoba legislature, as well as during a number of years here in Ottawa, I have always recognized the importance of the issue of safety and crime. As legislators, we need to do what we can to keep our communities safe. Quite frankly, I am very proud of initiatives the Liberal government has taken over the last number of years to do just that: to keep the communities we live in safe. That does not mean the issues are resolved. I am not saying that at all. I think we have work to do. We will continue to look at ways to make our communities healthier and safer.

Looking at today's opposition day motion, I see that it is very much a politically motivated issue brought forward by the Conservative Party. The message it is trying to give Canadians is that it is collectively tough on crime.

I want to deal with that, because that is not the reality we have seen. Specifically, we are talking about automobile theft. The discussions, thus far, from the Conservative benches have been focused on Canada's border control, car theft and how vehicles are exported outside of Canada. It is interesting that one member who stood up actually criticized the government. That really stuck with me. The member said something to the effect that we need to support and to provide more money to the CBSA, Canada's border control agency.

It is amazing that while the Conservatives were in government, they actually cut Canada's border control agents. At one time, we had close to 15,000 border controls. I have the actual number of full-time equivalents: 14,833. They were cut to 13,774 full-time equivalents. Those were well over 1,000 jobs cut by the former government and the former prime minister. The current leader of the Conservative Party sat in the cabinet of that former prime minister. That was a substantial cut, and now they are saying we need to have more. That was one comment.

The Conservatives talk about it being in the motion. We talk about increasing sentences from six months to three years. That six months is in regard to someone getting caught stealing a car on a third occasion. The current law states that it is a minimum of six months. The Conservatives say that it is not tough enough and that they believe it should be three years. Again, who do members think put in the six months? It was Stephen Harper.

• (1310)

Are Conservatives saying today that Stephen Harper messed up on that policy directive, and that Stephen Harper messed up on the cutbacks on the border controls? What the member did not reference, but I will, are the hundreds of millions of dollars cut also by Stephen Harper.

Is the Conservative Party now saying that, too, was a mistake? Let us keep in mind that it is easy for the Conservatives to concede that Stephen Harper made a mess of things and made problems a lot worse with cutbacks, and that might have contributed to the increases we are seeing. I would remind Conservatives that they might want to throw Stephen Harper under the bus, but their current leader was a minister in Stephen Harper's government, and they need to be reminded of that.

Let us think about it. This issue has been taking place for quite a while. The so-called "tough on crime" Leader of the Conservative Party, tougher than Stephen Harper was on crime, is tougher than when he was in cabinet. To the best of my knowledge, it was the first time, last week, where we actually have the Leader of the Conservative Party giving it attention. Why is that?

We announced that we are going to have a summit on the auto theft issue. The Liberal government has been working on it for a while now, unlike the Conservatives; it was not even on their radar screen until we announced the summit. Then, the Conservatives started saying that it would fit in nicely with their "tough on crime" bumper stickers, so they brought up the issue. Did they not study it? Did they not realize they are likely part of the problem?

I was the justice critic in the Province of Manitoba, and this is a quote from a StatsCan report dealing with car theft in Manitoba then, which states:

However, the province's 2007 rate remained the highest in the country...for the 11th straight year and was 24% higher than a decade ago.

In 2007, Stephen Harper was prime minister, and it continued to be a problem for years after that. If we look at it 10 years prior, there was not a Conservative government.

The point is that this issue takes more than one level of government to address it. That is the reason we have the minister responsible for public safety saying that we are going to have a summit. The Conservatives are howling, “just a summit”. They just discovered the issue, and we already said we are going to have a summit. We are bringing experts in. There is going to be dialogue, and things are going to be brought to the table. We are not only taking budgetary measures in the amount of tens of millions to look into how we can get at organized crime and organized gangs but also looking at legislative measures and possibly regulations that could be changed.

We want to take a holistic approach in dealing with this issue. Unlike the Conservatives, who like to talk tough on crime, we believe that actions speak louder than words. We will continue to work with different stakeholders and to get the level of expertise to the table so that we will be in a better position to work with provinces and law enforcement agencies. As a national government, we would be in a position to see if we could do something legislatively or could do something through regulations, and perhaps there are other pockets where we could invest more to support this issue.

That is ultimately what the Liberal government is doing. We are taking a progressive, holistic approach to make sure that the issue is dealt with, unlike Stephen Harper and the born-again Conservative right wing.

• (1315)

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really think the member for Winnipeg North will have lots of time to practise his Stephen Harper lines when he is in opposition.

We should not be fooled by the member's speech; the facts are what they are. Car theft is up 300%. Over 4,200 vehicles have been stolen in York Region. Canadians will not be fooled either. The NDP-Liberal government has spent 40% more on the federal public service for worse outcomes. If he went out and spoke with Canadians, he would tell them that their outcomes are worse. Mr. Speaker, is your life 40% better in terms of outcomes than it was?

Could the member comment on the spending for worse results for Canadians?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, because of time restrictions, I was not able to continue to give my explanation about the Manitoba case. I can tell the member opposite that, at this point in time, Manitoba had the highest number of cars being stolen in any given year, more than the province of Ontario. I am not talking about per capita but the raw number of cars being stolen.

Ultimately, what had the most positive impact was when law enforcement, the Province of Manitoba and Ottawa, to a certain degree, came together and tried to deal with the issue. At least today, Ottawa is recognizing that we need to bring people together in order to deal with this issue.

Business of Supply

Organized crime is more than just automobile theft. We recognize the importance of the issue. We are doing something, as opposed to the Conservatives, who heard we were having a summit and then decided it was an important issue.

• (1320)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives come forward today saying that one car stolen should equal a year in jail. That is not a policy. That is straight out of the books from a Texas governor, who failed in their policies in Texas.

We know the Conservatives cut 1,100 jobs at the Canada Border Services Agency, in terms of officers on the front line. According to Mark Weber, the president of the Customs and Immigration Union, “We estimate that we need between 2,000 and 3,000 additional officers on the front line.” He also cited that, with the amount of money they spent on the ArriveCAN app, the scandal taking place right now, they could have hired 500 border agents.

When is the government going to step it up when it comes to hiring officers at the border? Will it listen to the NDP proposal to require auto manufacturers to improve security features in the cars they sell? A memo we put forward today was shot down by the Conservatives, but this seems to be a common-sense solution to help stop car theft.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. The member referred to the well over 1,000 cuts in terms of Canada border control service officers. Not only have we, as a government, restored every one of those cuts, but we can add on another 800.

As a government, we have provided supports from a budget perspective; we continue to look at ways to enhance and try to improve the system, whether through the budgetary measures that we just cited or legislative measures, in terms of working with provinces on the bail reform legislation we ultimately passed.

The Government of Canada is committed to making our communities healthier and safer. We are taking the measures that are necessary and are prepared to work with other levels of government and stakeholders to do just that.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the hon. parliamentary secretary about the logic behind mandatory minimums, which have been proven, on empirical evidence, not to hold the logic one would hope. They actually tend to work against reducing crime.

One reason for this is that increasing the mandatory minimum would drive people toward cutting deals and plea bargains, instead of actually dealing with matters or giving judges the discretion to increase the sentencing where they think it is appropriate.

Business of Supply

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, given the complexities of the pros and cons of minimum sentencing, in certain situations, I believe that having minimal sentences can be an effective tool for our judicial system.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I would like to say that I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Flamborough—Glanbrook.

I am pleased to rise today on this very important debate. Canadians may wonder what Canada's top exports and fastest-growing exports are. They might think about oil and gas, minerals or aerospace parts. However, they would be surprised to learn that one of Canada's fastest-growing exports over the past few years has been stolen vehicles. Actually, this has been over the past eight years, under the Liberal government. This ongoing surge in auto thefts is a direct consequence of a weak justice system, the absence of proper law enforcement and a border so porous that the number of vehicles getting through reached over 100,000 vehicles in 2022 alone. In other words, it is a legacy of the current Liberal government.

I am proud to rise to speak to this issue and to put forward a common-sense Conservative plan to deal with these auto thefts, because that is what the hard-working people in Sturgeon River—Parkland and across this country deserve. They deserve a real plan that would provide tangible results, put these repeat offenders behind bars, and keep our vehicles in our driveways and off container ships going abroad.

This is not just an issue of young kids taking a vehicle out for a joyride or stealing a vehicle just to make a few bucks. Our country is facing an industrial-level organized crime problem. Let us go over some of the key facts. As we speak, on average, a vehicle is stolen every six minutes in Canada; therefore, in the time that we have been debating here today, dozens of Canadians have had their vehicles stolen from their driveways and places of work.

The trend is clear: In 2018, the insurance industry paid out \$400 million in stolen vehicle claims, and since then, this number has grown drastically. In 2021, it reached \$700 million in claims; in 2022, which is the latest year we have the insurance statistics for, the insurance industry paid out an unprecedented \$1.2 billion in claims on stolen vehicles. After eight years of the current government's soft-on-crime agenda, car thefts have tripled in Toronto and doubled in Montreal. While big cities have seen the largest increases in recent years, this wave of crime is affecting all Canadians across the country, including those living in western Canada and rural Canada, where vehicles being stolen from farms is a common story that I hear.

F-350s are vehicles that are often stolen. In fact, over the Christmas break, I woke up at seven o'clock in the morning, when people were getting up, getting dressed and getting ready to go to work. I looked out the window, and I saw an F-350 parked outside my house. There were people in hoodies trying to steal it. Kids were getting up and getting ready to go to school at that time in some of our rural communities, and there were people still out and trying to steal those cars. It is shocking and unacceptable.

This is not just a temporary crime wave. This is a sophisticated, industrial-level organized crime operation that requires our immediate attention. This is not a new issue; we faced it before, in the early

1990s. Car thefts inspired many Hollywood-level movies, such as *The Fast and the Furious* and *Gone in 60 Seconds*. However, with better technologies, better law enforcement and tougher sentences, we saw a significant decline in the number of auto thefts.

I was actually pulling up the statistics on this, and it is very interesting. From 2004 to 2015, the number of auto thefts reported to police in Canada went down by 61%. What happened between 2004 and 2015? We had a tough-on-crime Conservative government that put forward tangible measures to get tough on repeat offenders who were stealing vehicles, with mandatory minimum sentences and with investments in law enforcement to crack down on crime. That is a record I am very proud of.

It is not a record that the current government can say it replicates; during the time that it has been in power, we have seen a tripling of stolen vehicles from Toronto, a doubling from Montreal and an overall 34% increase in the country. The trend was broken by the Liberal government, and this is directly due to its policies.

It has become relatively easy to smuggle a vehicle out of the country after it has been stolen. The dedicated men and women of the CBSA are doing their very best, but they are facing a capacity problem, with an estimated five CBSA agents at the port of Montreal.

• (1325)

About a year ago, CBSA union officials came to the public safety committee. They talked about some of the measures they have in place so that people can report auto thefts and suspicious activities at the port. It is the 21st century. Do members know what measures the government has at the ports so that people can report when they see suspicious threats? It has a hotline telephone on the wall, so if people see something, they can call somebody to deal with it. It is 2024. We need new and better technologies to ensure that we have the tools we need to stop these containers with our vehicles from leaving our ports.

Once these stolen vehicles leave Canada, they are destined for markets far away, in Africa and the Middle East. As a result of our weak enforcement, Canada is becoming what some industry experts are calling a “donor country” for stolen vehicles. Usually, it is a good thing to be a donor, but not when we are talking about stolen vehicles. The revenue generated from this trade is being used to finance drug trafficking, illegal arms trafficking, human trafficking and even terrorism.

Business of Supply

Just a couple of weeks ago, Italian authorities intercepted a vessel with 251 stolen Canadian vehicles on it; they were bound for sale in the Middle East. Cars with Canadian licence plates have been a common sight on the streets of Accra, the capital of Ghana. In fact, the flood of Canadians' stolen vehicles entering that country has led the Ghanaian government to beg the Canadian government to do more to prevent our vehicles from leaving our country, because this is affecting its domestic market. This is not just a Canadian issue; it is becoming an international issue. It is an embarrassment for our country.

It is not only a crime problem but also an economic problem, with \$1.2 billion in insurance payouts made. Do members think the insurance companies are just going to eat that cost? That means Canadian families are paying an estimated \$500 in increased premiums. The reports coming out of MNP talk about how many Canadians are living paycheck to paycheck or are less than \$200 away from insolvency. Who can afford \$500 more for insurance premiums just to pay for the vehicle people are taking to work? It is not just the case for the people who are driving a Toyota Highlander, a Lexus or the other vehicles that are often being stolen; everyone is paying for it. The costs are being distributed to everyone, no matter what vehicle they have. This is unacceptable.

We know what the problem is. The government talks about having a summit, but the problem has been clear for years: We have a government with soft-on-crime policies that have unleashed a torrent of repeat violent offenders on our streets. Members might ask why I am calling them violent offenders. I saw a left-wing commentator online on what is now X, formerly known as Twitter, asking why we are putting people in jail for victimless crimes. This is not a victimless crime. In the few stories that I have seen where people have been stopped in stolen vehicles, do members know what charges most often accompanied the stolen vehicle charge? They were weapons, firearms and drug possession charges.

There was a heroic job done by RCMP officers just west of Stony Plain a few days ago. A stolen vehicle went through town with five people in it. They deployed a tire device to pop the tires. When they stopped the vehicle, they found methamphetamine, cocaine and loaded weapons. Two of the five people charged were released the very same day. This is unacceptable. These people do not carry guns because they are going out hunting or carry drugs just because; they are carrying these things because they intend to sell them or because they intend to commit violence if they are confronted.

Since 2015, the crisis has come to a point where Canadians will no longer accept inaction from the Liberal government. They will no longer accept bills such as Bill C-5, allowing house arrest for the people who are committing these crimes. Canadians will no longer accept a government that lets repeat offenders back on the streets over and over again, with bail, not jail, to victimize our families.

I know that, under our Conservative government, we will bring in mandatory minimum sentences. We will provide the resources to law enforcement to get these criminals behind bars and disrupt organized crime. This will keep the criminals from sending our stolen vehicles abroad and using that money to finance the terrorism and firearms trafficking being used to commit violence on our streets or the drugs that are victimizing families and addicts who need treat-

ment. We will not accept this. That is our common-sense plan, and we are going to do it.

• (1330)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the issue of auto theft, having worked for the public auto insurer in B.C., but there are statistics that show, in fact, that auto thefts in B.C. are down quite substantially from where they were five years ago. I wonder whether the member could reflect on what might be the cause, because the same laws are in effect. If one believes it is “catch and release”, that has been in effect there too for quite a long time, even in the Stephen Harper days.

What is different in B.C. and maybe in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and in fact worse, than in all other jurisdictions?

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, looking at the statistics, there are increases or decreases in different jurisdictions. One can cherry-pick certain jurisdictions and say, “This jurisdiction is seeing a lower rate; therefore our government's policies must be successful.”

However, when we look at the aggregate across the country, there has been a 34% increase. This increase has been most stark in provinces like Ontario and Quebec. Why is that? It is because the port of Montreal has become such a conduit for getting stolen vehicles abroad. It is because of the current government, which has a responsibility for the ports and a responsibility to protect our borders, that we have seen the port of Montreal become such a conduit for stolen vehicles. That is why we are seeing a commensurate increase in Ontario and Quebec.

However, it is not just an Ontario and Quebec issue. In Alberta, vehicles have been stolen for many years. F-350s are being re-vinned and sent down to the United States. They are being sent to chop shops. This is a cross-Canada issue, and we cannot neglect any part of the country with our response.

• (1335)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague is very familiar with this file. He said that criminal groups are using this money to fund other criminal activities, including terrorism. Earlier I was talking about human trafficking and illegal arms trafficking.

Business of Supply

He says that the Conservative Party has a plan for auto theft and that it involves harsher sentences. However, what is his party's plan to go after the heads of these big criminal networks?

Obviously we think of the car thieves, those who commit the crime in the here and now. Often they are people who do not have a criminal record. Some are even minors. We have seen people under 18 committing these crimes in Toronto and bringing the cars to Montreal.

Yes, I think it is important to increase certain sentences, but it is also important to go after the heads of these criminal groups. What is his party's plan for that?

[English]

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I much appreciate being with my hon. colleague on the public safety committee on this issue. I found, actually, quite the opposite: oftentimes the people caught with stolen vehicles do have very lengthy criminal records. In fact some of them are even out on bail and are supposed to be on house arrest when they are conducting these crimes. They are repeat offenders.

I do appreciate what the member is talking about. How do we go after the big guys? These criminal organizations are very sophisticated. They use multiple middlemen to prevent the big players from being hit. We obviously have to go after some of the big players, but we also have to remove their frontline soldiers from the streets, which makes it harder for them to recruit new people to come out to commit the crimes.

We also have to stop the vehicles from leaving the ports in the first place. If we make it more difficult, because it is very easy today to get these vehicles out of Canada, it is going to discourage criminals from engaging in this activity. It is going to discourage them from bringing their immense resources to bear on getting vehicles out of Canada. We need to be tough on the border. We need to get the people who are committing the crimes off the street so we can protect our communities.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask specifically whether the hon. member could comment on what seems to be the rapid increase in not being able to effectively catch vehicles in the process of being stolen. I know there have been high-profile cases. I have heard that it has been the case in Alberta as well that somebody will put an air tag in the vehicle and be able to follow it, yet law enforcement does not seem to either have the resources or be able to get the vehicle before it is shipped overseas.

Mr. Dane Lloyd: Mr. Speaker, I actually did have a positive interaction, as much as it could be positive, when a vehicle of mine was stolen. I had a subscription for technology that allowed me to track the vehicle. I called the police, and they were able to locate the vehicle fairly quickly. The vehicle was in a neighbourhood to cool off so the thieves could check to see whether it was being tracked or not.

Obviously, criminals know this technology is being used. They rip the electronics out of vehicles to prevent them from being used, but there is a technological solution that could really help. We need to not only get tough on the criminals but also to make it clear that

we need to use all the technological tools we have available to tackle this very difficult issue.

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will start with a couple of headlines that dominated the radio and the online and social media news in my home community this past weekend. They really underscore the debate we are having today. The first is “Gun-wielding men forcefully entered Dundas home, stole two luxury cars: Hamilton police”. The second is “High-end vehicles stolen in ‘targeted’ home invasion in Hamilton, Ont.”. Those are just a couple. Twenty years ago, I lived on the street where this particular crime took place on Friday night. It is a few houses down from where I used to live. It was shocking to hear that this was taking place. My grandparents lived on that same street when I grew up.

I talked to one of the neighbours yesterday, and people on Hopkins Court now live in fear. There were other vehicles at the targeted residence that the thieves did not get on Friday night, and the residents are now fearful the thieves will be back because they were a target. This is, as my colleagues have mentioned, a sophisticated gang operation that is taking place; it is an organized crime operation. That is the crux of the problem. They will be back because federal enforcement and federal prevention actions are woefully inadequate.

Less than 24 hours later, I received a text from my neighbour on an unrelated incident, but one of similar concern. There was a vehicle prowling around his workshop building and garage. It had to go around a steel barrier, through the grass and across a hill in order to get there. Alarmed by what he was seeing take place in the early hours of Sunday morning, my neighbour followed the vehicle and was able to get part of the licence plate number and report it to Hamilton Police Service.

These are just two recent incidents that are not isolated at all but are part of an epidemic.

I have talked to a number of constituents who have been victims of vehicle theft. One couple was able to trace their vehicle that was stolen from their driveway in Waterdown to Montreal. This was the second vehicle stolen from the couple's driveway. Waterdown is a bedroom community in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. The couple actually walked by the person they believe was the criminal responsible on the street of Montreal near the port. Eerily, the individual gave them a knowing glance. These are incidents we are hearing about. The couple also heard that as part of this organized crime network, groups are paid thousands of dollars per night just to scope out vehicles in driveways and locations that will be targeted in the coming nights. Just to spot vehicles, they are getting thousands of dollars. We are talking about millions of dollars in criminal activity.

Business of Supply

Truck and auto thefts are in not just my community; they are across the GTA. There have been a number of local headlines about this across Niagara, Waterloo Region, southern Ontario and, in fact, across the country. We know that local law enforcement is hamstrung because it needs the federal government to act. The Criminal Code, the RCMP, CBSA and certainly federal ports are all matters of federation jurisdiction. In order to put the brakes on auto theft by organized crime, we need the federal government to act.

At the transport committee, which I am privileged to sit on, there was a Conservative motion put forward today to look specifically at what is going on at the port of Montreal. Unfortunately, it was voted down by the Liberals and the NDP, the cover-up coalition working together. They do not have any interest in getting to the bottom of this.

It is costing all of us, even those people fortunate enough not to have had a vehicle stolen, because we know there has been \$1.2 billion in insurance payouts for stolen vehicles; this is causing an increase in insurance premiums, up 25% in some cases in Ontario. These are brazen acts of theft and violence, and they are affecting people in our communities. In 2022 alone there were a staggering 9,600 motor vehicles stolen from the GTA. This leaves families traumatized and financially burdened. The impact goes far beyond the immediate victims; it undermines the fabric of our society. It is eroding the trust and confidence in our institutions and is contributing to a pervasive sense of insecurity.

• (1340)

The repercussions are felt not only in the emotional toll exacted on individuals and families but also in the economic consequences borne by our communities as a whole. One of the most concerning aspects of this crisis is the failure of federal ports to stem the tide of stolen vehicles leaving our shores. These cars and trucks, pilfered from the streets of the GTHA, are effortlessly smuggled into containers, loaded onto trains and illegally shipped out of the country, primarily via the port of Montreal. Ironically, that port is in the backyard of the Minister of Transport.

In December I asked the CBSA, via an Order Paper question, how many vehicles it had intercepted at the port of Montreal. Despite the exponential rise in auto thefts that we have seen, over 300% in the GTA since the Liberal government took office in 2015, the number of vehicles intercepted at the port of Montreal remains stagnant, year over year, at somewhere between 1,000 and 1,100. We know that 105,000 vehicles were stolen in Canada in a year. We are talking about fewer than 1% being retrieved.

We know that the technology exists, through X-ray scanners, to scan more of the containers and actually track the vehicles down. However, there is just one scanner right now at the port of Montreal, and it does not work half of the time. That is insufficient.

As my colleague mentioned, there are African countries begging the Government of Canada to take action on this issue. The action is not being taken, and that is cause for concern. Like so many things in Canada, this is something that should not be happening. It should not be this way.

Even when Canadians resort to practical measures like putting Apple AirTags in their vehicles, recovery is far from guaranteed.

Railway agents often refuse to inspect cargo already en route to the ports, and there are inadequate resources at the ports for inspection; therefore there is a highway facilitating this.

The root cause is the soft-on-crime approach by the Liberal-NDP government, with bills like Bill C-75 and Bill C-5 that have emboldened criminals to be repeat offenders. They are often released on bail within hours of arrest and go on to commit further crimes. Even after being convicted, these individuals are often granted house arrest, which is really insufficient.

We say, "Enough is enough." Common-sense Conservatives are committed to really hitting the brakes on car theft and restoring the sense of security to our communities. The Leader of the Opposition has put forward a common-sense plan that includes a number of measures, such as mandatory prison sentences, ending house arrest for convicted car thieves, tougher sentencing for those crimes that are gang-related and have an organized crime element, and, of course, jail, not bail for repeat offenders and repeat violent offenders, as we saw in the examples I brought up from my community this past weekend.

In addition to that, we need to address what is happening at the ports. We need more CBSA officers. Right now there are only five at the port of Montreal. We need to cut the waste on consultants at CBSA and invest in enforcement at the ports. We also need to have more scanners that could actually address the issue.

There is some urgency now. Violent crime is up across the country. What the Liberal government has proposed is a summit: more convening and fewer results.

Common-sense Conservatives have a plan to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Indeed, we are going to stop crime. We are going to slam the brakes on auto theft. We will restore law and order. We will bring home safer streets to Canadians from coast to coast.

• (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether my colleague across the way would agree with me that the Leader of the Conservative Party made a big mistake when Conservatives slashed the funding to law enforcement agencies while he sat around the cabinet table. Would the member indicate whether the Leader of the Conservative Party made a mistake by cutting real jobs from the Canada Border Services Agency? We are talking about well over 1,000 jobs. Would the member not agree that supporting additional funds and making sure that there were more people working in that area would have been better then? Some people might suggest he was part of the problem.

Business of Supply

• (1350)

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North for his revisionist history. Crime was actually down during the previous Conservative government. We have seen an exponential rise in the auto thefts in particular, but violent crime is up 39%. We have the highest murder rates in 30 years under the soft-on-crime policies of the government.

We have seen this exponential rise in auto thefts impacting people in our communities. Cars are stolen at gunpoint, and that is alarming in every sense. We are putting forward a very practical plan to actually get this issue resolved, not just words, talks and summits among bureaucrats.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was really surprised to see the Liberals issue a press announcement that talked about the huge increase in car theft since they were elected in 2015. It is interesting that they did nothing about the problem, other than make it worse with Bill C-75 and Bill C-5, until we started raising the issue. Now the Liberals' answer is a meeting.

Would the member agree that this is simply not enough?

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, Sarnia—Lambton is also a border community that sees a lot of this criminal activity that is happening across the border. The member is exactly right. It was actually hilarious. The government press release announced the increase that we have seen, 300% in the greater Toronto area and over 100% in Ottawa and Montreal, and talked about this for some time.

I have certainly been hearing about it from constituents the entire two years I have been a member of this place. We have been raising this. As I mentioned, I put forward an Order Paper question to ask for specific numbers of what was being checked at the Port of Montreal, and clearly that was insufficient. We raised this as a motion at the transportation committee today and it was voted down by the cover-up coalition. More talk by politicians and bureaucrats and more hot air are not going to solve this problem; action is.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Mr. Speaker, I understand that our leader is visiting the Port of Montreal. Apparently, when it comes to cars that have trackers on them, owners can tell that their cars have gone to the Port of Montreal overnight and are shipped away to foreign countries. Clearly we need more resources there to detect and to retrieve these cars.

Would the member like to elaborate?

Mr. Dan Muys: Mr. Speaker, I will admit that I was not aware of what Apple tracking devices were until my wife introduced them to me. We have used them in our luggage to track down luggage lost at airports in Canada, which is another federal transport issue.

I have spoken to constituents who have used those trackers and seen the movement of their stolen vehicle from their driveway to Montreal and out of the Port of Montreal. We know that this is the source of the problem, which is why our leader is there. He has made some very specific recommendations about enforcement through the CBSA, cutting consultants and waste, so we can put more resources into that.

There is the use of the scanners and technology. The one scanner that exists right now at the Port of Montreal does not work half the time. We need dozens of scanners, not just one.

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on this very important issue. Auto theft is a critical one that impacts Canadians.

As a GTA resident, and as a GTA member of Parliament, I have heard from my constituents, friends and neighbours about fear of theft and increased risk in their communities. I can assure each and every one of those individuals right across the country that I take these concerns very seriously and I am determined to address this problem alongside the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Transport and other colleagues.

What is not helpful is spreading disinformation and stoking fear even in this very chamber. It is disappointing, but unsurprising, that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues across the way have taken this very tactic.

To start, let us discuss what we have done to address the issue of auto theft.

• (1355)

[Translation]

In December, we increased funding to fight organized crime. Last week, we redoubled our efforts by announcing \$121 million for the Ontario police forces to combat guns, gangs and organized crime.

[English]

Let me open a parentheses here; that is guns and gangs funding. On the night of a marathon vote initiated by the opposition, the Leader of the Opposition, in his infinite wisdom, returned to cast a direct vote against guns and gangs funding. Let the record be clear about which side of the House actually supports guns and gangs funding to keep our communities safe.

[Translation]

I was delighted to attend the announcement a week ago in York region in the GTA alongside the Minister of Public Safety, Premier Doug Ford, and other key players who will help prevent auto theft by organized crime.

We are also holding a meeting in Ottawa this Thursday that will bring together the provinces and representatives of cities, ports, insurers, automakers and other key stakeholders to discuss and develop a coordinated approach to combatting auto theft.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

While Conservatives are busy tweeting out videos, as a result of a news release by our government that they decided to read, and repeating childish slogans, we have a plan to keep communities safe.

I want to point out the very bill the Leader of the Opposition has weaponized on this issue, a bill I was pleased to work on as the parliamentary secretary at the time to the then minister of justice, Bill C-75. It raised the maximum penalty on summary conviction for motor vehicle theft from 18 months to two years. For everyone who is watching right now, let that sink in. Either the Leader of the Opposition does not understand the Criminal Code or he is purposely misleading Canadians. Either way, his objective is to repeal Bill C-75 and therefore lower the maximum penalty for motor vehicle theft. If it sounds a bit illogical, it is.

Additionally, a pillar of his so-called plan is to add an aggravating factor on sentencing to this issue. As I said yesterday in the House, and as I will repeat today, the Criminal Code already includes this provision. Section 718.2(a)(iv) specifies as an aggravating factor, allowing for a more increased sentence, involvement with organized crime.

I will be sharing my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge, Mr. Speaker.

This is a critical measure. We know that the majority of auto thefts are not one-off crimes committed by first-time offenders. Auto theft is most often coordinated through an operation of organized crime networks. What are we doing with respect to those organized crime networks? We are cracking down, as the police agencies have asked us to do, on organized crime and the financing of it.

How are we doing that? We have the fall economic statement being debated in this very House, Bill C-59. That bill contains provisions to crack down on money laundering to stop the organized criminals who are making our communities unsafe.

What has the Leader of the Opposition done in his infinite wisdom? He has directed every one of his Conservative colleagues to vote against this measure, to vote against measures that would keep our communities safe and to basically empower organized criminals. Is this illogical? Yes, very illogical.

In a video posted just this morning, the Leader of the Opposition threw the CBSA under the bus for failing to solve the issue of auto theft. What he conveniently failed to mention, in a very polished video that was very professionally done, is that under his watch, when he was part of the Conservative government at the cabinet table, the Conservatives cut 1,000 jobs from the CBSA.

If one of the problems with this, which we will be discussing at the auto summit, is border security, I am not sure how we keep the borders safe when we are cutting employees working at the border. Is it illogical? Indeed, very illogical.

In addition, the Conservatives routinely vote against bolstering CBSA funding. They talk out of both sides of their mouths on this issue. Canadians watching right now deserve a heck of a lot better.

[Translation]

I am always open to good-faith suggestions for improving the Criminal Code. I take my mandate to keep our streets and communities safe very seriously. I look forward to working with the leaders on Thursday.

[English]

What I do not see from members of the official opposition is any sort of leadership on this issue. Instead, I see trifling slogans and redundant suggestions about how to amend the Criminal Code with provisions that are already there. Canadians deserve a lot better from that opposition.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)

[English]

FIRST MINISTER OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my congratulations to Michelle O'Neill of Sinn Féin who became the First Minister of Northern Ireland last Saturday. This historic first and a groundbreaking milestone was once thought to be beyond the realm of possibility.

Sinn Féin's evolution from the political wing of the Irish Republican Army to becoming the leading political party in Northern Ireland's 2022 elections underscores the dynamic shift in the political landscape. It is a testament to the enduring impact of the 1998 Good Friday agreement. This also brings Sinn Féin's long-cherished vision of a united Ireland closer to reality.

This showcases the potential for unity and positive change within a historically divided community.

* * *

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with an ever-increasing number of Canadians struggling with mental illness, we need a government that will listen to mental health advocates and professionals.

Common-sense Conservatives believe that those who are struggling with mental health deserve support and treatment, not despair and death. We know that recovery is possible.

If the government moves forward with legislation that allows MAID for mental health illness as the only underlying condition, the result will be the deaths of people who could have gotten better.

Statements by Members

Assisted death is not health care. Far too many Canadians are falling prey to MAID because of the growing poverty and homelessness in our country. Every day, we hear of more Canadians caught in this cycle who feel their only escape is assisted death. Canada must do better.

Canadians deserve a government that will offer solutions instead of assisted death. The Conservatives stand on the side of the most vulnerable Canadians and their loved ones.

* * *

[Translation]

DAVID MULDER

Ms. Anna Gainey (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to congratulate Dr. David Mulder, who retired after a career of over 60 years.

[English]

Dr. Mulder moved to Montreal from Saskatchewan in 1963 to complete his medical training. He joined the Montreal Canadiens organization, earning \$10 a game. He went on to become the team physician, treating countless players, from Jean Béliveau to Saku Koivu, even my own dad. He served in many capacities, including surgeon and chief of the Montreal General Hospital and chair of the Department of Surgery at the McGill University Health Centre.

[Translation]

The trauma centre at the McGill University Health Centre, or MUHC, has been named in honour of Dr. Mulder for his outstanding leadership in trauma care, both as a surgeon and an educator.

[English]

Gentle, humble and gracious, endlessly generous with his time, our city, our health care institutions and, of course, our beloved Habs benefited from his renowned skill and devotion to his patients.

[Translation]

Dr. Mulder holds an important place in the history of the MUHC and the Montreal Canadiens.

I thank him for everything he has done.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as we kicked off our Black History Month celebrations on Friday, the community of Longueuil showed just how vibrant it is by immersing us in African and Caribbean culture in the middle of a Quebec winter.

I have to say that it was quite the party. There was a tasting of bissap, the iconic drink of West Africa, which was prepared by Michèle Kaugbough, a native of the Ivory Coast. Then, there was a musical performance by Tamara Suffren, a singer of Haitian origin. Muna Mingole, a proud member of the Longueuil community who is originally from Cameroon, did a fabulous job as MC for the evening. We were also able to admire the original creations of Paola Trénou, a fashion designer of Togolese origin, one of whose cre-

ations I am wearing right now, as well as those of Espérance Koumabeng, who is originally from Tchad, and Ghislain Ounguedou and members of the Nouvelle Famille association who are originally from Cameroon. We were also able to enjoy delicious chicken, cakes and desserts made by Alvine Yossa, Marguerite Ngoula and Jolande Petipa from Cameroon. I thank Joseph de Tassot for his amazing griot. This is Quebec in all its glory.

I wish them all a happy Black History Month.

* * *

DAIRY PRODUCERS

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is critical that we recognize the importance of supporting our valued dairy farmers. This is not just about the economy; it is also about preserving our cultural heritage and our nation's food security. Their hard work not only ensures the availability of a quality product, but also helps maintain our traditions and our identity.

In this era of globalization and rapid change, it is our duty to protect and uplift our dairy farmers and their associations, because they are the stewards of our agricultural heritage and our food future. By investing in their well-being and promoting sustainability, we are not only preserving a vital industry, but also strengthening the ties that bind our communities across the country.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last September, shamefully, a former SS soldier was honoured in this House during the address of the President of Ukraine.

The Prime Minister claimed he had no idea that this individual had been invited, even though it happened at his event, organized by his office. Instead of taking responsibility, he threw the now former Speaker under the bus, but we now know that the same SS soldier was invited by the Prime Minister to his exclusive reception with the President of Ukraine. This completely shatters the Prime Minister's claim that he had no idea and that his office was not involved.

The Prime Minister knew all along, and he hid the truth from Canadians. The Prime Minister is responsible, and he must be held accountable for this shameful affair.

* * *

UKRAINE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to emphasize the crucial importance of Canada's unwavering support for Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression.

This month, we approach the second anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It has been two years in which the values that we hold dear, freedom and democracy, continue to be threatened.

The people of Ukraine have a right to their sovereignty and territorial integrity and to live free and without fear. Canada's continued commitment and support goes beyond politics. It is about being there for people in their most challenging moments.

The House will be voting on the modernized free trade agreement with Ukraine today, and I am urging hon. members to put politics aside and support Bill C-57. Let us renew our pledge to stand united in supporting Ukraine's resilience and championing the principles that bind us all together as a global community.

* * *

RICK HOWE

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, "If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention."

Rick Howe, Nova Scotian broadcasting legend, the voice of Nova Scotia, has passed away at the age of 69. Rick was funny, energetic, outspoken, entertaining, kind and brutally honest. It was clear that he loved the medium of radio so much. In turn, Nova Scotians loved him, tuning in for almost 50 years: same bat time, same bat channel.

Rick got his radio start in rural New Brunswick, but it was his gig with CJCH in Halifax that truly launched his career. This is where he became the host of "The Hotline" and the most recognizable voice in Nova Scotian radio. Before his retirement, he ended his career hosting "The Rick Howe Show" on 95.7, now known as CityNews. Rick was also an author of several books. His search for truths and for good, local stories shaped his career.

I thank Yvonne and family for sharing him with us. Rick Howe leaves a legacy in Nova Scotia that we could never forget.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the costly Liberal-NDP coalition, Canadians are struggling to pay their rent, buy groceries and heat their homes. On April 1, the Liberal-NDP government will quadruple the carbon tax, further driving up the cost of living and making the lives of all Canadians more expensive.

New data shows that after eight years, violent crime has increased by 39% and homicides by 43%; gang murders have more than doubled, and violent gun crime has increased year over year. A common-sense Conservative government would ensure that repeat violent offenders remain behind bars while awaiting trial, and we would bring back mandatory jail time for serious violent crimes.

On this side of the House, we want to axe the carbon tax, build homes, fix the budget and stop the crime with jail, not bail. Let us bring it home.

Statements by Members

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, happy Black History Month. Storytelling is one of the tools used by Black communities to pass down our ancestors' experiences, struggles and successes, and the values that are important and worth keeping.

Allow me, then, to share the story of 800 Black families who lived in Strathcona, B.C., in the 1900s, the centre of Black families that was later displaced by the City of Vancouver through patterns of segregation. Today, they have secured a land trust agreement that allows them to rebuild on what was lost.

There is also Africville, Nova Scotia, where members of the Black community were displaced in the same manner. The last home was destroyed in 1970, but today this story is shared in the Africville Museum, so visitors from around the world can learn about Black history in Nova Scotia.

Africville and the Black community in Strathcona are some of the examples of the long history of racism and discrimination in Canada, so, when we celebrate the strides of Black Canadians, it is important to remember why.

We should take pride in celebrating the barriers that we are breaking as a government. Martin Luther King said, "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools." Black history is Canadian history.

* * *

● (1410)

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government is just not worth the cost. After eight years, Canadian businesses are struggling to survive. Alarming, the latest report from the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy revealed that business insolvencies increased by 41.4% in 2023 compared to 2022. It is no surprise: Liberal policies have attacked small businesses since the Liberals entered office.

Small businesses are drowning in debt, red tape, high taxes and high rent, and they are struggling to stay afloat. Statistics Canada continues to report that more businesses are closing their doors than are opening. While the Liberals' negligence has made life more expensive, Conservatives will continue to propose common-sense solutions that would provide relief to small businesses without driving excessive inflation. Let us bring it home.

*Statements by Members***CARBON TAX**

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal government is in denial. We are in a cost-of-living crisis, yet the Liberals have no shame, once again hiking the carbon tax on April 1. The Liberals do not care about the two million Canadians who regularly use food banks; they do not care about the 50% of families who are \$200 away from insolvency, and they really do not care about forcing farmers who feed us to pay thousands of dollars in carbon taxes. After eight years of the Prime Minister, it has never been more expensive to eat, heat and put a roof over one's head.

The worst part is that even the Liberals now acknowledge that their costly carbon tax serves little purpose. By their own admission, they do not track the amount that emissions are reduced by the carbon tax, which is proving once again that this is a tax plan, not an environmental plan.

It is time for the costly coalition to rediscover reality. People are hurting; people are struggling, and they cannot afford more tax grabs. Conservatives will keep fighting to axe the tax on everything, for everyone, and for good.

* * *

[Translation]

SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is Suicide Prevention Week in Quebec. It is a time to remember those who have sadly taken their own lives, but, most of all, to remember the importance of fast access to crisis lines.

This year's theme, "Prevention is Better Than Death", encourages people to speak up about suicide, despite any fear or discomfort they may feel.

Canadians need timely access to suicide prevention services. They need to know that they are not alone and that help is available. In Sherbrooke, the JEV team is always on hand to understand and respond to callers' needs.

If someone is contemplating suicide, or has concerns about a loved one struggling with suicidal thoughts, they can now call or text 988 to obtain bilingual support 24-7.

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[English]

ABANDONED VESSELS

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith on Vancouver Island is surrounded by marine-sensitive ecosystems, including ancient clam beds, southern resident killer whales and wild Pacific salmon. As waters continue to warm, our oceans and coastal communities need all the help they can get.

Despite this, consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have left derelict and abandoned vessels to sink, polluting oil, fuel, plastics and more into our waters. The impacts are detrimental to food security, wildlife, public safety, navigation and local economies. Still, these vessel graveyards are increasing at a rapid pace.

We know that local organizations, first nations and more are eager to do the work; they just need a federal partner. It is time that we see the government move forward with a real plan to prevent this, remove these vessels from our waters and support my bill, Bill C-344, to finally clean up this mess.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

DAIRY FARMERS

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the presence of dairy farmers from across Canada, and especially those from Quebec. They are on the Hill for the day to attend meetings with parliamentarians.

Our entrepreneurs are proud to offer the public their product at a stable and reasonable price that allows them to earn a decent living from their trade. That is why they are asking parliamentarians to support Bill C-282 to ensure the sustainability of supply management, and they hope the Senate will pass the legislation quickly.

Defending this system will help guarantee our national food security while protecting our model of regional agriculture on a human scale. This predictability allows farmers to invest in research and development, thereby constantly improving their productivity, the quality of their products and their environmental footprint.

I thank dairy farmers for getting up every morning to supply us with high-quality milk. We always enjoy their delicious products.

* * *

[English]

AUTO THEFT

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, car thefts are up 34% across Canada, and a vehicle is stolen every six minutes. According to the Liberal government's own news release, auto thefts in Toronto are up 300% since 2015, and Statistics Canada data shows auto theft is up 216% across the entire GTA since 2015.

What happened in 2015? The Prime Minister happened. After eight years in power, the government has not done a single thing to crack down on car theft. In fact, it has made life easier for the criminals who steal the cars from hard-working Canadians and for the overseas organized crime syndicates that profit from their actions. Thanks to the Liberal government's catch-and-release policies, these career car thieves face zero repercussions.

The Prime Minister has caused this auto theft crisis to happen under his watch. Ports are federal, the RCMP is federal, the CBSA is federal and the Criminal Code is federal. The Prime Minister is responsible for this crisis, and he is just not worth the cost.

Only a Conservative government would stop the crime, protect people's property and bring home safe streets. It is just common sense.

* * *

ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to rise to acknowledge 30 naval and officer cadets from the world-renowned Royal Military College of Canada, who have come to Ottawa today. The delegation is led by one of my best friends, a veteran of the war in Afghanistan and a professor at the RMC, Dr. Donald McFarling. Throughout the day, these fine cadets have met with government and official members. They have met with the Minister of National Defence; they have met with astronauts, and I believe they have also met with you, sir.

They came to the capital today to gain a deeper appreciation of the role of their representatives and the government they have sworn to protect. These cadets have made a commitment to serve their country and live by the Royal Military College motto: truth, duty and valour. They rise early, study hard and train even harder, because, in a few short years, many will be sent to foreign shores to represent Canada and enact the decisions that we make in this very House.

We will owe them all a debt of gratitude. Today, I ask my colleagues to acknowledge these great—

The Speaker: I remind the member for Sault Ste. Marie, who is an experienced member, that there is no recognition from the floor of the House of Commons, as it comes through the Chair. The member must make sure to follow the procedures that have been clearly established in this place.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the previous Conservative common-sense government managed to cut the number of auto thefts in half while reducing the cost of bureaucracy. However, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost, not worth the crime, and not worth the cost of the crime after eight years, because he has caused the bureaucracy to explode, but border services are inspecting only 1% of containers.

Will he follow my common-sense plan to reduce the bureaucracy and the consultants and add officers and container scanners?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that organized crime is involved in auto theft in Canada. That is why we gave \$121 million to the Province of Ontario, for example, to fight organized crime and car theft, but the

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Conservative Party voted against granting that money. We are in the process of fighting money laundering. The Conservatives are going to vote against that. Canadians are wondering why the Conservative leader is defending organized crime instead of dealing with auto theft.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has made Canada the capital of organized crime and money laundering, and yes, it is true, he is spending a lot more money to add more bureaucracy and hire management consultants for managers who cannot manage things themselves.

My common-sense plan will fire consultants and put that money toward border agents and scanners to scan all outgoing containers to stop auto theft.

Will he follow my common-sense plan?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that when we came to power in 2015, we had to rehire the thousands of border agents who had been laid off when the Harper government, with this Leader of the Opposition as minister, eliminated their jobs. He is constantly proposing cuts, whereas we are investing in the fight against money laundering and organized crime. The Conservative Party also votes against these measures.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we cut was auto theft. We cut auto theft by 50% under the previous common-sense Conservative government.

He is right. We did it at a lower cost to taxpayers. He is also right that he reversed our reduction in auto theft because it has exploded by 32% since he took office, just as the bureaucracy has exploded. He has not put it into frontline officers. In fact, at the port of Montreal, there are only five of them to inspect half a million containers, of which only 1% get inspected.

Why will he not cut the high-priced consultants and bureaucrats and get boots on the—

The Speaker: The hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition is saying would be more credible if he had not voted against sending \$121 million to the Province of Ontario to fight against organized crime and car theft, and if he had not announced that he is voting against our fight against money laundering. He still has time to change his perspective and get behind our initiatives to fight organized crime, fight auto theft and stand up for Canadians.

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He cut thousands of jobs, under his previous government, from border services. We have invested in them, and we will continue to do so.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say it softly and slowly so the Prime Minister can understand. We cut auto theft by 50% while reducing the cost of the bureaucracy. Yes, we are voting against his putting hundreds of millions of dollars more into high-priced consultants and back-office bureaucrats who do not stop crime.

My common-sense plan would scan every container going out of the four biggest ports and put 75 border agents on the ground to do the inspections. Why can we not have more boots on the ground and fewer bureaucrats in offices?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he talks about boots on the ground, but the government he was part of, that he is taking credit for now, actually cut thousands of jobs, of boots on the ground, at the Canada Border Services Agency. We have continued to step up to support Canadians.

They like to mention Bill C-5. It is a bill that kept mandatory minimum penalties for car thefts on the books. They mention Bill C-75, which is a bill that raised maximum penalties on car theft. We are going to continue to invest in fighting money laundering and organized crime, and we hope that the Conservatives change their mind and vote with us to crack down on organized crime.

* * *

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he has hiked the cost, and he has hiked the crime. He is not worth the cost, and he is not worth the crime. After eight years, the Prime Minister is also not worth the hypocrisy.

The Prime Minister has been claiming for months that he had no involvement in or knowledge of the invitation sent to a former Nazi soldier to the visit of the Ukrainian President. Now we know that he personally invited that same individual. He said the opposite. He said that the former Speaker had to resign over doing the exact same thing.

Will the Prime Minister hold himself to the very same standard and admit that he is not fit for office?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the attack that the Leader of the Opposition is choosing to make against the Ukrainian Canadian Congress demonstrates the extent to which this Conservative Party no longer stands with Ukraine.

They will have an opportunity in just a few minutes to stand and vote in favour of a free trade deal that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, himself, is asking this House to pass. The Leader of the Opposition is choosing to not stand with Ukraine, not stand with Ukrainians and not stand with Ukrainian Canadians.

Why are the Conservatives abandoning Ukraine?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Bloc Québécois reintroduced a bill to eliminate the religious exemption that allows hate and violence to be incited in the guise of religion.

We saw people hide behind the religious exemption recently to justify their support for a terrorist organization.

This time, will the Prime Minister vote in favour of eliminating the religious exemption with respect to hate speech and inciting violence?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my hon. colleague that any form of hatred or glorification of violence is completely unacceptable.

The Minister of Public Safety is in constant communication with the RCMP, and local police will not hesitate to act if necessary.

Canada is a country governed by the rule of law and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As Canadians, we must stand together against hate, regardless of when or where it is expressed.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in order for police to take action, the law must allow them to do so.

Last time, the Prime Minister chose denial and swept the issue under the rug. Discussion ended then and there. He spoke of freedom of expression, freedom in general, as he did just now. This religious exemption is found in a bill that criminalizes hate speech yet allows people to take the cowardly way out and hide behind that exemption.

Will he condone hate speech, or will he eliminate hate speech spread under the guise of the religious exemption?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Canada, any form of hatred or glorification of violence is unacceptable.

Our police forces are working very hard to eliminate hate speech and the glorification of violence. We recognize how important it is, in our legal system, to defend the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the rights of all Canadians, but glorification of violence and hate speech are always unacceptable.

[English]

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government and the Prime Minister promised to tax the excess profits of corporate grocery stores if they failed to stabilize grocery prices. They failed to stabilize prices, and the Liberals again broke their promise.

The Liberals announced, instead, another study on food prices. Canadians do not need another study to know that they are being gouged by corporate greed. We have learned that the Liberal housing minister received thousands of dollars in donations from none other than the Sobeys family. Is that why the Liberals are protecting their wealthy friends?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more competition means lower prices, more choice and more innovative products and services for Canadians.

Our government has just passed new legislation that empowers the Competition Bureau to hold grocers accountable and prioritize consumers' interests. The fall economic statement also cracks down on predatory pricing. I urge all parties to vote in favour of that.

Canadians are watching and counting on each and every single one of us in the House of Commons to keep supporting them.

● (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the Liberals boasted about announcing more studies on the price of groceries. People do not need more studies, they need the prices to come down. The minister promised to tax excess profits and he broke his promise. The Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities received thousands of dollars in donations from the Sobeys family.

Is the minister breaking his promises to please the CEO of IGA?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, more competition means lower prices, more choice and more innovative goods and services for Canadians.

Our government just adopted legislation that allows the Competition Bureau to require grocery chains to be accountable to it and promote consumer interests. The fall economic statement also addresses predatory pricing. I strongly encourage all parties to vote in favour of it. Canadians are watching us. They are counting on the support of each and every member here in the House of Commons.

[English]

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after months of feigned outrage and apologies on behalf of everyone else, a new report from The Globe and Mail shows that the Prime Minister's Office invited a Nazi to his diplomatic reception in Toronto. The Prime Minister blamed the Speaker, saying that he acted alone. The Prime Minister is saying he had no idea about any of it. He called for the Speaker to take responsibility. He watched

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him resign, and yesterday he tried to blame the Ukrainian Canadian Congress.

After all of the embarrassment all over the world, why is the Prime Minister above the rules he applies to everyone else?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about is a name that came from a community organization. Obviously, the Prime Minister had no knowledge of this, but we know what is happening over here. We are voting today at third reading on the Canada-Ukraine free trade arrangements. Mr. Zelenskyy stood here and asked us to pass this. The Conservatives' opposition to this bill is a moral failing of historic proportions in response to an effort to support our friends in Ukraine and repel the Russian invaders.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what an embarrassment it must be for the House leader to have to clean up the Prime Minister's mess every day. The invitation had the Prime Minister's name on it. It came from him, and for months he said only the Speaker invited Hunka. That turned out to not be true. The Prime Minister's own House leader said that the invitation merited a Speaker's resignation. The Speaker resigned because of him, and all of the Liberals watched him do it.

Will the Prime Minister be subject to the rules he imposes on everyone else?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is another small conflagration to mask the Conservatives' larger historical moral failing of not supporting the people, the armed forces and the President of Ukraine, who stood in this very chamber not months ago and asked us to support the Canada-Ukraine free trade arrangements. Then, the Conservatives voted against Operation Unifier and support for our troops, which once again supports Ukraine.

What is next? Why will they not stop trying to hide their moral failings?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: There are several experienced members of the House who know that their time to speak will be recognized by the Chair when they are supposed to speak. Otherwise, I ask members to please allow questions to be asked and answers to be given so the Speaker can hear them, along with anybody else who is participating here.

The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley has the floor.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a shameful answer from the member. It is another day with another international embarrassment.

Oral Questions

After months of denials and throwing the former Speaker under the bus, we have learned that it was the Prime Minister who invited a Nazi to a reception with President Zelenskyy. He forced the Speaker to resign and to take the fall so he could avoid responsibility and cling to power.

After eight years of the Prime Minister, he is not worth the cost to Canada's reputation. Why did the Prime Minister invite a Nazi to a reception with the Ukrainian President?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a community event was held with the President of Ukraine to which over 1,000 people were invited. In fact, some Conservatives were invited to that, but we are not talking about any of that today because the Conservatives care about this. They are pretending to care about this. This is fake outrage.

Why are they doing this? It is because today we are voting on trade arrangements with one of our closest allies, the people in the country of Ukraine, who are repelling, as we speak, Russian invaders and dying. This is a moral failing of historic proportions.

• (1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps misleading the House.

On September 27, the Prime Minister said in this House that he had no idea that a former Nazi was going to be involved in the events surrounding President Zelenskyy's visit. We now know that the Prime Minister personally invited the Nazi to his private reception in Toronto. He said that the Speaker of the House should resign for inviting a Nazi into the House of Commons. After eight years, it is safe to say his relationship with the truth is pretty questionable.

Will the Prime Minister apply the same standard to himself and resign?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, apparently the Conservatives want to talk about their moral failings in French, too.

I will come right out and say it: Why are we talking about this in the House today? We are talking about it because they are about to vote against an historic agreement between Canada and Ukraine at a time when the two countries want to support each other in terms of trade and we want to strengthen Ukraine so it can drive the Russians out of its homeland.

This is a moral failing that the Conservatives are trying to mask by raising this issue today. I would invite them to draw back from this moral failing and vote in favour of the bill.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been a breakdown in law and order in this country. Over the last eight years, auto thefts are up 34% and violent crimes 39%. Canada has become a foreign interference playground for the PRC, Iran and Russia. Behind all of this is organized crime,

money laundering and terrorist financing. In fact, in a U.S. indictment unsealed last week, Iran hired two Hell's Angels' members in British Columbia as assassins.

When is the government going to get serious about crime in this country and start protecting Canadian citizens?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, but I would ask him to reflect seriously on the vote he is going to cast on the fall economic statement.

The fall economic statement deals directly with the money laundering that is fuelling organized crime. We know that auto theft and so many other crimes right now are being committed and orchestrated by organized criminals. We have the ability to get tough on their financing structures and break down those organizations.

The member hopefully has the rectitude to address that issue, vote against his leader's instructions and vote in favour of the fall economic statement.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-59 will do little to combat the problem of organized crime and money laundering in this country, which by the government's own estimate is \$133 billion a year, equal to 5% of GDP. The government has ignored numerous reports and protected lawyers from money laundering and terrorist financing law and failed to crack down on Canada's big banks and their funnelling of money laundering and terrorist financing through our financial system.

When is the government going to subject lawyers to federal law and start cracking down on our big banks and the gobs of money laundering going through our financial system?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I again would ask the member to use reason, for which he is known in this chamber, and to think about the vote he is being asked to cast and the votes he has already cast.

What am I talking about? We know that police forces around this country are asking for resources. We dedicated resources of \$121 million last week to combat guns and gangs, yet the member, under the guidance of his leader, was instructed to vote in an all-night voting session against that funding. That is not becoming of that member or of that caucus.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all three federalist parties voted against a bilingualism requirement for miscarriage of justice review commissioners. The Liberal parliamentary secretary and the NDP justified dropping the bilingualism requirement by saying it would stand in the way of hiring unilingual French-speaking commissioners. Frankly, unilingual francophones have never benefited from bilingualism taking a backseat, believe me.

Are these parties really saying that it is impossible to find nine competent bilingual jurists out of 40 million Canadians?

• (1440)

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, judges in Canada are extremely important. Their role is extraordinarily important. The need to be bilingual is a very important priority and not just for judges in Quebec, but for judges across Canada. When we took office in 2015, we revised the process for appointing judges. This includes the fact that bilingualism is a priority for us when it comes to assessing applications.

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is not following his minister's instructions.

Another excuse for giving up on bilingualism is that apparently it is too expensive. Yesterday, Radio-Canada reported that it obtained a copy of a letter from the Privy Council announcing that it would take years and it would be very expensive to translate the documents produced for the Rouleau commission. It seems that the production of a simple index would cost too much too.

This raises three questions for us. How much is bilingualism worth? How much is Canada prepared to pay for bilingualism? Most of all, have we ever heard anyone here complain about the cost of translation from French to English?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question. I acknowledge the frustration of francophones in the country on this.

As my colleague knows full well, the commission produced a final report of 2,000 pages in both official languages. The challenge of this situation should also be noted, specifically that the commission received 200,000 documents.

That does not mean this situation is acceptable. There is a lesson to be learned here and we will do better in future.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing is a marked tendency to extinguish the francophone presence in Canada. It is happening in the justice system, as my colleague demonstrated. It is also happening with appointments, such as that of Governor General Mary Simon, and in major events, such as the all-star hockey game and the Grey Cup.

I am appealing to my colleagues in the national parties. If they choose to do nothing to stop the extinction of francophones, if they

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tolerate it or come up with excuses to abandon the French language, what choice are Quebecers left with?

Our only choice is independence.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that, on this Tuesday in the House of Commons, the Bloc Québécois is trying to pick a fight over language.

I want everyone to know that I am a redeemed francophone. When I first landed at Campus Saint-Jean in Alberta in 1998, I could not speak French, but I learned French and now I am the Minister of Official Languages. I am proof that bilingualism is working in Canada.

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[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of soft-on-crime policies, this Prime Minister has created the auto theft crisis. According to the Liberal government's own news release in New Brunswick, car theft has spiked by 120%.

It is time to stop the crime. Will the Prime Minister reverse his soft-on-crime, catch-and-release policies that have caused the auto theft crisis?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government obviously takes the increase in auto theft extremely seriously, which is why we have invested in a very significant way in the Border Services Agency and the RCMP to work on organized crime.

When we formed government, we found out that Conservatives had cut 1,000 officers from border services and half of the border services officers who work on criminal intelligence to interdict the export of, for example, stolen vehicles. Good news, we reversed those cuts, we have invested more and we are going to continue to do more to deal with this issue.

• (1445)

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the results are in after eight years. There were five agents working at one port; five people.

This Liberal government has let organized crime run rampant in Canada. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the crime. His reckless policies have caused an explosion in car thefts. He is responsible for the ports. He is responsible for the RCMP and the Criminal Code. These are federal responsibilities.

Oral Questions

Car thefts have spiked 190% in Moncton and 93% in Saint John. Will this Prime Minister finally reverse his soft-on-crime, catch-and-release policies?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can assure my colleague from Miramichi that this government will continue to crack down on auto theft and organized crime. They like fancy slogans where they make up things like “catch and-release”. He is from Miramichi, New Brunswick, and he knows that applies to salmon angling and not serious criminals, so just because he repeats the silly phrase does not make it true. Our government will do what is necessary with provincial partners and local police to crack down on this. We have invested in the CBSA and the RCMP and will continue to do more.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years under this Prime Minister and this government, auto theft has doubled in Montreal.

Furthermore, the Canada Border Services Agency is responsible for controlling our borders, including ports. The Port of Montreal, however, has only five Canada Border Services Agency officers on duty to inspect the huge volume of containers transiting through the port on their way to foreign destinations. This morning, our leader proposed to significantly increase that number to 75 officers.

Will the Prime Minister take the Conservative leader's proposals into account during discussions at his summit on Thursday?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what are we going to do at Thursday's discussion?

For one thing, we are going to discuss exactly what we can do to combat auto theft with the chief of the Montreal police service and other partners.

I was also at the port of Montreal two weeks ago with my colleague, the Minister of Transport. The good news is that we saw a lot more than five border services officers working on this troubling situation.

We will continue to increase the number of Canada Border Services Agency staff, which the Conservatives drastically reduced.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday our leader proposed other measures to fix this government's mistakes, like fixing the Criminal Code by bringing back tougher sentences. Three auto thefts would get a minimum of three years in prison. It is pretty simple.

Also, by finding savings elsewhere—yes, we can save money; our leader has found savings—we can purchase 24 scanners that would be installed at the ports to check containers.

Will the government listen to the Leader of the Opposition's proposals and bring them to the summit on Thursday so that we can finally solve the problem of auto theft in Canada?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see my colleague's interest in our summit

on Thursday. His leader had downplayed the meeting, describing it as a bunch of bigwigs nattering at a meeting in Ottawa.

Personally, I would never say such a thing about the chiefs of municipal and provincial police forces and provincial ministers who want to partner with the federal government in the fight against auto theft.

On Thursday, we will be discussing concrete ideas to help reduce this major scourge facing Canadians. We will continue to increase investments.

* * *

[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everyone should be treated with dignity and respect, yet Canadians living with a disability have been deplaned on a catering cart or forced to get on their hands and knees to crawl off a plane. Some of these dehumanizing experiences happened under the watch of Air Canada's CEO, and the Liberal government is doing nothing about it. It continues to give CEOs a free ride, even handing them billions of taxpayers' dollars.

Will the Liberals stop protecting rich CEOs and start protecting people with disabilities?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, airlines can do better and have to do better. That is why I convened the team from Air Canada, the CEO and others, to come here and meet me and my colleague a couple of weeks ago. That is fundamental. What we have seen in the papers and through media is totally unacceptable, and not only with Air Canada but other companies also. Once again, they have to do better and they will do better.

* * *

● (1450)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Palestinian Canadian families are desperate to bring their loved ones to safety in Canada. The rollout of the special immigration measure for Gaza is riddled with problems. People have been rejected without any explanation. Some are rejected then later approved with exactly the same application. Now officials are saying the 1,000 cap has almost been reached, yet many have not received the code from IRCC to move on to the next stage.

What action is the minister taking to clean up this mess, and will he remove the arbitrary cap without further delay to save lives?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what this measure is about. It is about saving lives in the face of a humanitarian catastrophe. We have said time and time again that we will be flexible about the 1,000-person cap. Right now, the challenge is actually getting an initial list of people out who are pre-approved to cross Rafah gates. I am extremely disappointed with local authorities that we have not been able to get this through, but that will not prevent us from trying.

It is very difficult to extend these programs when we cannot even get people out. I am frustrated by it. We are in the House and I would use stronger words outside it, but we need to get those people out and into safety.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we started debate on the first nations clean water act, an important piece of legislation that I look forward to studying at committee in due course. However, it seems like every time we want to move forward on reconciliation, the Conservatives want to keep us in our colonial past. The very first time a Conservative MP rose on this bill, the member accused first nations of burning down their own water systems.

For the Minister of Indigenous Services, how would this legislation make long-term drinking water advisories in first nations communities a thing of the past?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Cloverdale—Langley City for caring so much about access to clean water for first nations, something about which we should all care.

It was very disappointing yesterday, on the first day of the second reading of the bill, that the Conservative member blamed first nations for their lack of drinking water. I guess it is easier to do that than to look in the mirror. In 2015, when we took office, there were 105 long-term boil-water advisories. Now, 96% of first nations communities have access to clean water. We will not rest until we get it done, and this bill would help.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, auto theft is up over 200% in the GTA. Canadians are waking up to their cars being stolen from their driveway, and they are watching them being shipped out to Africa and Dubai. Even the former Liberal justice minister had his own government cars stolen. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the crime or the chaos.

Will the Prime Minister reverse his soft-on-crime, catch-and-release bail policies that have caused this auto theft crisis?

Oral Questions

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very strange that the party opposite only started talking about auto theft after we announced the fact that we were having a national summit to study auto theft, to bring together all affected parties, and after we realized that it was actually under Prime Minister Harper that boots on the ground were cut. We added 1,000 more to CBSA to staff the border. We are bringing together auto insurers, local law enforcement and industry, and we will reach—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I want to encourage all members to only take the microphone when they are recognized by the Speaker. I know some members will even be asking questions later on and I am certain they will want to have that same respect returned to them.

The hon. member for Oxford.

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Prime Minister that he is responsible for the ports, the RCMP, the CBSA and our Criminal Code.

Canadians are paying \$1 billion more in insurance premiums because of skyrocketing auto theft claims. The Prime Minister has caused this auto theft crisis with bills like Bill C-75 and Bill C-5, which allow criminals to be on the streets the same day.

Will the government reverse its policies and replace them with our common-sense plan of jail and not bail for repeat violent offenders?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to stress that slogans and videos are not going to fix this very complex problem. Our approach to addressing complex problems is to develop a complex solution.

In Bill C-75, the very piece of legislation that the Leader of the Opposition is asking us to repeal, our government raised the maximum penalty on summary conviction for motor vehicle theft from 18 months to two years. Why does the Leader of the Opposition want to—

● (1455)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton—Mill Woods.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Prime Minister, car thefts have skyrocketed across the country. They are up 300% in Toronto and up over 100% in other Canadian cities. Car theft now costs the insurance industry over \$1 billion a year. That means that every Canadian is spending more every month for their insurance premiums.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister has caused this auto theft crisis. His catch-and-release policies have allowed organized crime to thrive in our country. It is time to stop the crime.

When will the Prime Minister reverse his catch-and-release policies?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the good news is that on Thursday representatives of the insurance industry will participate with auto manufacturers, people responsible for rail transportation, the ports, federal border services agents, the RCMP and provincial ministers responsible. Their police chiefs will be here. We think that if we are going to do the work that Canadians expect us to do on this important issue our government is committed to doing, we need to do it in partnership with all the people to whom my colleague referred. The good news is that is exactly what we are doing.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals continue to hold meetings, criminals are going to continue to steal cars. After eight years of the NDP-Liberal soft-on-crime policies, our police forces are powerless to stop car thieves. Liberal Bill C-5 allows house arrest for these criminals and Bill C-75 allows repeat offenders to be released on bail just hours after they were arrested.

The Prime Minister has caused this crisis and he is not worth the cost. When will he reverse the soft-on-crime policies that have caused this auto theft crisis?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he is entitled to his own opinions, but he is not entitled to his own facts. Bill C-5, which he just mentioned, maintained a mandatory minimum penalty for auto theft. That is what the Conservatives apparently want to repeal. Bill C-75, which he just mentioned, actually enhanced the maximum penalty for auto theft, moving it from 18 months to two years less a day. That apparently is what they want to repeal.

This problem cannot be fixed by suggesting redundant changes that already exist in the Criminal Code. We fix this problem by being the adults in the room, convening people and coming up with a complex solution to a complex problem.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers have spent \$470 million welcoming asylum seekers who are the federal government's responsibility. The federal government may feel that is a lot of money to have to pay back, but that is because we took in far more than our fair share of people. Now it is the Liberals' turn to do their bit. So far, all they have offered is an inadequate amount for accommodation, one that seems more about improving the mayor of Toronto's mood and far less about relieving pressure on public services in Quebec.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance was scheduled to speak to her Quebec counterpart. Did she tell him that she was finally reimbursing Quebecers?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it would be useful to point out that, since 2015, Quebec has received \$4.4 billion under the Canada-Quebec accord. That is not an insignificant amount of money. It is earmarked for welcoming immigrants and is put towards the services Quebec uses to welcome immigrants and help them integrate under the Canada-Quebec accord. The amount was \$300 million in 2015 and it is now \$700 million, regardless of immigration levels. The Bloc is being intellectually dishonest when it claims that we are not paying up. They are constantly picking fights.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, they claim we are picking fights whenever they do not feel like debating. We have the member for Honoré-Mercier to thank for that.

The federal government also needs to make it so that every province welcomes asylum seekers. Every time we raise the issue, the Minister of Immigration accuses Quebec of wanting to treat immigrants like cattle. That kind of rhetoric does not help anyone, especially when a year ago, the government made efforts to settle asylum seekers in various provinces. It sent people to Ontario. If the Liberals were not treating people like cattle when they did it, then things are no different today.

When will the minister make it so that asylum seekers are spread out among the provinces?

• (1500)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we see with this type of question that the Bloc Québécois is still trying to pick a fight. Obviously, as a responsible government we are at the negotiating table with the Government of Quebec. Do members know who is not? It is the Bloc Québécois. The Government of Quebec could invite Bloc members, but they are not welcome. Let them be the armchair quarterbacks that they are and let them listen to the two responsible governments that are in the process of fixing the problem.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the environment minister revealed the truth about the carbon tax. I asked how many emissions were directly reduced from the carbon tax in an Order Paper question. The minister's response was "the government does not measure the annual amount of emissions that are directly reduced by federal carbon pricing." Those are his words, not mine.

Why is the minister forcing Canadians to pay his carbon tax if he does not measure the emissions he pretends to reduce?

Oral Questions

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, what the member is saying is simply not true. Just before Christmas, we put out a study by Environment and Climate Change Canada that shows that carbon pricing will be responsible for between 20% and 30% of our greenhouse gas emissions between 2019 and 2030.

On the issue of carbon pricing and climate change, we have no lessons to take from the Conservative Party, whose official position today, as Alberta is suffering from droughts, as there are unforeseen storms in eastern Canada and atmospheric rivers in B.C., is still that climate change simply does not exist.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, shame on the Liberals for telling Canadians that their costly carbon tax is reducing emissions. It is a complete scam.

The minister pretends that his carbon tax reduces emissions, but now we know that the Liberals do not measure the results of their carbon tax. With no measurement, there are no results. No wonder emissions went up after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government.

Why did the environment minister mislead Canadians about his carbon tax scam?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the falsehoods that we hear from the Conservative Party on the issue of climate change and carbon pricing has not been seen before in the history of our country. First, the Conservatives believe that climate change does not exist. That is simply not true. They say that our plan is not working. Our plan has allowed us to reduce—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am having difficulty hearing the minister respond to the question. I will ask him to start from the top. Could members please withhold their comments so the Speaker can hear?

The hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, do members want to know the truth? Climate change is real. That is the truth. Do they want to know the truth? Climate change is impacting Canadians all over the country, including farmers from coast to coast. Do they want to know the truth about climate change? It is costing Canadians billions of dollars. That is the truth about climate change.

Our party is working. We are reducing emissions. We are helping Canadians with affordability. That is the truth.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals do not measure the results of the carbon tax, there are no results. The Liberals have no shame in punishing Canadians without anything to show for it.

Here is something we can measure, though. After eight years of the Liberal government, gas is up, groceries are up, home heating is up because of its failed carbon tax.

Now that the environment minister has exposed his own carbon tax scam, will he finally axe the tax?

• (1505)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty hard to take the Conservatives seriously on the cost of groceries when the senior adviser to their leader is actually a lobbyist for Loblaws. Now it turns out that the deputy leader used to work for Walmart.

The Conservatives are opposing our historic reforms to the Competition Act, which will bring down the cost of groceries. Is that because they are taking dictation from Walmart and Loblaws and not working for Canadians?

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as parents, the safety of our children is essential. Too often, children are affected by war. Russia's invasion of Ukraine cost thousands of people their lives and continues to jeopardize children's safety.

As the second anniversary of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine approaches, can the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us what Canada is doing for the children of Ukraine?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just got back from Ukraine, where thousands of Ukrainian children have been abducted and brought to Russia, far from their families. This is terribly sad. That is why Canada and Ukraine have launched the international coalition for the return of Ukrainian children.

We are going to work through our diplomatic network to exert pressure on various countries and on the Kremlin. Every child that is returned will be a victory.

Today, there is going to be an important vote in the House. The Conservatives are facing a historic failure. We all need to support Ukraine.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, one thing is for sure: Canadians are paying more taxes.

The other thing we know for sure is that Liberal carbon taxes are the cornerstone of the Liberal approach to fighting climate change. Do they actually work, though?

That is why my colleague from Manitoba tabled a written question. The minister wrote back and said, "the government does not measure the annual amount of emissions that are directly reduced by federal carbon pricing."

Oral Questions

Why tax when there is no way to assess?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I said this in English, and I am pleased to say it in French. We put out figures on carbon pricing just before the holidays.

Carbon pricing will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% to 30% by 2030. We have already reduced greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of 30 million tonnes. There is still a lot of work to be done because the Conservatives spent 10 years doing nothing to fight pollution and climate change.

Thanks to our programs, our actions and the actions of Canadians, we are starting to tackle this problem. The last thing we need is for the Conservatives to come back and wreck everything.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know who is answering my questions. Is it the environment minister who claims that things are in the works, or the environment minister who signs off on things we cannot assess? Which one is speaking today? Is it the environment minister under whose watch Canada went from ranking 58th to 62nd on climate performance?

That is the Liberal's track record.

Why do you keep imposing taxes? You have no way to assess their effectiveness.

The Speaker: I would like to remind all hon. members to address their questions through the Chair.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is wrong. We publish an annual report on greenhouse gas emissions in April. It happens every year, just like Christmas or tax time.

I would be pleased to arrange a personalized briefing for all Conservative members interested in the climate change issue—I know there are only a few of them—on Canada's progress in the fight against climate change and on the support we provide to help Canadians transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1510)

The Speaker: Order.

I would invite all members to listen to their whip, who is advising them to show some restraint.

[English]

The hon. member for Souris Moose Mountain.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is Brandon—Souris.

After eight long years of the Liberal Prime Minister, many—

The Speaker: I would like to apologize to the member for Brandon—Souris. I will invite the member to please start again, from the top.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, after eight long years of the Liberal Prime Minister, many West End families are struggling to make ends meet as the price of gas, groceries and heat continue to rise because of the Prime Minister's carbon tax.

In Brandon, the Samaritan House food bank gave out nearly 36,000 hampers last year, a dramatic increase of 12,000, which was 50% above their normal annual average.

For Canadian families facing hardship, the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. Will the Liberals give people a break and stop their April 1 carbon tax hike?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this fall we put forward a comprehensive economic plan that included generational changes to Canada's competition law that will bring down grocery prices.

The Conservative leader described that plan as a “disgusting scheme”. His actions make a lot more sense now that we have learned that he is advised by a Loblaw's lobbyist and that his deputy leader used to work for Walmart.

The Conservative leader talks a lot about powerful paycheques. Who is paying his advisers?

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, members of the chamber will have the opportunity, yet again, to advance the modernized Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. February 24 will mark two years since Russia's brutal, inhumane and cruel invasion of Ukraine. Ukrainians both at home and across the Canadian diaspora have demonstrated an unwavering and inspiring will to persevere. I have seen this tenacity first-hand in my home riding of Winnipeg South Centre.

Can the Minister of International Trade expand on the critical importance of this legislation, a piece of legislation that President Zelenskyy himself has urged us to enact?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was with the member for Winnipeg South Centre meeting with those very excellent and wonderful Ukrainian Canadians. To those Ukrainian Canadians in Manitoba, in Saskatchewan, in British Columbia, in Alberta, here in Ontario and, indeed, across the country, I want to say to them that I hear them and that we hear them. The Liberal government is going to vote, today, in favour of the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement.

Most of the House is going to do that. I want to ask my Conservative colleagues, I appeal to them, to support Ukraine today. Vote for this Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement today.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Jared Guerard was a beautiful young Cree artist. He died this past weekend in a horrific house fire in Peawanuck. A young woman is also dead, and three others are in hospital fighting for their lives. This government knew that Peawanuck was at risk, yet the minister nickel-and-dimed the community over funding for a fire hall.

A fire hall: that is basic stuff. People in Treaty 9 are tired of the trauma and the broken promises. We need a full comprehensive plan for fire safety in the north and no more fire deaths.

Is the minister up to the job, yes or no?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been working with Weenusk First Nation since last year when there was yet another tragic death in that community due to a house fire. In fact, last march, we airlifted in the fire truck that would help them respond. I agree that they do need a fire hall as well. Our department is working with the community to make sure that we can accelerate the work of the design and make it possible to get the equipment and the supplies there quickly.

I look forward to meeting with this member this afternoon to talk more about this.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Haida have stewarded the lands and waters of Haida Gwaii for millennia. Today, their leaders continue the long journey toward restoring their inherent right of self-government. Last year, they secured legislation in British Columbia that officially recognized the Council of the Haida Nation as their government, at long last.

This is a significant step away from the colonial binds of the Indian Act, consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

Will Canada also recognize the Council of the Haida Nation as the government of the Haida?

• (1515)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his advocacy for the Council of the Haida Nation.

For 50 years, the Haida Nation has been on a journey toward self-governance. This recognition is long overdue and rightfully owed. Later today, I will have the opportunity to meet with the president of the Haida Nation, Gaagwiis Jason Alsop, to further his important work.

We will continue working to advance shared priorities and to strengthen our nation-to-nation relationship.

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CANADA-UKRAINE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT
IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed from February 5 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.

The Speaker: It being 3:16 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-57.

Call in the members.

• (1525)

[English]

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

(Division No. 627)

YEAS

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	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Jonas	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
DeBellefeuille	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Garon
Garrison	Gaudreau
Gazan	Gerretsen
Gill	Gould
Green	Guilbeault

Government Orders

Hajdu	Hanley	Brassard	Brock
Hardie	Hepfner	Calkins	Caputo
Holland	Housefather	Carrie	Chambers
Hughes	Hussen	Chong	Cooper
Hutchings	Iacono	Dalton	Dancho
Idlout	Ien	Davidson	Deltell
Jaczek	Johns	d'Entremont	Doherty
Joly	Jones	Dowdall	Dreeshen
Jowhari	Julian	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Kayabaga	Kelloway	Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Khalid	Khera	Falk (Provencher)	Ferreri
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk	Findlay	Gallant
Kwan	Lalonde	Généreux	Genuis
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux	Gladu	Godin
Lapointe	Larouche	Goodridge	Gourde
Lattanzio	Lauson	Gray	Hallan
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Hoback	Jeneroux
Lemire	Lightbound	Kelly	Khanna
Long	Longfield	Kitchen	Kmiec
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Kram	Kramp-Neuman
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor	Kurek	Kusie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Lake	Lantsman
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Lawrence	Lehoux
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
McGuinty	McKay	Lloyd	Lobb
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod	Maguire	Majumdar
McPherson	Mendès	Martel	Mazier
Mendicino	Miao	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Michaud	Miller	Melillo	Moore
Morrice	Morrissey	Morantz	Morrison
Murray	Naqvi	Motz	Muys
Ng	Noormohamed	Nater	Patzer
Normandin	O'Connell	Paul-Hus	Perkins
Oliphant	O'Regan	Poilievre	Redekopp
Pauzé	Perron	Reid	Rempel Garner
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon	Richards	Roberts
Powlowski	Qualtrough	Rood	Ruff
Rayes	Robillard	Scheer	Schmale
Rodriguez	Rogers	Seeback	Shields
Romanado	Rota	Shipley	Small
Sahota	Sajjan	Soroka	Steinley
Saks	Samson	Stewart	Strahl
Sarai	Savard-Tremblay	Stubbs	Thomas
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke	Tochor	Tolmie
Serré	Sgro	Uppal	Van Popta
Shanahan	Sheehan	Vecchio	Vidal
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Vien	Viersen
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné	Vis	Vuong
Singh	Sorbara	Wagantall	Warkentin
Sousa	Ste-Marie	Waugh	Webber
St-Onge	Sudds	Williams	Williamson— 116
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 — 214		

PAIRED

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 12 minutes.

• (1530)

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AUTO THEFT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is great to rise in this House after question period and see so many of my colleagues.

I would like to start my remarks by acknowledging the vote that just took place in the House of Commons in support of our friends and allies in Ukraine, the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian government. I am very proud to have voted yes on the free trade agreement. We should all be proud, as members of Parliament who voted yes and supported it. We will continue to support the brave men and women fighting against the unjustified, tyrannical Russian government that invaded Ukraine. We will continue to be there, much as the European Union was there for them this week in its €54-billion aid package. We will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukrainian people in Ukraine and the over 1.5 million Ukrainian Canadians who call Canada home. God bless them all.

I take the floor to discuss the important issue of auto theft, something the Government of Canada is deeply concerned about. Our government is addressing the issue, with over \$120 million in additional funding announced last week in the region of York; it is cracking down on repeat violent offenders through Bill C-48 and attacking organized crime through anti-money-laundering measures.

In addition, the government is playing a key role—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I ask for order, so we can actually hear what the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge is saying.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I think it applies to our side of the House on that one.

The government is playing a key role in bringing together partners and stakeholders from across Canada to consider new and meaningful solutions. No one level of government can expect to effectively address this issue on its own, nor can one agency or organization.

Later this week, on Thursday, the Minister of Public Safety will host a national summit on auto theft. He will be joined by the Minister of Justice; the Minister of Transport; the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry; and the President of the Treasury Board, along with numerous provincial counterparts, law enforcement officials and leaders of industry. They will discuss and ensure a coordinated response to this issue. We need all levels of government, including federal, provincial, regional and municipal, as well as partners in industry, auto manufacturers and policing to work together in a coordinated and focused way.

I was at York Regional Police headquarters last week with the Premier of Ontario; Chief MacSween, the police chief of York Region and the presiding president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police; the Minister of Justice; and the Minister of Public Safety to announce the investment of \$121 million targeting guns, gangs and auto theft. It is very important that we continue the work

Business of Supply

and support our frontline officers, which our government has done since day one, instead of and versus the cuts the prior administration brought in across the board, whether it was to border security or directed funding.

This is exactly the approach the federal government is leading on. I am very confident that it will result in meaningful and effective action to address this pernicious activity.

The motion before us proposes we change the law. I expect that this work will comprehensively examine our existing laws, from the investigative tools that police use to the scope of the existing offences and whether they clearly denounce the many ways in which auto theft occurs, including through the use of violence and carjackings, as well as the links between auto theft and organized crime. It is important to remember that our criminal laws in this space are quite broad and far-reaching.

We can take organized crime as an example. We know that the face of auto theft today in Canada involves organized crime. In the GTA, 251 vehicles were taken, put on containers on a ship and brought to the port of Calabria, in southern Italy, with the vehicles destined for the Middle East and Africa. That only happens through transnational organized crime working to do so. We will stamp this activity out. The game is over for these folks. The easy money is done, and we are coming after them.

We see repeated stories of cars being stolen in places such as Ontario, Quebec and my city of Vaughan. Within a matter of days, they are placed on cargo containers and shipped overseas, where they are received and sold. They are then found in destinations in Africa and the Middle East.

Canada's organized crime offences operate independently of underlying criminal conduct, as well as working in tandem with it. This means, for example, that a person is charged with our criminal organization offences independently of being charged with any other underlying offence. To illustrate, a person may be charged with participating in the activities of a criminal organization for scoping out potential cars to steal or committing an indictable offence for the benefit of, at the direction of or in association with a criminal organization. In other words, they can be charged for stealing the car for the benefit of the criminal organization.

As I mentioned, our organized crime laws work in tandem with other criminal offences. This means that, in addition to being charged with an organized crime offence, the person can be charged with the underlying criminal conduct: the actual theft. In cases where convictions are secured for both, the Criminal Code requires that the sentences imposed be served consecutively, back to back. The Criminal Code also makes clear that a conditional sentence is not possible in cases where an auto theft is prosecuted on indictment and linked to organized crime.

Business of Supply

It is important for all parliamentarians to recognize that we have a rich legal framework in place that already provides our police forces with strong tools. If more is to be done, I am confident that the work led by the Minister of Justice and his department will identify it.

I started my remarks by talking about the leadership the federal government is showing in this space. This is leadership in pursuing a strategy that will lead to success and meaningful action to prevent and respond to the rise in auto theft. I strongly support this approach, as it is far more likely to produce the results Canadians expect. In fact, through the first part of 2024, auto thefts in the GTA, and specifically in York Region, are down by over 20%. We are seeing a decline in auto thefts, going in the right direction. Ours is a comprehensive approach that starts with prevention and focuses on industry-specific enhancements, on operational improvements and, of course, on our legal responses.

• (1535)

None of these actions can work on its own to address the complex reality of auto theft; it seems to me that the focus of the motion fails to appreciate this. It is not about just throwing away the key and locking people up for years and years and determining laws to be unconstitutional; rather, it is about providing a holistic all-of-government approach working with industry and insurance to come up with the proper solutions, which they are doing. Currently, when a vehicle such as a Range Rover is purchased, insurance companies will require that a tracker be placed in the vehicle before it can be insured, which leads to a 75% reduction in auto thefts.

Leadership is about taking action and working collaboratively. Just last week, I joined the federal Minister of Public Safety, the federal Minister of Justice, the Premier of Ontario and provincial counterparts to announce a new investment of \$121 million to prevent gun and gang violence, including as it relates to auto theft. This is exactly what Canadians, including the residents of York Region and of my riding, expect: governments working together to implement real solutions to address these important issues. We are already seeing a double-digit decline in auto theft in the region of York.

Conservatives are offering nothing but unserious slogans that reduce complex criminal issues to childish political games. Their so-called plan includes measures that already exist in the Criminal Code, such as a mandatory minimum penalty for repeat auto thefts. Their suggestions are not rooted in evidence or research but are classic tough-on-crime Conservative scare tactics that do not keep communities safe.

We will continue to focus on solutions while they continue to try to scare Canadians. The government will continue to work with its partners to ensure that all necessary actions can be taken to better address auto theft. I call on all parliamentarians to similarly work in the spirit of collaboration to identify real solutions for the benefit of us all. It is imperative that, as parliamentarians, our number one responsibility be to keep our communities safe and to make sure our residents feel safe in our communities, including the residents of Vaughan—Woodbridge, whom I am proud to represent.

We know that in 2022-23, criminals understood they could make a lot of money by stealing fancy vehicles and shipping them overseas

post-COVID. We will put a stop to that. We are putting a stop to that. How do we do that? We do it by working with the insurance companies and the auto manufacturers. I am proud to lead the Liberal auto caucus in dealing with the auto manufacturers. I invite all Canadians, especially all the people of Ontario, to visit the auto show in the coming days to see the new vehicles and the new technology there.

We are working with our provincial counterparts and the Premier of Ontario to make key announcements and key investments in our justice system. The Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice will be overseeing where the laws are, where we need improved actions, where to add resources to our ports and so forth.

Finally, in the existing laws, there are mandatory minimums for auto theft that have been there for years, prior to our government. Of course we need to ensure that our residents are kept safe and that they feel safe in their communities, and we have taken action. For the first part of this year so far, car thefts are down over 20% in the region of York. We will see a further decline as the years go by.

I would say to the criminals out there that we know who they are and that we are going to come to get them. Our police resources will be able to do so.

• (1540)

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

After eight years of the Liberal government, we are continually left with the same rhetoric; it is all talk, no results. Here is the problem: Car thefts are rising, and now the government says it is going to have a summit. Then it tries to connect the dots with organized crime. With respect, I will inform my colleague that, as the Crown must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that organized crime is involved, there is an incredible hurdle to achieving that. The Liberals make it sound like it is no big deal, just like house arrest is no big deal.

There is a vehicle theft epidemic caused by the Liberals. When will they wake up and finally deal with the problem rather than having more meetings?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, my family and that of the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo have known each other for over six decades now in this beautiful country.

Auto theft is a very important and severe issue for Canadians, including the residents of my riding. We are undertaking action. We have invested the resources. We will host a national auto summit this Thursday. I have spoken to many of the participants. I look forward to welcoming the chief of police of York Region, Chief MacSween, who is coming up. I have had many conversations with the deputy chiefs of York Region over the last several months, not just several weeks. We were there last week with the Premier of Ontario investing funds.

As for organized crime, the learned member knows very well that Canada has tough laws on organized crime—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There needs to be an opportunity for other questions.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Drummond.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech. His ability to focus was amazing. It was incredible to hear the heckling in the House of Commons while my colleague was giving his speech. This is a Conservative motion. Perhaps the least the Conservatives could do to show a modicum of respect is listen to what other members have to say.

That being said, the Conservative motion is not completely meaningless. On the contrary, we agree with the principle, overall. However, some of the facts have been somewhat distorted.

There is something that has always bothered me a bit. It is the fact that things move around a lot at the border and at ports, in particular. There has always been an assumption that shipping goods through Canada's ports is pretty smooth and easy. It seems that the percentage of containers checked on their way in and out of ports, particularly in Montreal, is minimal.

I wonder if my colleague agrees with what the Conservatives are proposing, for example, the issue of checking containers leaving the port of Montreal. Does he think that this could be a useful tool to help combat auto theft, specifically?

• (1545)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. It is a very important one. I agree with what he said about the ports of Montreal and Vancouver.

[English]

Historically, under any government administration in Canada, we have done a really good job of checking inbound cargo to Canada. We need to do a better job of checking outbound cargo. That has traditionally been the mainstay and the way the CBSA has operated. We also need to provide more resources to CBSA officers to ensure that they have the tools, while we balance the efficiency of our ports to get containers in and out. That is the economic argument.

There is also a security provision; we need to ensure that we are checking enough containers and that we maintain the checking. Also, if individuals put tags in their vehicles, we will know where those vehicles are and we could get them.

Business of Supply

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was wondering whether my colleague across the way could put today's Conservative motion in the context of two things: first of all, the massive cuts to the Canada Border Services Agency in 2012 by the previous Harper government and, second, the December votes of the supplementary estimates, in which the Conservatives voted against important line item spending for both the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, it points to a certain level of hypocrisy. When the Conservatives were in power, they did cut over \$400 to \$500 million for CBSA frontline officers. Recently, on the supplementary estimates, they voted against funding for law enforcement agencies and the brave men and women who keep our communities safe. Whether it is in my hometown of Prince Rupert, where there is an RCMP detachment, or across this country, we hear again and again that the Conservatives are saying no to helping our frontline officers do their job day in and day out.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is really hard to be listening to the debate right now with the level of noise from the Conservative bench. It is like a coffee chat over there while we are trying to do some important work.

I would ask them to please listen.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I take notice. I called the House to order twice during the hon. member's speech. I remind members to be respectful of one another when someone is speaking.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

After eight years in power, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost, he is not worth the crime and he is not worth the cost of crime. After eight years with this Prime Minister in power, everything costs more, work no longer pays, housing costs have doubled, and crime, chaos, drugs and disorder are out of control.

I want to give an example from a CTV article. A 26-year-old man is facing a slew of charges filed by police officers in Bradford. Police say the suspect was arrested for stealing a vehicle at around 11 p.m. but was more or less automatically released on bail. That morning, he was arrested again at 4:30 a.m. for another theft. There will be a bail hearing. He will likely be released a second time to commit a third theft in less than 24 hours.

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We are hearing these sorts of stories after eight years of this Prime Minister because Bill C-75 gives automatic parole to chronic auto thieves. Even the bail reform the government presented under pressure from the Conservatives did not address auto theft. As a result, these same criminals can continue to commit hundreds of crimes, even if they are caught. It is no big deal if they are found guilty, because, under Bill C-5, they can serve their sentence in their living room, meaning they can watch Netflix or play a game while they wait to go out and steal another vehicle. That is why, after eight years of this Prime Minister, auto theft is up 300% in Toronto, 100% in Ottawa and Montreal and 100% in New Brunswick.

The government is releasing recidivists who terrorize our streets and then it helps them send stolen goods around the world to fund terrorism and organized crime. The ports are wide open to criminals. Even though the Prime Minister has spent billions of dollars on bureaucracy, we see that the Port of Montreal has only five border officers to inspect more than 500,000 containers. Less than 1% of the containers are inspected. They have a scanner that barely works. It is easy to see why theft has massively increased. Even after all of these increases, we see that the number of containers being intercepted is the same as it was eight years ago. There is more theft, more illegal exports, but more containers are not being intercepted. That does not make sense.

We did exactly the opposite when we formed the government: We cut the number of car thefts in half. That is a massive reduction that makes me proud. The Prime Minister likes to point out the fact that we did that by cutting costs. It is true, we cut costs and reduced crime at the same time. That is a good thing, a win-win, as the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles would say.

Today, I continued to present our common-sense plan. First, we will bring in three years of jail for three stolen cars. Second, we will end house arrest. Third, we will bring in harsher penalties for theft tied to organized crime. Finally, we will strengthen our ports.

• (1550)

We will do this by hiring 75 border officers to carry out inspections at Canada's four largest ports, namely, Vancouver, Halifax, Prince Rupert and, of course, Montreal. They will be able to use new scanners that can look into the boxes to see if they contain stolen goods. Each of those 24 scanners will be able to scan one million containers a year.

How are we going to pay for that? With a common-sense approach, dollar for dollar. We are going to cut \$165 million from the budget for external management consultants. We are going to get rid of consultants and put the money into boots on the ground and box scanners.

It is really very simple. We have a common-sense plan to stop auto theft by strengthening our ports and keeping thieves behind bars. That is just common sense.

[English]

After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. After eight years, he is not worth the crime. After eight years, he is not worth the cost of crime. Crime is costly, because after eight years of the Prime Minister, we are paying \$1 billion in higher insurance

premiums to pay for the stolen cars. In Ontario, that adds \$120 to the insurance bill of every family that has a car.

Let me tell the story that was on CTV News on December 27:

A 26-year-old man faces a slew of charges after police arrested him twice less than six hours apart for alleged crimes in Bradford and Innisfil.

Police said he was caught stealing a car at 11:00 p.m. on Sunday. They arrested and released him, and then he was arrested at 4:30 a.m. the very next morning. That was five hours after his last crime.

This is the new normal after eight years of the Prime Minister and his catch-and-release Bill C-75, which forced police to arrest the same 40 offenders 6,000 times in Vancouver and contributed to a 300% increase in auto theft in Toronto, 100% in Ottawa and Montreal, and over 100% in New Brunswick. It is crime, chaos, drugs and disorder.

If these repeat career car thieves are actually convicted, they do not have to worry about that either, because under the Prime Minister's Bill C-5, which has the full support of the NDP, they will have house arrest, meaning they can watch Netflix or play a game of Grand Theft Auto in their living room. Then they can get up whenever they say they need a few more bucks to fill their pockets, open the front door, walk out onto the street and steal another car. That car then goes to the port and is gone.

Our common-sense plan is very straightforward. We are going to get rid of house arrest for career car thieves. We are going bring in jail and not bail for people who have long rap sheets. We are going to bring in a mandatory three years' jail for three cars stolen. We are going to increase penalties if the stolen car was related to organized crime.

Then, we are going to reinforce our ports. I am going to cut \$165 million that we are now giving to management consultants, because if the managers over at CBSA cannot manage, they should not be managing; they should be fired. We will fire the management consultants, and we will put that money, \$135 million of it, into hiring 75 border agents who will use 24 new scanners that are able to scan a million shipping containers every year at our four biggest ports. If a stolen car is in there and there is a phony claim on the manifest, the scanner will show it. If someone calls saying, "Look out for my stolen car," the scanner will catch it. The box can be put aside. The car can be put back in the hands of the rightful owner.

In other words, our common-sense plan is to put boots on the ground, to scan the boxes and to put the career car thieves in jail. Our common-sense plan is to stop the crime and bring home safe streets. It is the common sense of the common people, united for our common home.

• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a few days ago this was not even an issue for the leader of the Conservative Party, but less than an hour ago, what we witnessed was the Conservative Party of Canada vote against speaking as one voice in favour of the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement.

I believe that the Conservative Party has done a great disservice to Ukraine and the whole idea of solidarity with Ukraine that has taken form around the world. I and so many other Canadians would like to understand the real reason the Conservative leader today voted against the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement.

How does he justify his actions today?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to remind the hon. member to be relevant to the speech the hon. Leader of the Opposition made.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, he knows it is not relevant and he does not care, because he does not care about Ukraine. He cares about using Ukrainians to distract from the car-theft crisis that his boss, the Prime Minister, has caused. The Prime Minister could not care less about Ukraine or any of the other distractions he brings up. He does it because he knows he cannot run on his miserable track record of doubling the cost of housing, sending a record-smashing two million people to food banks, quadrupling the carbon tax, leading to a 300% car-theft increase in just eight years in Toronto, and giving Halifax 30 homeless encampments. This kind of chaos and misery is a record no one wants.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, the Bloc Québécois agrees with quite a few aspects of this motion. I also find it very interesting because it appears to address an issue of mutual concern today to the Liberals and the Conservatives. I like that.

The Liberals are organizing a summit on auto theft. These thefts are a scourge, especially given the figures released in recent weeks. It is appalling, and we must take action. I could not agree more.

The Conservatives have made it the topic of their opposition day today. I think it is wonderful to finally see some agreement on the issues we are called on to debate in this place.

Since the Conservatives are proposing solutions and the Liberals are organizing a summit on Thursday, I would like to ask the Leader of the Opposition whether he intends to raise these representations at the Thursday summit to gain support for them. Will he attend?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, yes, I am going. I was not invited, but I will go anyway and share my common-sense ideas. I hope that, after eight years, they will learn, because I was

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part of the government that managed to reduce auto theft by 50% while reducing the cost of bureaucracy at the Canada Border Services Agency.

The Bloc voted in favour of Bill C-5, which allows sentences to be served at home, thereby enabling more crime. They voted in favour of Bill C-75, which allows for the automatic release of repeat car thieves. The Bloc also supports wasting money going after sport shooters and hunters, which takes money away from our border forces.

The Bloc supports all public safety policies. It makes no sense. Only the Conservative Party makes sense for Quebecers.

• (1600)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqagtittiji*, the NDP, I think, are quite well-known for trying to work with all parties to get things done, and we did try to work with the Conservative Party on this motion.

Why did the Conservatives vote against our amendments, for example, requiring auto manufacturers to improve security features in the cars they sell, and secondly, to put in place tough, new measures to crack down on organized crime and money laundering linked to auto thefts?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the member voted against her constituents by supporting the Prime Minister's ban on law-abiding, licensed, trained and tested firearms owners. She voted with her party to attack first nations hunters and other legitimate, law-abiding firearms owners, instead of going after the real criminals. She, like the Prime Minister, would take money away from border security and use it to harass licensed, law-abiding firearms owners in her own riding.

That is the shameful record of the NDP. Only the common-sense Conservatives will respect and honour our hunters, our anglers and our sport shooters and go after real criminals.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

There have been discussions among the parties and, if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

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That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, during the debate pursuant to Standing Order 66 on Motion No. 49 to concur in the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair and at the conclusion of the time provided for debate or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the motions be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred pursuant to Standing Order 66.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

It is agreed.

[Translation]

The House has heard the terms of the motion.

All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AUTO THEFT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to our opposition motion and a very serious subject. Auto theft is a problem that is happening right now, and I do not know whether my colleagues are aware of this, but Canada has the highest rate of auto theft in the world. We are the number one exporter of stolen vehicles. Is that something we want to see? No, not at all.

It is important to understand that auto theft is a big deal. It has gone up by 34% in Canada since this Prime Minister and his government came to power. Even worse, it has gone up by 300% in Toronto. In Montreal and the Ottawa-Gatineau region, it has gone up by more than 100%. It is up by 120% in New Brunswick and 122% overall in Ontario. One of the reasons we are seeing these numbers is that inflation has driven up the price of cars. Compared to last year, cars are worth 20% more. They are very attractive items. Nowadays, we are no longer talking about cars that were worth \$15,000 or \$20,000 back in the day. They now cost \$45,000 on average. The most desirable cars are in the \$60,000 to \$70,000 range. This means someone can steal a car and resell it for more than \$100,000, even as much as \$120,000, abroad. It is a very attractive market for organized crime and thieves.

This is causing stress. People are stressed right now. When they wake up in the morning or go to the grocery store, they wonder whether their car will be where they left it. Things cannot go on like this. Theft has a financial impact too. Last year, insurance companies paid out \$1 billion to settle claims by the owners of stolen cars. What comes next? All car owners end up paying more for insurance. Insurance companies have to cover their losses, so they raise premiums. Once again, in addition to inflation and rising rates everywhere, insurance premiums go up because auto theft is out of control.

The solutions for controlling auto theft are not limitless. Some things are easy to do. The government is not being called out for

nothing. Before I rose to speak, we heard from the Leader of the Opposition. For the past two days, he has been proposing concrete solutions to the problem. I would like to talk about the first two. First, there was Bill C-5, which was enacted. We criticized it from the start. We made every possible and impossible representation to say that it does not work. Here is a concrete example: People are convicted, but instead of going to prison like they should, they get to stay at home. What do we think these people are doing? They think nothing of it; they are criminals. They unapologetically go out and commit more crimes.

The other issue with Bill C-5 was minimum sentences. The government stood up and the justice minister said that the Conservatives were wrong. No, we are not wrong. Auto theft currently carries a six-month sentence. What we are saying, and we are not going too far, is that if the same person has stolen three cars and has been charged with three thefts, they should get a minimum of three years in jail. I think this is just common sense. When we talk about common sense, this is a perfect example. People are looking at this and wondering whether it is normal for a criminal to continue stealing with impunity, with no penalty other than to be sent home to watch Netflix. We said before that there was a problem with Bill C-5, and we are seeing it now. We are calling on the government to fix it and rework what was done with Bill C-5.

Then there is Bill C-75, which was implemented by the Liberals and has led to people being arrested and released in the same day. At times, it happens that someone is arrested in the morning, their case is processed and, after a few hours, they are released and continue to commit crimes. It is a vicious cycle. We do not want to exaggerate; we know that very few people are doing that. However, here is a really incredible statistic. In Vancouver, 40 criminals were arrested 6,000 times in one year. That is 150 times each. It is the same 40 people. There is a small number of them, but they commit a lot of crimes. Basically, what we want to do is prevent these individuals from being released again and again and from committing crimes over and over. The repercussions of Bill C-75 are being felt everywhere.

The same thing applies to the auto theft market. These people know that there are not really any consequences under the laws that have been put in place by the Liberals. They will get arrested, go to the station to deal with a little charge and then they will be back on the street. It does not bother them. It is as though they are not afraid, they have no fear. They know they will be able to carry on doing whatever they feel like doing.

● (1605)

Let us talk about the technical aspect. Take, for example, the Port of Montreal. There are only five border agents to inspect the some 580,000 containers that leave the port each year, and they only have one scanner. I had the opportunity to visit the facilities there, and I saw that this big arch-shaped scanner does not always work and it is not really effective. Sooner or later, the port is going to need effective state-of-the-art equipment to get the job done right.

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I want to come back to our Liberal friends. What have they been doing in the meantime, over the past several years? The Prime Minister wasted \$15 million on management consultants for the CBSA. That was useless. He also spent \$54 million on the failed Arrive-CAN app, and the RCMP is even investigating that contract. What is more, the Liberals did not spend the \$117 million that was approved by Parliament.

It is much like the support for Ukraine. Our colleagues like to talk to us about Ukraine. What is being done with the \$406 million we voted on and was announced with great fanfare to buy anti-aircraft systems for Ukraine? Absolutely nothing has been done about it in a year. What is happening with the 83,000 decommissioned air-to-surface missiles that are warehoused in Manitoba? As Conservatives, we said they need to be given to Ukraine. Ukraine sent a letter asking for them. We said we needed to send them. This is war, it is urgent, but, no, they are asleep across the way. That is another file.

The fact is that the Liberals are good at making accusations, but today we are here to work on things that are happening here, in Canada, things for which immediate action is needed and expected.

What we are asking for is not complicated. As I said earlier, there is the legislation stemming from Bill C-5. There is a way to fix at least that part of that law, which actually covers many types of crimes. I introduced Bill C-325, which would fix the problems in that law. Obviously, it was not accepted by the Liberals or the NDP. I thank my friends in the Bloc Québécois who understood me and supported me on this.

What we are asking for today has to do specifically with auto theft. There is a way to amend the law to deter crime. First, we need to actually incarcerate criminals. More importantly, we need to discourage those who are considering becoming car thieves. Those are some of the things that we need to do. People will see that and think to themselves that it is better not to get involved in auto theft. I was saying earlier that the vehicles are worth tens of thousands of dollars. Auto theft benefits organized crime and those on the other side of the ocean who buy the vehicles, but the thieves themselves are not paid very well, even though they are the ones who are taking all the risks. If we were to target them, to make young people understand that it is not a good idea to enter a life of crime because they will end up in prison, then that would be more effective than what is currently being done.

The Conservatives get it. The Liberals did not do it, but when we take power, we are going to remove the right to house arrest. There will be no more Netflix sentences.

We are going to create a new aggravating circumstance when the offence of motor vehicle theft is committed for the benefit of organized crime. This is important, because we must stop encouraging organized crime, and that starts with tackling the root cause.

We will repeal the arrest and release rules in Bill C-75 to ensure that repeat offenders are jailed and not released on bail.

We will fire the useless management consultants at CBSA and take that money to properly equip federal ports. We will invest in state-of-the-art X-ray equipment to enable rapid scanning of con-

tainers at our major ports in Vancouver, Montreal, Prince Rupert and Halifax.

A total of 24 scanners will be purchased. Canada's four largest ports have a combined total of 12 terminals that handle container shipping. All of these terminals allow for goods to be transported by truck and rail, and each requires its own scanner and operator. The total cost for the 24 scanners is \$55 million, with an ongoing service agreement of \$300,000 per scanner, or \$7.2 million per year.

Let us talk about spending. Two days ago, our leader presented very clear proposals. He demonstrated how a Conservative government might make "investments", as the Liberals like to say. Well, it takes money to do that. We have solutions for finding wasteful spending. We will be able to recover that money and invest it in immediate needs to ensure the safety of Canadians and put an end to auto theft and the too-easy shipping of stolen cars to the rest of the world.

● (1610)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had a meeting recently in my riding of Saint John—Rothesay with CBSA officers and I was shocked to learn that in 2011-12, the party opposite cut almost 1,100 jobs. That would be like the mayor of Saint John cutting hundreds of jobs out of the police force and then wondering why crime went up. The Conservatives were also going to cut another 400 jobs if they had been re-elected in 2015. As of 2022-23, we have restored every single job cut by the Conservatives and have added an additional 884, getting more boots on the ground to protect our borders.

I am wondering if the member opposite could explain the reason for the cuts and if he understands that those cuts resulted in the situation we have today.

● (1615)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I see that is the question of the day and I will answer it with a question.

Why, under the Conservative government, did auto theft go down by 50%? Why were there no problems at the border? Why did we not need resources from the Border Services Agency to go to Roxham Road, for example, after the Prime Minister's famous tweet that invited everyone to enter Canada?

The Liberals created these situations by relaxing the Criminal Code, by showing criminals how easy it was to do whatever they wanted and by inviting people to enter Canada by Roxham Road. Obviously that required a lot more resources.

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What we are asking is for is a return to common sense. It is common sense to go back to a solid Criminal Code that will not tempt people to become criminals because they know they will end up in prison. Common sense will also lead to lower crime rates, which means there will be enough resources.

For now, we have to fix the problem that has been created by eight years of this government.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees with the principle of the motion. We spoke out against rising auto theft at the port of Montreal before the Conservatives.

We think they are taking liberties with the logic underpinning today's motion. They are taking shortcuts that distort reality. For example, claiming that Bill C-5 is responsible for the increase in auto theft since 2015 is clearly false, because the bill came into force at the end of 2022, and 2022 was a record year for auto theft.

They say they do not agree with the six-month minimum sentence for a third offence, but they are the ones who brought it in with section 333.1, which was added to Bill S-9 in 2010 under the Conservative government.

We do agree that the Port of Montreal and the Canada Border Services Agency do not have the resources to really check containers and do their job.

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

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, the Bloc Québécois members initially voted in favour of Bill C-5, but then realized that it was creating problems. They changed their minds and supported my bill, Bill C-325, and I thank them once again.

As far as resources are concerned, the Leader of the Opposition made our case in Montreal this morning. I was with him. We went to the port of Montreal to make a clear, costed announcement that really showed how we could invest properly in equipping the ports and the Canada Border Services Agency. One part of the announcement was about purchasing equipment to scan containers, while at the same time, saving money by eliminating wasteful spending on consultants and things like ArriveCAN. Basically, all these kinds of expenses are completely useless.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it seems, upon observation of the Conservative Party these days, that it is guided in its policy by two principles: one, it has to rhyme, which is why we see the words “axe” and “tax” and “bail” and “jail”, and, two, it has to fit on a bumper sticker. This is a fundamentally unserious way of dealing with a very serious issue, and I will give a clear example. My colleague asked a question of the Leader of the Opposition and instead of answering her directly, he switched tactics and attacked her because this is an unserious party.

New Democrats put forward a very reasonable amendment to this motion and I wonder why the Conservatives do not think we should have a requirement that manufacturers improve the security on the vehicles they manufacture and why we should not have mea-

sures in place to crack down on organized crime and money laundering that is key to auto theft. Why will the Conservatives not agree to that very reasonable amendment to their motion?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, quite honestly, I do not know what my colleague is talking about. I am not familiar with the amendment. I do not want to give him an empty answer or say something stupid. If I had an answer, I would give it to him, but I do not.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Public Services and Procurement; the hon. member for Calgary Centre, Carbon Pricing; the hon. member for Kenora, Indigenous Affairs.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will take this opportunity to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for St. Catharines.

We are discussing an important matter today. It is interesting the Conservatives have decided to bring up in this way, through an opposition motion, rather than putting serious and constructive measures on the table whether at committee or in other places. Be that as it may, we are discussing it.

I agree with the fact that car theft is an issue in this country. It needs to be taken very seriously, and we are acting in that vein. I will mention a little later the national summit that is upcoming. This is a very good way and a example of co-operation that meets the moment in the regard.

What we also see is a need for us to listen to Canadians and understand where they are coming from on this issue. There is a natural connection, a very logical understanding, that says government has a fundamental responsibility to be there for people and to protect them against many things, and that includes securing their property. When theft happens, there is a violation of that trust.

Anytime that takes place in our communities, and I have talked to constituents who have unfortunately experienced this, governments have to answer. It is not only the federal government that has to answer but all levels of government have to come together. I hope to see more of that in the coming days, months and beyond as we talk more about this issue.

We rely at the federal level on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It works to counter organized crimes. It works with international and domestic partners in this, of course. If it is the police of jurisdiction where car theft takes place, and we know the RCMP does have this role through different parts of the country, it is the police force on the ground, investigating those thefts. Fundamentally, it plays, and this is something not terribly understood by the wider public, a key role in information sharing, gathering that vital data with respect to auto theft and sharing it with local police so investigations can take place and that outcomes to theft can benefit the victim of crime.

We have the CBSA that works at our border to do many things. In respect to auto theft, it intercepts shipments that may contain stolen cars. That is fundamental work. I thank the RCMP, the CBSA and their public servants for carrying it out.

Where I find difficulty, and I alluded to this in the opening remarks I made but will repeat it here, is in the hypocrisy of the Conservatives' approach. They are well within their right to raise an opposition motion of this kind, but they do so with a record. When they were in government, they made enormous cuts the member for Saint John—Rothesay brought up just now, that devastated the CBSA, cuts we are still feeling the effects of. A thousand public servants were cut from the CBSA.

What the Conservatives have made clear is they would introduce further cuts. In fact, if elected again they made clear they want to cut another 400 jobs. They want to go back to the failed promise of theirs in the lead-up to the 2015 election that would have seen 400 public servants leave the CBSA. I am not sure how that makes the country more safe. Everybody has a role to play here. Every level of government has a role to play. At the federal level we do rely on the CBSA, and when cuts take place obviously the country is less safe. That is why it was so important for the federal government to restore those jobs that were lost.

Conservatives want to introduce other cuts as well. Members will indulge me here for a moment, but it is not out of place for me to say that in keeping with their approach to rushing to a balanced budget, it is important to ask them what else they would cut. They want to cut the CBSA. They want to cut funding to the RCMP, no doubt. There are pensions, employment insurance and funding for dental care and child care. All of this comes together and is part of an unfortunate pattern that puts austerity at the very heart of the Conservative agenda.

We have to be non-partisan on these issues. I certainly believe that and will continue to believe that, but I think I can be forgiven for saying in this debate there is a place for us to look at the record of the Conservative Party members when they were in government to understand the sincerity of their current approach and the sincerity they have, or do not have, frankly, when dealing with this very important issue, an issue every member of Parliament is affected by because their constituents are affected by it. I will not stand here and say I have not heard about this issue in my community. Of course I have, and that is why the government's approach to convene an effort at co-operation, and the summit is an example of that, is quite important.

• (1620)

I mentioned the RCMP already, but I think I will repeat it, because along with discussions of auto theft comes, at the federal level, certainly a natural focus on the CBSA, but also the RCMP. However, the Conservatives cut funding for the RCMP and they never like to own up to that. I think it is very important to understand that the party across the way, the party that has presented this opposition motion, the party that so often wraps itself in the flag and a discourse of law and order, in fact acted counter to law and order, and therefore counter to the needs, interests and concerns of Canadians.

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When this Liberal government came into office in 2015, it supported the CBSA and restored those jobs that were lost, as I said, and supported the work of the RCMP, and will continue to do so. The police play a vital role in our communities where the RCMP is the police of jurisdiction. Obviously, that has even more impact with respect to what we can say at the federal level about the importance of the organization. However, it is also important to recognize, as I said before, the need to summon together different parties: the federal government, provincial governments, municipal governments, the RCMP, the CBSA and the private sector, of course, which is also fundamental, because the private sector does have a role to play in all of this.

I heard my colleague across the way in the NDP raise a good question about the obligations that could exist on the part of the auto companies to help in all of this. I think it is a question that is quite relevant. I did not hear my colleague opposite in the Conservative Party actually answer the question, but it does merit further consideration: What further role can the private sector play in this? It is not just about government responding. In fact, if we are going to see a meaningful and effective outcome in all of this, the private sector will have to be front and centre not only in discussions but certainly in the action to follow.

In closing, I very much hope that we do see action come out of what is a pan-Canadian approach. This is the summit that will be taking place in just a few days. I know that there is great interest in this right across the country. I saw the federal government combined with the provincial government in Ontario move ahead with the summit, or to certainly announce it, and what do we see? We see a serious discussion materializing at the federal, provincial and municipal levels following this development, and I will be watching as will other MPs.

We have more work to do, but I look forward to this evolving and taking part wherever I can to help the government and therefore Canadians and my constituents in responding to this critical issue at this time.

• (1625)

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

I thank my hon. colleague for his speech, and I commend him for the fact that he did not read a speech that may or not have been prepared by someone else.

After eight years of this Liberal government, we have crime that is essentially, for all intents and purposes, out of control. What we have seen from this government is a lack of leadership, and here is why. We are always, as a country, responding to problems, and here we have another time that this government is responding. However, there has been zero proactivity when it comes to crime or when it comes to people on bail. We wait until bad things happen and then we react. On auto theft, we wait until bad things happen and then we react. Here we are again with a summit after auto theft is up over 34%. Is this just not emblematic of a government that is tired after eight years and has lost the plot?

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Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, first of all, I will say to my hon. colleague that I did prepare the speech myself. I am not sure if his notes came from the opposition leader's office, but I did see that he spoke off the cuff and therefore I am going to make the assumption, I will be charitable, that he came up with the question, and as a former prosecutor, I certainly hope that he did.

In fact, to go back to that, the member was a prosecutor and certainly would have seen the effects of the Conservative Party's cuts with respect to the CBSA and the RCMP, and also the many social cuts that it made, such as cuts to various programs that youth relied on. I think that is relevant in the discussion too.

I will repeat that it is a party that wraps itself in the flag, wraps itself in a discourse of law and order, but does not present any serious solution to what is admittedly a serious issue, a serious problem in this country, and is not to be taken seriously at all.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, once again, we have a situation where one party is pointing fingers at the other, and then that party just points fingers back. One says it has a better solution, and the other says the opposite. Eventually, everyone points fingers at our party.

That said, prevention is always a good thing. Have mistakes been made in the past? Yes, mistakes may have been made in the past when prevention measures were eliminated. We know that these prevention measures were eliminated. We know that these are good measures, including adding more CBSA officers. That is a good preventive measure.

Why not implement that right away, without waiting for the results of another meeting of discussions and consultations? We are aware of possible solutions. We can move forward. Why not go ahead and follow some of the same approaches that have worked in the past?

• (1630)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, our colleague is wondering why we need to have a meeting now and why the government is taking this approach. It is interesting to hear a Bloc member say that, because the Bloc is always talking in the House about the importance of co-operation between the federal, provincial—Quebec in particular—and municipal governments throughout Canada. In this case, however, she is saying that we need to take immediate action.

[English]

It does not make sense. I think that we have to engage all levels that are involved in the issue in order to come to a solution.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I just want to touch on an issue that was brought up by the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. He was talking about being proactive versus reactive.

My issue is that most of this motion deals with the Criminal Code, which is fundamentally a very reactive piece of legislation, in that it is brought to bear after the fact. I have a greater interest in being more proactive in heading off the problem before it becomes too large an issue.

We know that people do not just wake up one day and decide to steal a car. There are a lot of different circumstances and a lot of provisions in the Criminal Code that allow judges to mete out the appropriate sentence based on the individual crime.

What could the government be doing more of, proactively, to prevent the crime from happening in the first place rather than relying solely on a reactive element like the Criminal Code?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my colleague, because he always offers constructive ideas and has something important to say every time he speaks.

I know that he has spoken in the past about the importance of making sure that we are investing in youth programs as a preventative measure. I think that has a place in this conversation but I also take very seriously the idea that criminals should be punished for the crimes that they commit. Therefore, I follow with great interest what the summit will produce on that score. The government did move ahead with legislation that did advance that. I want to see more on that.

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I only hope that I can speak half as well as the other Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities. That is my goal. It is aspirational. It is a very high bar, but I will do my best.

We all know auto theft is impacting more and more Canadians. In doing so, it is undermining public confidence and feelings of safety. A serious conversation is best needed to address this issue, as we owe it to our constituents to ensure we propose a meaningful impact for solutions in this area.

That is why I was disappointed yesterday to see unserious proposals coming from the Leader of the Opposition. His alleged reforms would be to do things that are already being done and would have no practical effect. We know that criminal law is not always the best solution here. We are focused on improving enforcement and working with manufacturers to increase security for vehicles. This Thursday, we are bringing together federal, provincial and municipal governments, law enforcement and industry to discuss how we can combat auto theft.

The Conservatives, and I think the Bloc just momentarily, are saying these are empty gestures, but it is an understanding of the complexity of this issue. The Conservatives think that, magically, we will change the Criminal Code, and this will disappear. They have even said they would repeal some of the provisions we have brought forward, which I believe have been to actually increase sentencing for auto theft, which again shows how unserious and slogan-based the Conservative Party is.

However, we are bringing together all people at the table. The face of auto theft varies from place to place in Canada, and what we know about auto theft is different from what it may have been 30 or even 10 years ago. According to available data, Ontario, Quebec and Alberta are the jurisdictions most impacted by auto theft, but the circumstances facing these jurisdictions differ. For instance, Alberta vehicles are being stolen for parts or resale domestically after having their vehicle identification numbers, or VINs, replaced. In Ontario and Quebec, we know that certain cars are targeted for theft so that they can be shipped to overseas markets in Africa or the Middle East. This activity is mining the pockets of transnational organized crime.

Make no mistake; transnational organized crime activity is big business. I was astounded to read about the scale. Even in data reported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime from 2009, it was estimated that \$870 billion, annually, was being generated by transnational organized crime. We can all imagine that number is much larger today. That number is staggering and far exceeds the GDP of most countries around the world.

We need to think about what that means. Money in the hands of organized crime, including money generated by auto theft, can be used to facilitate other criminal activity, like drug trafficking, people trafficking and migrant smuggling. Therefore, in the fall economic statement we proposed a number of measures to combat money laundering in Canada. Those measures would target organized crime in Canada and, in turn, would have an effect in combatting auto theft.

However, the Conservatives are opposing legislation, slowing it down at every turn. Even in the committee I sit on, the committee on public safety, the Conservatives are filibustering legislation to deal with cybercrime and cyber-activity to prevent us from getting to a study on auto theft. They talk a good game. Again, it is slogans. They get angry and pound the table, but when it comes to actually doing something and listening to experts, Conservatives are nowhere to be found. They are even filibustering legislation that I think they support, and the odd time we get to hear from a witness, cyber-activity is funding these same types of criminals.

Again, when it comes down to taking action on crime and protecting Canadians, it is crickets from the Conservative caucus. Maybe “crickets” is not the proper word, since there are lengthy filibusters, but I think the analogy still holds.

It is truly unfortunate to see all this legislation being slowed down. It is unfortunate to see the Conservatives voting against funding the police. We know, when they were in power, that they cut the RCMP, and they cut 1,000 officers from CBSA, and we are struggling to get back at it. It takes years. It takes time. The Leader of the Opposition the other day boasted about more cuts coming and that they can do more with less. I do not think that is what Canadians want to hear, that the Conservative Party is going to, once again, like it historically has done, cut police.

● (1635)

That is not what Canadians want to hear when there is a situation that needs to be addressed, but that is what the Conservatives are offering. They will change the Criminal Code in the hopes that it will do something, and cut frontline policing. They have voted

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against it at every turn. They are showing us what they are going to do by voting against it.

It is also interesting at the public safety committee to hear Conservative members beat the drum on American-style criminal law. That is a great thing for them to bring forward, but when I ask, time after time, if they could point me to a place that has enacted those types of laws in the United States that have made those communities safer. It is great for them to tell their constituents that they are going to bring these things in, but we can see the laboratory down south. We can look across the border and see that it has not worked. Again, it is empty rhetoric that is not going to do anything.

Our government is committed to the work of public safety. As I mentioned, this Thursday, ministers responsible from across Canada, will join federal counterparts and leaders of law enforcement to consider the impacts of auto theft here in Canada and to identify the ways to work together. The federal government is showing leadership in this space by convening this urgent meeting. As the Minister of Public Safety said, “Collaboration is the key to identifying solutions.”

The Bloc and the Conservatives can disagree and say that we should take action without listening to the experts and without understanding the complexity of crime. There is a place for the federal government. It needs to be there. However, there needs to be a place for the provinces, which oversee policing, and it is the same for municipalities; they need to work together. We are there.

We made a big announcement with the premier of the Province of Ontario, in terms of money to help curb guns and gangs and to go after organized crime. Again, the federal government is taking action. What does the Conservative Party of Canada do? It votes against that money, and that is truly shocking.

I have said before that the sole component of the Conservative Party environmental plan is recycling slogans. It really is in full gear when Conservatives talk about criminal justice, but there is nothing to back it up. It is just empty words. When it comes time to answer questions, they are nowhere to be found. They are a completely unserious party on this particular issue.

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I would like to note that we already have an extremely robust criminal law framework to address auto theft. This legal framework includes specific offences that target auto theft and related activity. It includes things like tampering with vehicle identification numbers, possessing items used to break into a vehicle or using computer systems to intercept car fob signals in order to steal a vehicle. In fact, the Liberal government, in 2019, raised the maximum penalty on summary conviction for theft of motor vehicles to two years. The previous government had it at 18 months, I believe.

Would members like to know what legislation the government did this with? It was Bill C-75, the very legislation the Conservative Party leader is proposing to repeal. I am surprised he wants to lower penalties for those who steal motor vehicles. Again, it is empty slogans. His plans are unserious. The Conservative Party is unserious when it comes to public safety.

The Criminal Code prohibits possession of stolen cars for the purpose illegally exporting them. Sentencing courts have the ability to impose significant penalties in cases where organized crime is involved. Sentencing courts must impose penalties that reflect the seriousness of the offences and the responsibility of the offender. Sentencing courts cannot impose conditional sentences for auto theft when prosecuted on indictment or committed for organized crime. Again, this flies in the face of the empty promises from the Leader of the Opposition. Serious criminals cannot and should not get house arrest. This is what the law says.

Again, we hear some heckling that it is incorrect, but that is the fact. That is in the legislation that they, with their slogans, say they are going to repeal to actually make it easier for criminals to get away with it. Conservatives want to lower sentences, and they are laughing.

● (1640)

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo is laughing while he is heckling. He thinks this is a funny joke, which is what he just said. It is truly a disappointing and unserious party, the Conservative Party of Canada.

We are going to get action done. We are taking action on this file.

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

I will say this much. Sometimes, people say really funny things, and my colleague just said something very funny. Perhaps it was because the speech was just not that compelling.

At the end of the day, the member has spoken all about what they have done about auto theft. I will remind him that Bill C-75 did not just raise the sentence, as though he is saying that we are targeting auto theft. It was actually two years less a day that it raised it on summary conviction. It raised every summary conviction to two years less a day. The Liberal government can say that it is targeting this time after time.

There is an epidemic here, and I want to know this: Will the member admit, fundamentally, what police and citizens across the country are telling us, that there is a problem?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I cannot believe that the hon. member is criticizing us for increasing the summary conviction penalty across the board in the Criminal Code. That is their criticism that he wants repealed. They say we are soft on crime. I am surprised that the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, as a former prosecutor, would stand in the House and talk about making it easier on criminals.

We cannot make this up, but he just gets up. He should go back to listening to his colleague and laughing in this place, because that was just a joke.

● (1645)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is possible to do two things at once. I will clarify my previous question to ensure the member understands. Obviously, consultation and coordination are essential when it comes to an issue as serious as auto theft, and crime in general. That said, there used to be preventative measures in place, but they were removed. Everyone knows that they are preventative measures. They have never been reinstated. We should be perfectly capable of considering their reinstatement while also discussing, coordinating and consulting.

Why do my colleagues think we cannot do two things at once?

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comment. I do think we can walk and chew gum at the same time, perhaps myself not always so well.

The government is addressing these things. The government is focused on poverty. It is focused on gangs. It is focused on finding activities for young people and funding those programs. We can do multiple things. Though the member from Kamloops wants to repeal stronger sentences against criminals, we want that to stand. We can do multiple things at the same time. The government is taking this seriously, working with provincial leaders, working with the Province of Quebec, to find a solution to this crisis.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, as I listen to the interventions and think back to the effectiveness of the NDP in this 44th Parliament, I think about, for example, what the MP for Vancouver East and I have done in securing \$4 billion over seven years for urban, rural and northern housing. I think about the member of Parliament for Winnipeg Centre who got unanimous consent by all of Parliament that residential schools are a form of genocide.

Having said that, I am struck by the fact that there are 24 Liberal MPs who represent Toronto and the general area of Toronto alone. What I am asking is this: Why have they failed to take action to stop criminals from stealing cars?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Nunavut for her concern about southern Ontario. The members of the Toronto caucus have been very vocal and, again, have been behind many of the items and legislation the Liberal government has brought forward.

I know the Conservative Party wants to repeal tougher sentences for those who steal cars, but at the end of the day, this is something I know Toronto members have stood strongly on. As a member from southern Ontario, I have stood strongly on it. Perhaps the member for Nunavut should consult with members from the 416 area before asking such questions.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Nunavut, who is entitled to the same rights and privileges we all have in this place was just insulted by the previous speaker, a parliamentary secretary for the Liberal Party. I believe that the member should apologize for demeaning her and her right to intervene in this place.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): If the hon. member for Nunavut wants to raise a point of order, it is her right.

The hon. member for Nunavut.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, I would indeed like to rise on that same point of order because I am quite offended that I am being told that I might not be smart enough or might not have the level of information that I need to be able to ask smart questions. I did point to the effectiveness of what the NDP has done and pointed to the difference between that and what the Liberals have not done. The member did not answer my question in this manner.

• (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I have heard the parliamentary secretary speak to and answer many questions. I can assure the member that there was in no way an attempt to be personal on the question or to be—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are getting into debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, just to clarify, I did directly answer the question of the member for Nunavut when she said that Toronto members were doing nothing about this. I stood up for Toronto members, as that was insulting to them. It is debate. I just responded that the member should speak to Toronto members about their actions. If she took offence at that, I do apologize.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, I find it difficult to accept that apology because I do not think it is a sincere one.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I do not think we can dispute the sincerity of a member's sentiments when they express an apology, and I believe the hon. member did so.

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Resuming debate, the hon. member for Brantford—Brant has the floor.

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Imagine someone waking up in their home, their castle, where they should feel safe at all times, pouring their morning cup of coffee and looking out the window at their driveway, only to realize that their prize possession, their family vehicle that was parked there the night before, is now gone. After eight years of the Prime Minister, this has become a situation all too common for Canadians.

We have heard other stories of victims being robbed in parking lots and in front of their homes, some held at gunpoint in broad daylight. We will remember the story of Toronto Maple Leafs' Mitch Marner being held at gunpoint while his vehicle was stolen. Others have had criminals break into their homes searching for the keys to their vehicles.

According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, on average, more than 200 vehicles are stolen every day, meaning that a car is stolen almost every six minutes in Canada. I cannot do the quick math, but members can imagine the number of vehicles stolen since the start of this debate. During my 10 minutes of debate and five minutes of questions and comments, another three vehicles will have been stolen. This is the result of the failed approach of the Prime Minister's soft-on-crime agenda.

How did we get here? We got here due to a number of important decisions made by the Prime Minister and his government, starting with Bill C-75, which allowed repeat offenders to get bail, often within hours of their initial arrest, and reoffend multiple times, sometimes on the same day, leaving police powerless to stop car thieves. Then, after criminals are convicted, the Prime Minister's reckless Bill C-5 allows them to serve their sentences in the comfort of their own homes. We all know that those who serve conditional sentences are not monitored on a regular basis, so repeat car theft offenders, while serving their sentences at home, are out on the streets creating more havoc and stealing more cars.

I have said many times in the House that criminals in this country are laughing at the government. They love the soft-on-crime approach. We all know Canada is now a haven for car thieves, for organized crime to thrive, for money laundering and human trafficking. That is the legacy the Prime Minister is leaving for Canadians.

After eight years of his soft-on-crime policies, the Prime Minister has created an auto theft crisis in Canada. Auto theft in the GTA alone is up 300% since he took office. Additionally, statistics tell us that, since he formed government, auto theft is up 190% in Moncton, 122% in Ottawa-Gatineau, over 106% in Montreal and over 60% in Winnipeg.

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It is the responsibility of the federal government to reduce auto theft as the primary prevention tools, including the Criminal Code, the RCMP, the CBSA and our port systems, are all under the federal government's jurisdiction. However, as a result of the mismanagement of these prevention tools, organized crime has taken over our ports, turning them into parking lots for stolen vehicles, which are then shipped overseas.

The port of Montreal, a major hub for stolen vehicles to be shipped out of Canada, only has five CBSA agents to inspect the over 580,000 containers that leave the port each year. According to *Le Journal de Montréal*, one law enforcement agent said the CBSA has no resources to check containers and they check less than 1%, making it clear that the increase in auto theft is directly related to Liberal mismanagement. It is costing Canadians far too much.

In places such as Ontario, insurance companies are set to increase premiums by 25% this year. As reported by *Équité*, it is estimated that \$1 billion in vehicle theft claims were paid out in the year 2022 alone, and these costs are being passed down to drivers.

● (1655)

What is the Liberal plan? We have been hearing about this great summit, where all the stakeholders are going to gather and talk about the problem and the solutions. Maybe in another two years from now, we might see solutions.

As per our foreign affairs minister, she proudly announced to the whole world that Canada is known for convening. That is all we hear about with the government. There is meeting after meeting, summit after summit, and no action.

To stop the increase in crime rates and reduce auto theft, today Conservatives are calling on the government to immediately reverse the changes to the Liberal government's soft-on-crime Bill C-5, which allowed for car-stealing criminals to be on house arrest instead of in jail. We want to strengthen the Criminal Code provisions to ensure repeat car-stealing criminals remain in jail, following the principles of both general and specific deterrents in the Criminal Code, and provide the Canada Border Service Agency and our ports with the resources they need to prevent stolen cars from leaving the country.

I asked the vice-president of inspections of the CBSA today at committee how he could explain having only five agents. He said that the CBSA does not have the resources or the funding, and that if it had to inspect every container, our trade system would completely shut down. That is small comfort to victims of auto theft crime in this country, but it is a pleasing announcement for the thieves out there because, not only are our cars being shipped abroad, but also we are accepting containers from countries in Asia loaded with deadly drugs such as carfentanil and fentanyl, which are poisoning our Canadians.

As the member for Brantford—Brant, I can speak to these issues personally, as my community has had over 600 vehicles stolen between the years of 2022 and 2023 alone for a population of just under 100,000 people. Sadly, it does not have the necessary funds to put into fighting car theft.

We heard from the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada numerous times. The justice minister can speak all he wants about how he and his Liberal colleagues are hitting organized crime where it hurts, “funding the fight against crime” and “working with police, provinces [and] ports”, but the facts are the facts. He cannot change the fact that over 80,000 vehicles were stolen in Canada in the past year alone.

The minister and his Liberal colleagues have consistently taken a dismissive stance on pressing issues. Just last summer, they brushed off concerns about rising crime rates, suggesting that Canadians were imagining the problem.

What is our solution? The Prime Minister's reckless policies have caused an explosion of car thefts and made our communities dangerous, and the only action he has taken to fix this mess is to hold a summit. We do not need another summit. We need a common-sense plan to stop the theft and the crime.

The solution is simple. It is the first plank of our Conservative plan to hit the brakes on car theft. To combat this Liberal oversight, Conservatives will go after the real criminals by restoring jail, not bail; increasing mandatory jail time; ending house arrest for car thieves; and increasing sentences for gang-associated car thieves.

This is a pressing and urgent matter that Public Safety has a mandate to review thoroughly. Canadians cannot wait for the summit to produce results. It is time for the government to move beyond conferences, meetings, announcements and press conferences, join Conservatives and show up for Canadians.

I call on all members of the House to support our motion. Help us put the brakes on auto theft once and for all, protect our communities and bring home safer streets for all Canadians. That is just common sense.

● (1700)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have to point out the unbelievable hypocrisy here. The member opposite talks about lack of resources when it was the Conservatives who cut 1,100 jobs out of the CBSA. They talk about lack of resources, and they were going to cut another 400 more.

It has to be mentioned again that Conservatives talk about lack of resources, but they voted against \$1.5 billion in funding for the CBSA, which included \$1.44 billion for operating and \$197 million for capital expenditures. They voted against \$2.7 billion for the RCMP. That is like a municipality cutting its budget for the police and then lamenting that crime has gone up.

My question for the member opposite is this: How can he explain Conservatives voting against funding for the CBSA and the RCMP?

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, listening to that very carefully, one would almost think that this Liberal government had been in power for maybe one to two years and that it could reflect on the previous Conservative administration.

When are the Liberals going to move beyond blaming all of the ills of this country on former prime minister Harper?

Why do they not also go back to the Brian Mulroney years? They have had eight years to fix this mess, eight years. They have increased the public service by 40%, and they do not do a damn thing to increase confidence among Canadians.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, yes, it is quite troubling.

I agree with my colleague that the Liberals have done nothing, that they have been lax since 2015, and that the Bloc Québécois, and particularly my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, even raised this issue last year.

However, I find it a bit ironic to hear the Conservatives worrying about the number of employees at the Canada Border Services Agency, considering an auditor's report dating back to 2015 and 2014. Who was in power before? It was the Conservatives. I was even an assistant at the time when CBSA employees were speaking out against the Conservative government's cuts. That happened around 2010. As it turns out, it was the Conservatives who were in power.

I wonder if the member could talk about those cuts, the effects of which we are now unfortunately seeing.

[English]

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, I think the time has come to stop putting blame on old Conservative policies or what the Conservatives could or should have done. This government has eight years under its belt, and it has nothing to show for it but heartache, hardship and, now, this national and worldwide reputation: "Come to Canada, where we have a thriving criminal market for you to take advantage of."

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, in diving into the world of auto crime today, I found, of course, that the rate of theft of automobiles has also increased dramatically in the United States. I do not think our Prime Minister is responsible for that, but I am looking at it here in Canada.

I will share an anecdote. One of the most shocking car thefts in my life was when I was in church and somebody went into the minister's office and figured they could open the desk. They picked a

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key up. They did not know what make her car was. They went outside, went beep, beep, and found and stole her car.

I wonder if the hon. member knows, relatively speaking, and I think he knows more about car thefts and this issue of technological change than I do, how much the big increase in car thefts in Canada and the U.S. has to do with the ability to use technology, so that thieves can sit at the end of a driveway and actually scoop, remotely, the electronic signals to a computerized, on-off button kind of car.

How much of our car theft increase is because it is just simpler to steal cars because of technological change?

• (1705)

Mr. Larry Brock: Madam Speaker, that is definitely a real concern, and it really accounts for a lot of the car thefts we are seeing. Criminals are very computer- and technology-savvy.

There are ways Canadians can mitigate against these procedures, and I know that my local police service is educating the public on the steps they can take. For instance, people should not leave their vehicle in the driveway. If they have a garage, they should park it in the garage. As far as the key fob is concerned, they should make sure it is not readily accessible just inside the front door but close it in a shoebox or something, or perhaps put it in a closet.

I know these are measures that will probably require that people adjust their daily habits, but these are ways that will block the infrared signal and prevent these criminals, these savvy criminals, from capturing the data and simply walking up with a second, handmade remote—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. Unlike some members of the Liberal Party, particularly the member for St. Catharines, I do not think we should be here doing cartwheels about the fact that the Liberal government has essentially been asleep at the switch and is now finally convening a meeting.

At the end of the day, this is a government that has failed, and that is why we, as Conservatives, have four very clear priorities: one, to axe the tax; two, to build the homes; three, to fix the budget; and four, to stop the crime.

We require common sense. Where is the first place to start? Let us look at where we are now. Again, the member for St. Catharines will say we have no problems and there are no real big issues here. He will say the Liberals have been responsible. That is what I took from his speech, that they have been eminently responsible. Tell that to all the people who are now suffering from car theft.

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I can say this: There are people who, historically, would not have even sought release on bail, based on a bail system that we, as Conservatives, may have even criticized as being too lenient. Now those people are released in what I would call a pro forma way.

That is why I am excited to rise on what our common-sense plan is. Why? This is a Liberal government that loves to say, “We are going to.” We are going to do this. I believe somebody said today, “We are going to crack down on auto theft.” When have we heard that before? The member for St. Catharines expects us to believe it: “We are going to.”

This is just like when the Liberals said they were going to make it easier for people in the middle class and those entering the middle class. “We are going to balance the budget”, after a series of what? It was a series of deficits. They said, “We are going to run small deficits; just trust us.”

After eight years, the trust has evaporated. We can no longer trust that the Liberals are going to address problems when it comes to crime. People have talked about importing American-style justice, and certainly I would not advocate for that. There have been varying degrees of consequences. At the same time, I also would not advocate for the leniency we are seeing.

The member for St. Catharines can misrepresent my words when it comes to the fact that Bill C-75 raised summary offences from six months to two years less a day. We can do cartwheels about that. That is actually something that I believe was done based on the Jordan principle and based on system actors, when we did not want to proceed by indictment yet wanted a greater sentence than six months.

Nobody here on this side has ever said we will repeal those sentences, yet the Liberals will stand up repeatedly and say they have a minimum sentence, and bail is working. How many times have we heard that? The bail system is working. I think that all one needs to do is walk down the street and see circumstances that are largely inhumane for a lot of people, and that does not just have to do with bail. That has a lot to do with substances and, in large part, what the Liberal government has done when it comes to substance abuse.

This is a government that, at the end of the day, loves to convene, but convening does not get results. Where were they four years ago when it was clear that bail was becoming a problem? Where were they when key decisions from the Supreme Court of Canada came down? Typically, Parliament used to respond to those decisions. The Liberals said no, they were comfortable and they would just let them be.

We then had a series of decisions that Parliament did not respond to. That was a deliberate choice, a value judgment, based on the Liberals' saying, essentially, in my view, that they just do not care. It is just like they do not care and have not cared about housing, like they have not cared about inflation, and now, how they have not cared about auto theft.

• (1710)

It is a government, frankly, that does not have its head in the game when it comes to crime. It does not have its head in the game when it comes to just about anything. We have a Prime Minister

who stayed with friends for an \$84,000 vacation. His response was not to apologize to Canadians. No, he can never admit fault on his own behalf. What was his response? He said that, like many Canadians, he stayed with family or friends.

I am going to get to some of the things that were said yesterday by the justice minister. It is interesting, because there are Liberals, again, like the member for St. Catharines. I know he is a lawyer, and perhaps he went to a faculty of law in American Samoa.

I say that in jest.

On proceeding by indictment, there is a maximum term—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary, on a point of order.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, during my speech I debated the ideas that the hon. member brought forward, but I did not—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Bittle: He is heckling and trying to shout me down, Madam Speaker.

I debated the ideas and questioned the stances he took with respect to policy. I did not question his education in terms of his qualifications as a lawyer or a prosecutor. I personally abide by the rules of professional conduct in the province of Ontario, and I am sure it is very similar in B.C., to not attack other lawyers on the basis of their qualifications. I hope that he will abide by the same thing.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is well noted. I remind the hon. member that although he did say “in jest”, it is not quite the appropriate comment to make.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, if only people in this place would look in the mirror when they make comments like that. It is unfortunate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Did the hon. member understand what I said?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, I did understand and, with respect, I will move on, because I have fairly strong feelings on this.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I asked the hon. member to first realize that to question someone else's education is not something we do. The member did say that it was in jest, but it is still on the record. I would advise the hon. member to just retract what he said.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, so be it.

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I look at section 333.1, and I see here a mandatory minimum sentence of six months in jail after three convictions, so again the Liberals will do cartwheels over this and claim they have a mandatory minimum, that Conservatives do not realize they have a mandatory minimum and that Conservatives love mandatory minimums. It is a minimum of six months in jail when proceeded by indictment. With all due respect to members, like the member for St. Catharines, I ask how often that will be invoked. How often does somebody obtain the maximum sentence when anybody proceeds by summary or by indictment?

Let us reflect on what the hon. minister said yesterday, “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”.

I can tell members that I have never once, in working in the justice system for years, actually seen that provision employed. There is a reason organized crime is so successful. It is because it is organized. People do not wake up and say, “I was caught for auto theft. You are right. There was a gang helping me out. Forget safety of my family. Forget my safety. Forget safety of my friends. An organized crime gang was taking these vehicles, shipping them across the Atlantic, changing the VINs, and I am prepared to admit that.”

The reason organized crime is successful is because those things do not happen. The hon. minister or the member for St. Catharines might do cartwheels about this and say this is wonderful and that they are cracking down on organized crime. That fact has to be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. How easy is it to prove the presence of organized crime beyond a reasonable doubt? I would love to note that section and, by that, research it to see how many times it has been successful when it comes to auto theft. Anecdotally, I have never seen it.

Here is another quote:

...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.

The government has had eight years, and in those eight years Canada has become a money-laundering haven. Again, they are going to convene. They are going to figure this out. They are going to have more meetings. The time for meetings has come and gone, and with respect to the hon. minister, somebody whom I do respect and whom I have had constructive discussions with, he must be talking to different police officers. The police officers I am talking to are not happy about the current state of affairs when it comes to their ability to have people detained, to have serious people with serious criminality processed for breaches and to have the law reflect meaningful consequences.

We are at a point now where the law, despite this six-month mandatory minimum, really needs to reflect a serious consequence, and that is why I am proud to support an opposition motion to make it a three-year mandatory minimum—

• (1715)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): For questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just a few days ago this was not even an issue for the leader of the Conservative Party. It is only because there is a summit that now he has been made aware of the issue, and now he wants to advocate. In his last words, the member is saying that what he wants to do is make a change. If someone gets caught three times stealing a vehicle, then they are going to have to go to prison for six months, and they want to extend that to three years. It was Stephen Harper who actually put in the six months. That is hard to believe. The hypocrisy just kind of oozes out of the cup.

Members opposite have been saying they want to see more money invested. They cut hundreds of millions of dollars. They say they want more staff. They cut over a thousand staff. Does the member not recognize the reality that the Conservatives were a disaster and did not contribute then, nor today, to the actual debate of the issue?

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, if we want to talk hypocrisy, let us talk about today versus 2014. People were not afraid as they are today to walk down the street. People were not afraid that their vehicle would not be there to the same degree in 2014 as they are today. People were not worried that their domestic abuser or the person who hit them, the person who sold drugs, was going to be released on bail and then be back a mere half an hour or two hours later. They were not afraid.

So, the member can pontificate all he wants about how wonderful things are. We have never had it so good under these Liberals, he will tell us. I invite the member to Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo officially right here, right now. Let us take a walk down the streets and talk to people about the points he just made.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, yes, thefts did increase in 2023. However, contrary to what the Conservatives may say, Bill C-5 did not abolish minimum sentences for car theft; not at all. The Conservatives can claim all they want that it is not enough, but there is a major problem with their statement. It was the Conservatives who added section 333.1 with Bill S-9 in 2010. The accusations and attacks need to stop. We need to act quickly.

What does my colleague think? We have to deal with this car theft situation. Sooner or later, it could be mine or his that gets stolen. We need to act quickly.

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Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, yes, mandatory minimums do change with time. I will remind the House that it was not long ago that Internet luring, a defence I believe should have life imprisonment, was at five years. The hon. member for Abbotsford had to petition to get it to 10 years, and then under the Harper government it went to 14 years. I believe there was no mandatory minimum before the Harper government imposed it.

However, times change. Right now, auto theft, as the hon. member mentioned, is up substantially. She asked whether we have to address this quickly. We do have to address this quickly, because it is not working. We want to look at this issue as a whole. People say that it was like this eight years ago, but car theft was not like this eight years ago, and changing times require changing measures, and they require changing minimums.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know the Conservatives are always focused on tough-on-crime approaches and they are calling it common sense, but I think it is non-sense, and I will tell members why.

We know that recidivism rates for people who are incarcerated are higher than 80%. It costs over \$225,000 a year to incarcerate one woman in a federal penitentiary. It costs well over \$125,000 to incarcerate one male. I am wondering why the Conservatives want to waste all this money on solutions that we know do not work instead of investing those multimillions to billions of dollars into dealing with the root causes of crime.

Mr. Frank Caputo: Madam Speaker, I always appreciate hearing my colleague's comments, and I would agree with her that we do have to address the causes of crime. However, where I would part company is when she said that Conservatives were tough on crime. I do not know if that is the characterization I would use, but rather we are tough on certain crimes.

Something our leader has emphasized is the idea of recovery. What does recovery do? It addresses substance abuse, which is often at the root cause of crime. So, the two are not mutually exclusive. I would suggest that we can address serious crime and also address recovery, because when we address serious crime and that which it is impacting—

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

The hon. member for King—Vaughan.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will try to be quick.

After eight years of the Prime Minister's soft-on-crime policies, we see crime, chaos, drugs and disorder rampaging through our streets. In our major cities, the spike in car theft since 2015 is extreme, increasing by 300% in Toronto. The Liberal government's dangerous catch-and-release policies have unleashed crime and chaos in our communities. The Prime Minister's reckless Bill C-5 allows for house arrest of these criminals, even those with long rap sheets. This means that they just walk out onto the streets and continue committing more crimes.

Increasing crime has been very troubling in the riding of King—Vaughan. I have to acknowledge Joe from @notonjoeswatch, a large social media page based in the city of Vaughan. He produces a page informing constituents of where the crimes are proceeding.

Over the past year, in Vaughan, which I represent, break and enters have increased by 45%, vehicle thefts by 30%, assaults by 13.8%, sexual violations by 11% and robberies by 10%. These are scary statistics, which are causing many in my riding and across the country to live in fear. I have heard many scary stories from my riding and around Canada. People are getting their doors kicked in, their houses robbed and their cars stolen. Crime is up and people are scared.

Recently I toured a neighbourhood in Kleinburg. They had to hire a security service company to protect their homes and cars, to the cost of \$5,000 per household, which totals in excess of \$200,000 a year, not included in their property taxes. How ridiculous is that? We need to ensure that we can protect our citizens based on the security of what we now feel is weak.

The Leader of the Opposition, who, by the way, for those who are not aware, will be our next prime minister, will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

• (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Order. It being 5:27 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[Translation]

The question is as follows.

[English]

May I dispense?

Some hon. members: No.

[Chair read text of motion to the House]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 7, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-1001, An Act to amalgamate The Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation of Ottawa and The Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation for the Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall, in Ontario, Canada.

This bill is deemed to have been read the first time and ordered for a second reading at the next sitting of the House.

• (1730)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that, if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent at this time to call it 5:42 p.m. so we could begin private members' hour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

GREENHOUSE GAS POLLUTION PRICING ACT

The House resumed from January 29 consideration of the motion in relation to the amendments made by the Senate to Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise tonight and pursue the discussion of a very complex piece of legislation. It did not start out being complex, when our colleague initially put it forward as Bill C-234, but I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it. Of course, this is the greenhouse gas pollution pricing act as it relates to on-farm use of fossil fuels. It has now been amended in the Senate to exempt one of the larger uses of fossil fuels on farms. Of course, farm communities are not pleased; however, I wanted to step back.

This piece that would now be exempted under the Senate amendments is the on-farm use of propane fuel for grain drying. In other words, activities that take place in buildings are now no longer exempt from the fossil fuel exemption that came through in the first version of Bill C-234. As the Green Party members and I voted for Bill C-234 in its first iteration, I wanted to take advantage of the opportunity, if I may, to explain why we voted that way and what I think we should do for a fundamental reconsideration of the way we price carbon on farms so that it has some intellectual and scientific coherence.

Let me first start with why we voted for Bill C-234 in its first iteration. I recall really clearly when carbon pricing came forward, which we favour, to be very clear. We think we have to monetize carbon. If we treat pollution as something free, nobody will pay at-

Private Members' Business

tention to what it really costs society, what it really costs humanity to treat the atmosphere as if it were a large, free garbage dump for our pollution. That is clearly not acceptable. We moved forward, accepting that there would be, unfortunately, a patchwork, because some provinces had already moved forward.

British Columbia brought in Canada's first carbon tax, a well-constructed and logical revenue-neutral approach to carbon pricing. There have been changes, and some provinces brought in their own versions. What the current Liberal government brought forward was essentially a backstop; for those provinces that did not have their own systems, the federal government brought in a carbon price that would apply everywhere to try to equalize the pricing among all the different provinces and have a system that remained revenue-neutral.

British Columbia brought in the revenue-neutral carbon tax under the government of previous premier Gordon Campbell, who pretty much represented the right wing of B.C. politics. Nevertheless, it was a really well-designed carbon price. The revenue-neutral part of it was that, as British Columbians, we got tax cuts that were how we received what citizens now actually receive as a rebate check in those backstop provinces. This became a bit more complicated than it perhaps needed to be.

When the Liberals brought this in, they said they were not going to apply it on farms; farmers would not have to pay the carbon tax. At least, that was how it was communicated. When farmers realized that they were not paying a carbon tax on the diesel they put in their tractors or the farm equipment they use, but they were paying a big one on grain drying, they became quite concerned. That is the source of Bill C-234. We felt, in principle, that once the farming community has been told that carbon tax will not apply to them, one should stick to that.

It also happened that, because of the climate crisis, the need for grain drying increased. This is one of those things that may sound counterintuitive, of course, but we had what farmers in the Prairies referred to as "the harvest from hell" that winter. I am going to back up and say that I know it is not the first time we have ever had the need for grain drying. We have had wet harvests before. It was not a novelty, but it was particularly bad. They were still trying to get crops out of the fields when there was snow on them. Grain drying became much more intense, and the use of propane for grain drying actually increased. That is when farmers said, "Well, wait a minute. We were supposed to be exempt from carbon pricing."

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• (1735)

Before diving into what has happened to Bill C-234 since then, I want to step back and ask this: If we wanted to monetize carbon and, preferably, keep farmers who are essentially land stewards on board with the need to respond to the climate crisis, how would we do that? I would say that the reason farmers should be particularly on board with measures to reduce greenhouse gases and avoid an ever-worsening climate crisis is that, if there is one economic sector that is a big loser and at risk in a world of climate crisis, it is agriculture. In the Prairies now, there is a multi-year drought. Some of my friends who are farmers on the Prairies say not to call it a drought. They say to call it “aridification”, because it is just going to keep getting drier as a result of climate trends and global warming.

With respect to the impact on the cost of food, we talk about inflation in grocery prices, and a good chunk of that is the impact on certain agricultural products because of extreme climate events. Whether droughts or floods, extreme weather events wipe out certain kinds of food. The price of vanilla went sky-high because of the impact of storms hitting Madagascar, as but one example. Of course, grains all around the world started costing a lot more because of a combination of Putin declaring war on Ukraine and crop failures caused by extreme climatic events.

As someone who wants to see us all pull together, it was distressing that one component of Canadian society would be alienated from efforts to act on climate by what felt like and, I have to say, looked like a betrayal on a promise. This component is severely impacted by the climate crisis and, therefore, should be onside with doing something to keep it from becoming ever worse; at the same time, it is a part of our society that plays a big role in how carbon is sequestered. If the Liberals say they are not going to apply carbon taxes on farms, then farmers are surprised to be paying a walloping carbon tax, how did that happen? I am sorry to say this to my Liberal friends, but it is because the Liberals do not really understand a lot about farming; when they made the promise, they did not realize that fossil fuels used on farms were largely used in buildings to dry grain.

It is fine to exempt tractors and on-farm equipment, but here we come to the crux of what I wish we had done, which we could perhaps still do: We can enlist farmers as the creative land stewards they are, as farmers sequester carbon through their practices and on-farm activities, such as zero-tillage agriculture, getting rid of summer fallow, and making sure they are doing more perennial and fewer annual crops. Farmers are massively effective at sequestering carbon in soil, and guess what? We talk about planting forests as a way of sequestering carbon and carbon sinks in forests. Those things are real; that is true.

However, right now, and largely because of climate change, our grasslands are better at sequestering carbon than our forests are. Why? The soils hold an enormous quantity of carbon. Climate conditions causing forest fires wipe out the carbon we were sequestering in forests, releasing it by the millions of tonnes into the atmosphere. It is not just in the summer; every province in this country started having wildfires that were out of control in the spring, in May of last year, and all the way through late fall and some into the winter. When forests burn, we lose all the carbon.

Here is something interesting, and scientists are looking at this a lot: When grasslands burn, we do not lose all the carbon. Most of that carbon is stored well below the soil, in the root systems that do not burn. Therefore, if we are offsetting for greenhouse gas, I generally think we are better not to plant a tree but to plant a billion-acre; I usually say that in jest, just to make sure everybody understands that. We are better off protecting the grasslands.

Where ecosystems exist with grasslands, it is better to sustain them and keep them robust, which means this: What if, instead of just having carbon pricing on the fuel they burn, we pay farmers for every tonne of carbon they sequester? What if we had an actual balance sheet on carbon pricing, thanking and rewarding farmers who have taken on board protecting ecological services, such as wetlands, protecting biodiversity and making sure they are restoring the health of soil, improving the profitability and the health of the food, and keeping carbon out of the atmosphere?

I say thanks to farmers.

• (1740)

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to resume debate on this private member's bill, Bill C-234, pursuant to the proposed amendments to the bill from the Senate.

Canada has the best farmers and food processors in the world. We are a global leader in agricultural production, and the sector is of great importance to our economy, to trade and to jobs. I know that in my riding of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, we have some of the best small-scale farms in the country. The government understands that farmers are essential to our communities and to Canada's economy, and that is why it agrees with the intent of Bill C-234.

Supporting our farmers is, of course, of great importance. However, the bill is not appropriately structured to achieve this objective. It is important to deliver support for farmers that is effective in helping them ramp up production without undermining important goals like addressing climate change, which itself poses a severe threat to agricultural production.

Private Members' Business

Putting a price on pollution is a cornerstone of Canada's climate plan. It is widely recognized as the most efficient means to reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that are contributing to more intense wildfires, droughts and floods, while putting money back in people's pockets and driving investment in cleaner alternatives. In B.C., of course, there has been a price on pollution for more than 15 years; it remains in place today. It is instead of the federal system, which applies only in provinces that do not bring in their own carbon pricing system.

Farmers are on the front lines of climate change, facing ever-increasing risks of natural disasters to their operations. Pollution pricing was designed to take into account the unique needs of farmers. Of course I have seen it first hand with a number of the farms in my riding, where historic droughts and water restrictions actually brought in a state of emergency that restricted access to water for some of these farms. I have also seen in recent years the crushing impact of the heat dome fuelled by climate change.

That is why, for all provinces where the federal carbon price is in effect, Canada's agriculture is already receiving significant relief under the federal carbon pollution pricing system compared to other sectors. Through the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, the federal system exempts gasoline and diesel used in eligible farming machinery, as well as biological emissions, such that roughly 97% of on-farm emissions are not subject to a price on pollution.

Greenhouse operators also received upfront relief of 80% on the fuel charge on propane and marketable natural gas. Additionally, farmers in provinces where the federal system is in place can receive a refundable tax credit, which, overall, returns the estimated total fuel charge proceeds in these provinces related to farm use of natural gas and propane for heating and drying activities, to help farmers transition to lower-carbon ways of farming.

This year, farmers in rural areas will benefit from the doubling of the rural top-up for pollution price rebates, which will give households an extra 20% of the value of the rebates in backstop jurisdictions. Putting a price on pollution and returning the proceeds to farmers helps them transition to lower-carbon ways of farming by providing support to farmers while also maintaining a price signal to reduce emissions. These are the right ways to help farmers increase production while addressing climate change that threatens production.

Unfortunately, even as amended by the Senate, which did make some steps in the right direction, the bill does not reflect Canada's commitment to climate change or incentivize farmers to switch to less carbon-intensive solutions. It also risks weakening Canada's efforts to lower its greenhouse gas emissions. It is true that one amendment would remove—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

• (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask members to please refrain from trying to ask questions and make comments when someone has the floor. The hon. member knows that if he were speaking, he would want the respect of the House. He should give the same to the hon. member.

The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Madam Speaker, I would note that Canada's emissions have dropped by a bigger percentage than those of any other G7 country since 2019.

It is true that one amendment would remove the relief associated with heating or cooling a building or similar structure used for raising or housing livestock or growing crops, but the relief for grain drying would remain, as would amendments to expand qualifying farm fuels to include natural gas and propane. The government does not believe that making it free to pollute is the right way to proceed.

We are taking action where it makes a real, positive difference in supporting farmers to make cleaner choices. As part of our strengthened climate plan and the 2030 emissions reduction plan, the Government of Canada has committed over \$1.5 billion to accelerate the agricultural sector's progress on reducing emissions, while remaining a global leader in sustainable agriculture. This includes almost \$500 million for the agricultural clean technology program to create an enabling environment for the development and adoption of clean technology that will help drive the changes required to achieve a low-carbon economy and promote sustainable growth in Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. This program is helping Canadians in the agricultural sector to innovate and to adopt clean technologies.

Farmers are taking action. They have been leading the adoption of climate-friendly practices like precision agriculture technology and low-till techniques that can help reduce emissions and save them both time and money. I have seen it in my riding with local companies; Terramera, for example, has been partnering with Microsoft to share information on precision agriculture at landscape scale. I have seen the sustainable farming practices being implemented locally that are making a big difference on climate change and on water use. The government is continuing to take action to support them.

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Budget 2022, for example, provided \$150 million for a resilient agricultural landscape program, cost-shared with provinces and territories, to support carbon sequestration and adaptation and to address other environmental co-benefits. It also provided \$100 million to the federal granting councils to support post-secondary research in developing technologies and crop varieties that will allow for net-zero emission agriculture, and it provided \$469 million to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to expand the agricultural climate solutions program's on-farm climate action fund.

Budget 2022 also renewed the Canadian agricultural partnership, which delivers a range of support programs for farmers and agriculture, including federal-only programs and programs developed in partnership with provincial and territorial governments. Each year, these programs provide about \$600 million to support agricultural innovation, sustainability, competitiveness and market development. The Canadian agricultural partnership also includes a comprehensive suite of business risk management programs to help Canadian farmers cope with volatile markets and disaster situations, delivering approximately \$2.3 billion of support, on average, per year. These are the right ways to help farmers increase production while addressing climate change that threatens production.

Our pollution pricing system is simply about recognizing that pollution has a cost, and about encouraging cleaner growth and a more sustainable future. The federal government does not keep any direct proceeds from pollution pricing under this system. Canada's approach to pollution pricing is not only one of the best ways to fight climate change; it also puts more money back into the pockets of Canadians. The direct proceeds from the federal pollution price are returned in the jurisdiction from which they were collected, to help with cost of living challenges while keeping the incentive to pollute less.

As 2024 kicks off, the Government of Canada reiterates its commitment to pollution pricing and its crucial role in meeting targets to cut emissions to 40% below 2005 levels by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Estimates show that pollution pricing will contribute about a third of the total reductions in emissions that will occur between now and 2030. Putting a price on pollution and returning the bulk of the proceeds through rebates provides support not just for farmers but also for consumers and businesses, while also maintaining an incentive to reduce emissions.

Canada has been a world leader in fighting climate change through pollution pricing, and we should not do anything that would undermine this achievement, as Bill C-234 would for the reasons I have set out today. I am thankful for the opportunity to make the government's position on this piece of legislation clear.

• (1750)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are here tonight debating Bill C-234 again. Why are we? It is because the Liberal-appointed senators voted to gut the bill from its original form to prevent it from passing. The panicking Liberals are resorting to every trick in the book, trying desperately to prevent farmers from getting a carbon tax carve-out for drying grain, heating barns and other farm operations. This is ahead of the Prime Minister's plan to increase the carbon tax on April 1 by 23% as part of the NDP-Liberal plan to quadruple the carbon tax.

Farmers in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and from across this great country made their voices known to senators loud and clear by writing, calling and emailing their offices. They have done so with MPs as well over the course of the last two years that we have been seeing this important bill make its way through the parliamentary process.

Despite the farmers' best efforts to voice their concerns and let senators know that they need to pass the bill in its original form in order to bring the much-needed financial relief to their cost of growing food, and despite the testimony that was heard from industry about how the carbon tax will eventually price most farmers out of business while increasing the cost of food for Canadians, Liberal senators instead gutted the bill and sent it back to this place for reconsideration.

This begs the question "Why?". What possibly could have influenced Liberal senators to gut the bill when the overwhelming evidence shows that if the bill is not passed, the cost of production for farmers will keep rising and thus will continue to drive up the cost of food for Canadians?

The Liberals have denied trying to influence their so-called independent senators; however, as it turns out, the environment minister has actually admitted to calling senators and asking them to keep the carbon tax on. I will read into the record an exchange the environment minister had on December 14, 2023, at the environment committee:

Mr. Dan Mazier: Did you call any senators to discuss Bill C-234?

Hon. [Minister]: Can you repeat the question, please?

Mr. Dan Mazier: Did you call any senators to discuss Bill C-234?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member mentioned the name of a member. I would remind members not to do that.

The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Ms. Lianne Rood: My apologies, Madam Speaker.

I will continue with the exchange.

[The hon. minister]: I had conversations with five or six senators, yes.

[The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa]: ...five or six senators. What are their names?

[The hon. minister]: I don't have the names with me.

[The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa]: Can you table those?

[The hon. minister]: I'm sure we can make those available.

[The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa]: Okay, thank you.

The environment minister did table with the committee three names of senators he spoke with, but only three names. However, the minister said that he spoke with six senators, so it begs the question who those other three senators are that the minister spoke with. This is just another example of a Liberal cabinet minister politically interfering when they want to get their own way.

No matter what the Liberals say about the senators they have appointed, it proves they are not independent. On this side of the House, we know that nothing about this bill needs to be reconsidered and that this bill must be sent back to the Senate in its original form.

No matter what happens with this bill right now, if Conservatives form government, Canadians can rest assured that we would axe the carbon tax for everyone. Farmers would have this reprieve because we know this carbon tax does nothing to reduce emissions; it only harms Canadians' ability to afford the nutritious foods they need to feed their families and makes everything more expensive.

If the NDP-Liberals refuse to support Bill C-234 in its original form, they would send a very clear message to farmers in particular. The message they would send is that they do not care about how their carbon tax negatively affects Canadians and contributes to rising food costs. They would show, sadly, how out of touch they are with Canadian farmers.

Being involved in the business of fresh produce and farming, I have first-hand knowledge of how the carbon tax increases the costs and makes the cost of food go up. I am passionate about farming to my core; I am sure everyone can see that. Agriculture is the backbone of the area where I grew up and is the backbone of the communities that I have the honour and privilege of representing here in this place. There are lots of different kinds of farming in my area, including grain farming, poultry farming, which includes turkey and chicken, as well as greenhouse farming and vegetable growing. There is a cost associated with that. The farmers who grow grain and who raise the poultry for market, and greenhouse growers as well are especially affected by the carbon tax.

Many farmers in my area have to use propane or natural gas to heat their barns or to heat their greenhouses, and it might be a surprise, but vegetable farmers heat their barns too while they are storing things. Not only that, they have to heat barns in order to dry onions enough to store them. One thing they all have in common is that, on their most recent gas bill, the carbon tax charge was higher than the actual gas charge. That is outrageous.

A greenhouse grower in Ontario recently told me about the devastating impact the carbon tax would have on their greenhouse operation. They told me the average farmer who grows in greenhouses has anywhere from 50 acres to 100 acres. They did the calculation of the carbon tax they pay now and calculated what the NDP-Liberal government's quadrupling of the carbon tax would do.

If the carbon tax quadruples, they would pay up to \$50,000 per acre in carbon tax alone. That is \$50,000, so a 50-acre farm would pay up to \$2.5 million in carbon tax and a 100-acre farm would pay up to \$5 million in carbon tax. They would have no choice but to pass those costs on to consumers. Common sense tells us Canadian families would pay more at the store. When the carbon tax rises so

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does the cost of production for farmers and producers. If it costs the farmer more to grow the food and the trucker more to ship the food, it will cost Canadian families more to buy the food.

Farmers are affected by the uncertainties of weather, and this is not new. Farmers have always been affected by weather. Every year, the climate changes. It is now winter in much of Canada, but soon, it is going to spring. Then it is going to be summer, and then it is going to be fall, and then it is going to be winter again. The uncertainty of the weather means sometimes farmers have to harvest their crops before they are dry.

● (1755)

For the last few decades, our farmers have had the option of using grain dryers. Farmers can take a crop off when it is still a little wet, they can bring it to the right moisture content in a propane or natural gas-fired grain dryer. It will dry it so the moisture content comes down. However, right now, there is no alternative to natural gas or propane grain dryers.

I want to remind my colleagues across the way that we live in Canada, and we experience wide ranges of temperatures. I know most of the Liberals are from Toronto and they do not get out to other parts of Canada, but it does regularly get to be -40° or colder.

Many chicken farmers have to heat their poultry barns throughout much of the year with propane or natural gas, because it is a humane necessity to keep birds alive.

Farmer Brian, a large chicken farmer in my riding, wrote to me and gave me his natural gas bills for one of his many chicken barns. For a period of 12 months in 2023, he paid almost \$16,000 in carbon tax alone, just to heat one barn. That is just one barn, and the carbon tax is going to quadruple.

The carbon tax is going to rise again on April 1. The NDP-Liberals want to quadruple the tax. That is going to increase the cost of food. The Parliamentary Budget Officer made it clear that this bill would save Canadian farmers \$1 billion by 2030, which would reduce the cost of food for Canadian families that are currently struggling to afford groceries.

The profit margins for most Canadian producers are very narrow, and there is very little room for additional input costs. For Canadian farmers, the NDP-Liberal carbon tax is an input cost on their production. Most producers are price takers, not price setters. That means that farmers have no way of recovering what they pay in the NDP-Liberal carbon tax from the next stage of the supply chain.

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To be clear, the NDP-Liberal carbon tax takes from most Canadian farming families' profits, which reflects on the Canadian families' standard of living. I have said it before, it is not rocket science. If it costs farmers to grow food and truckers more to ship food, it is going to cost Canadian families more to buy food.

The existing carbon tax exemption for farmers' use of gasoline and other fuels raises another question related to science and math. The science says that natural gas and propane are the least-emitting sources available for heat.

Will the NDP-Liberals send this bill back to the Senate unamended, in its original form and let us get this bill passed for Canadian farmers so that they could have this tax relief from the carbon tax?

• (1800)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, here we are again, another debate where the basis of the Conservative argument is that it should be free to pollute in this country, and that the most challenging crisis that we face, the one that will impact Canadians the most, especially in their pocket-books, is something that they deny.

The previous speaker said that climate changes, winter to spring to summer to fall, as if to deny the seriousness of the crisis. What is the main driver of increased food costs? It is climate change.

I have asked Conservative members, and none of them are willing to answer this. Why have the increases in food costs gone up even higher in the United States than they have in Canada, when most jurisdictions in the United States do not have a price on pollution?

Mr. Greg McLean: You are making that up.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, the hon. member across the way is accusing me of lying, and that is truly unfortunate. They can look that up themselves.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members, again, that there is no opportunity for questions and comments. I would ask members to please listen to what the hon. members have to say, and then, if they so wish, they can actually be recognized for debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Madam Speaker, it just goes to show that, when confronted with the reality that food prices are going up in jurisdictions that do not have a price on pollution, the cognitive dissonance that exists on that side with respect to the science on the issue is loud and clear. It is truly unfortunate that this issue, climate change, is going to dramatically affect costs for Canadians. We are seeing it all the time.

We saw it in the summer when we were debating a motion brought by the Conservatives to eliminate the price on pollution, when we could not even see into Gatineau from Ottawa because the smoke was so thick. Hurricanes have ravaged us, and again Conservatives are denying the impacts of climate change during their heckles on forest fires and their spread. They cannot get it through

their heads that this is a crisis that is affecting them, and that their constituents are facing droughts and floods.

Yes, the hon. member who spoke before me is correct that farmers are impacted by the weather, but they are also dramatically impacted by radical changes in the climate. Much of the Prairies has been under significant drought. What is that going to do to the price of food? What is the Conservative plan on pollution? It is nothing except to stick their heads in the sand and pretend it is not an issue, when it is the central piece as to why food prices are going to increase. If they do not have a plan to address the climate, they do not have a plan to address rising food costs.

Conservatives are correct that farmers are stewards of this land. I have a quote from a Saskatchewan farmer, National Farmers Union former vice-president Glenn Wright, who stated:

Farmers will be among the hardest hit if we don't act fast to slash greenhouse gas emissions and stabilize the climate. For this reason—to protect farmers—the NFU supports pricing pollution; it is an important policy tool to reduce the harmful emissions fuelling the climate crisis and threatening farms and food supplies.

How do members of the Conservative Party deal with this? During this debate, they took to social media to threaten and harass senators. One of its members was even found to have violated the privileges of senators in the other place. Although they are independent senators, they accused them of being Liberal senators even though they do not sit in their caucus, while Conservative senators did not even show up to vote. I believe there were only one or two votes this pass-by, and Conservative senators, who sit in their own party's caucus, did not show up to work. Instead of coming here, and instead of trying to intimidate members of the other place, they should probably speak to the Conservative senators who come to their caucus meeting every Wednesday and ask them why they did not show up.

I would like to speak to a few things in order to clarify the record a bit. We have exempted gas and diesel for farm use from federal pollution pricing. We have created a rural top-up for rebates. We have returned \$120 million to farmers thanks to carbon pricing proceeds. Over the last two years, we have invested \$1.5 billion in programs to support farmers in reducing emissions on farms and growing their operations. Since the \$500-million reinvestment through the agricultural clean technology program, more than 128 grain dryer projects have been approved. Nearly \$500 million has been approved for research, development and adaptation for clean technology. There has been \$12 million to reduce methane emissions from cattle and \$670 million to support the adaptation of greenhouse gas reduction practices on farms.

What would the Conservative response be? It would be to gut everything, pretend climate change does not exist, just say that the unprecedented floods, fires and droughts are just the weather, and say that we should ignore the scientists and the experts.

It would be a much more credible thing for the other side to say that the bill needs to be passed, and that they have a plan to reduce emissions, but they do not. They have zero plans to address this existential threat that we face as a country. It is a pocketbook issue and a security threat; experts are saying this across the board, and farmers are telling us they are impacted, yet Conservatives stick their head in the sand and say that polluting in this country should be free.

● (1805)

They all ran on it, which is the other thing I do not understand. If we go back into our time machine, just a couple of years ago, we will see that Conservatives all ran on a price on pollution, but it was a little different from ours. We give rebates right back to people. However, for the Conservative's price on pollution, people would get a Government of Canada credit card and would build up points, and maybe they could buy a bike at the end of the day if they built up enough points. I think "The more you burn, the more you earn" was their slogan at the time, but it was good to see them acknowledge a price on pollution, all of them. Every single one of them ran on it.

It was interesting at the time, but it was good to see every major political party in this country addressing climate change. I thought it fell flat, and I guess voters also felt that it fell flat in addressing the climate crisis. However, what the Conservatives have taken from their poor attempt at pricing pollution is to ignore climate change, despite seeing it with their own eyes across the country with record highs, record droughts, record floods, atmospheric rivers and hurricanes that are stronger than ever. They abandoned their constituents.

This is the Conservative playbook. They talk a good game in terms of affordability, but when it comes to addressing the number one driver of that in terms of food prices, they are absent. They are silent, and their silence will be costly for Canadians. The farmers they claim that they stand up for will be the most hurt as they suffer from severe weather, which makes it harder to produce and impacts the bottom line for farmers. It is truly disappointing to see a Conservative Party embrace climate denial policies in the United States and try to bring that north.

This is a mechanism that works. It puts more money in the pockets of Canadians. It will be responsible for 20% to 30% of our greenhouse gas reductions. Again, if the Conservatives have a plan that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30%, I would like to know, but they do not. They have absolutely nothing. We want to return that money to the pocketbooks of Canadians.

I thought it was telling, when the Government of Saskatchewan was having a fight about carbon pricing, that it had to reassure its constituents not to worry, and they would still get the rebate. I think it was the first time I have heard Conservative politicians talk about a climate rebate in this country when their constituents were worried that it was going to be taken away. That is another affordability issue where eight out of 10 families receive more than they put in,

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and the Conservatives want to say "No, we'd rather give it to oil executives. It would be better in the pockets of the shareholders of oil companies than it would in the pockets of Canadians." That is where the Conservative Party is right now. It is out of touch on the number one issue that is driving food prices.

I wish the Conservatives would go back and embrace what they brought in the last election and what they ran on, which was a price on pollution. It was a reasonable time, but none of them stood up at the time except one. I forget the member's riding, but I will give her credit. Also, there was one member who stood up at the time to challenge Mr. O'Toole on that policy, but all of them embraced it. They ran on it and took it home to their constituents. They went to the polls. They all got elected on that promise to price pollution, yet we see them sit and do nothing. They put their heads in the sand.

I have asked what the Conservatives will do when there is no action on the dramatic issues that are impacting climate. We know that carbon dioxide causes this. However, some Conservatives will say that carbon dioxide is great and that it feeds plants, as if to minimize the impact of carbon pollution in our society.

● (1810)

However, this is having a dramatic impact that we can see. Even in my own community, it does not even rain the same way it used to when I was growing up. All of us can see it. We can go outside. It is hitting us right in the face, and ultimately, the Conservative Party is going to ignore it.

I can appreciate that the Conservatives' want to see different changes to policy and, as I said, it would be a lot more credible to come up with a plan, any plan. When the Leader of the Opposition is pushed, he will say they are going to invest in technology, as if there is one magic bullet out there. Technology is part of the solution, but what will those members do when faced with a crisis so severe? Early on, there was basic denial and heckling that it even existed, that food prices increased in other jurisdictions and that climate change was the source of that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I asked the member to wrap up, and I actually allowed him to go a bit longer than I should have.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lethbridge.

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• (1815)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to stand in this place and to address a very important issue. That issue comes down to affordability. It comes down to the well-being of Canadians from coast to coast, to those who live in rural areas, in urban areas, in my province of Alberta and in Atlantic Canada.

The debate tonight has to do with being able to buy the very basics of life, including fuel for a person's vehicle so that they can drive to work or take their kids to sport practice. It is a conversation about being able to put food on the table, whether that is fruits, vegetables, grain or dairy. Whatever a family chooses to consume, they should be able to afford those choices.

Furthermore, Bill C-234 is about being able to heat one's home. I do not know about others, but where I live in Alberta, we can get temperatures down to -53°C with the wind chill. I cannot imagine trying to heat my home with a heat pump, as the Liberals would like to suggest is possible, nor can I imagine relying on wind or solar as my sole source of electricity, because we had a proof point, just a few weeks ago, that it just does not work.

Instead, what people rely on to heat their homes in my part of the country is largely natural gas. The Liberal government has attached something called a carbon tax to those very necessities of life, whether it is the food we eat, the fuel that we put in our vehicles or the energy that heats our homes. The carbon tax is punitive in nature, and it is driving up the cost that Canadians have to pay just to survive.

Bill C-234, which we are discussing here today, has to do with taking the carbon tax off the fuel that farmers use for the very necessities of the jobs they do. Imagine putting all of one's time and energy and all of one's labour into producing food for the nation of Canada and for the entire world. Imagine doing that, and then imagine having a government in power that, rather than expressing gratitude toward them, actually punishes them. That is exactly what the Liberals have done for the last eight years.

The carbon tax is extremely punitive in nature. It goes after those individuals working hard to produce food. It does that by applying this tax to the very necessities of production. Whether it is using natural gas to heat a barn in order to keep chickens alive or dairy cattle alive, or whether it is using propane to be able to dry grain, let us say, those are things farmers do on a day to day basis. Those things are necessary to produce food for Canadians and for the world. Those things are required to keep us, as humanity, alive and to drive our economy forward. Rather than celebrating the incredible contribution that farmers are making, the Liberal government has chosen to go after them and to be extremely punitive.

On this side of the House, members got together and came up with an idea. That idea is brilliant. It is supported by producers all across the country. That idea is to remove the carbon tax from fuel, from natural gas and from propane so that farmers can produce food at less expense.

Here is what happens when farmers are empowered to produce food with little expense attached to it. Those savings get passed on to Canadians. Then, when Canadians go to grocery stores and buy

food for their families, they are able to pay a little less. However, when the government attaches that tax, it actually drives up the cost of food, so Canadians then have to spend more.

What will happen when Canadians have to spend more? Headlines across this country will show us exactly what will happen. Families are struggling. Millions are lining up at food banks every single month across this country. In my riding, in Lethbridge, Alberta, the food bank use has doubled under the Liberal government. It has doubled.

• (1820)

It is not just folks who maybe do not have homes or who live in low-income housing. It is folks who have full-time jobs and live in middle-class neighbourhoods. It is seniors who rely on fixed incomes, who have worked incredibly hard for 65, 75, maybe 80 years of their lives. It is the students studying at Lethbridge College or the University of Lethbridge who are investing in their education and, because of the government, cannot afford to make ends meet, so they have to go to the food bank. It is the veterans who fought for this country, the country that we love. It is the men and women who sacrificed a great deal, and are now not supported by the government, who are lining up at the food bank.

That is a problem that was created under the watch of the Liberal government, but it did not have to be that way. The government has created policy after policy that has punished Canadians and held them back from achieving greatness, from being able to bring in income and stretch it to cover their costs of life. It is the government that has prevented people from being able to do that.

On this side of the House, there is a concerted effort to give Canadians control of their lives back. There is a concerted effort to make sure they can afford the very necessities they require. Of course, top of mind is to axe the tax, and that is exactly what Bill C-234 would do. Bill C-234 is all about getting rid of this punitive tax, taking it off of farmers and allowing all Canadians to benefit because, when farmers benefit, so do the people who go to the grocery store to buy food. That is what this bill is about.

Here is what the government did. This bill was discussed in this place and then went to the Senate, which started out with some good common-sense thinking. At first, it seemed that the majority in the Senate was going to support this bill because it just makes sense, but then the Liberal government, in particular, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment, caught wind of this. What did they do? They got on the phone, asked for meetings and applied pressure. They applied pressure to the senators, who are supposedly independent, and eventually those senators caved. The bill ended up being gutted to the point of being meaningless, and that is what we are now debating in this place.

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Canadians deserve better. For starters, they deserve better behaviour from the government, and second, they deserve better policy. They deserve policy that would allow them to work hard for a paycheque, bring that money home and be able to cover the cost of things they need to purchase, whether it is groceries, fuel for their vehicles or their heating bills. Canadians need to be empowered to cover those expenses, and a big part of that is axing the tax.

In my riding, a producer was willing to share his natural gas bill with me. He has a few different parts to his farming operation, but just for one of them, the beef operation, he spends \$62,000 a year on the carbon tax. He was willing to share some his bills with me, which I reviewed, and month after month the carbon tax is more than the amount he spent on the actual natural gas used. That is crazy. It is ludicrous that a farmer would have to spend more on the tax than the product itself.

What also needs to be driven home is that we have to remember that all Canadians, including farmers, are not just paying the carbon tax, but the tax on top of it. They are paying a government tax and a provincial tax on top of the carbon tax. It is the greatest scheme for the government to make money, but it is on the backs of Canadians, and the government should be ashamed of itself.

Conservatives are going to work hard. We are going to fight for Canadians. We are going to make sure their paycheques stay powerful. We are going to axe the tax.

• (1825)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it has been interesting to listen to the debate thus far. To begin, I think there is a bit of a misunderstanding when we are talking about affordability and carbon pricing. I am really wondering what the members opposite are concerned about when talking about affordability.

There was a study that came out of the University of Calgary from an economist. It talked about what would happen if we cancelled the carbon price tomorrow and the rebate that goes along with it. It is not just the carbon price. There is also a rebate cheque that gets sent to people where there is a federal backstop. The economist from the University of Calgary found that, if that were cancelled tomorrow, the people who would benefit the most would be the people who earn over \$250,000.

I can only guess, from the fervour that I hear from the other side of the House, that the people they are concerned about, who they really want to make sure have no affordability issues, are the people who earn over \$250,000. This study from this economist found that those are the people who would benefit the most from this big push we are hearing of every day to end carbon pricing and the rebates that get sent to people who are paying the carbon price in federal backstop provinces. I would like to have some clarity on that point because it seems perplexing to me.

Today, we are talking about Bill C-234. It is about farming. Farmers feed us. They are such an important part of our community and our country. Agriculture is a cornerstone of rural communities right across our country. When we are talking about this, I think we

need to start with that point and recognize the importance of farmers in our country.

When we are talking about this bill, we are actually talking about protecting farming and agriculture right across our country. We are seeing natural disasters, like the atmospheric rivers and the droughts. There is a drought right now that we are hearing about in Alberta, and people are talking about having to reduce their water use. We are talking about wildfires. We saw the atmospheric river that happened in the interior of B.C. That impacted farms. Those were farms that got washed out.

When we are talking about fighting climate change and about taking action on this really important issue, it is not something that is nice to have, but it is essential. We need to do it for our own survival, and we need to do it to support farmers. They are the ones who are bearing the brunt every day, and they are seeing the impacts of natural disasters caused by climate change.

That is why we need to continue to take action. It is also why it is very shortsighted. It is not going to help affordability. It is not going to help our farmers to not take action on climate change. I believe it is really important, when we are looking at this bill and when we are talking about these issues, that we take into account those parts. The last thing I will say on affordability when talking about farming is that, when our farms are impacted by natural disasters, the price of food goes up. That is what we saw. In fact, we saw that with the price of iceberg lettuce when it shot up when natural disasters were happening in California. We see it time and time again.

One of the things we can do best, as a country, if we want to make sure we are protecting farms, our sources of food, while dealing with affordability issues, is to continue to fight climate change and protect our communities from natural disasters.

Let me talk about Bill C-234. The first part of the bill would be redundant because the agricultural sector already receives significant relief compared to other sectors of the economy under the carbon pollution pricing system. In fact, the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act already provides upfront relief from the fuel charge to farmers for gasoline and diesel used in eligible farming machinery, such as farm trucks and tractors. It also relieves 80% of the fuel charge from natural gas and propane used to heat an eligible greenhouse.

There are now refundable tax credits in place, which return a portion of the fuel charge proceeds to farm businesses operating in the backstop provinces covered by the federal fuel charge. I do not think, in this conversation that we are having, we talk enough about those parts. People would think they do not exist. Let us just remind Canadians that, when we are talking about this bill, there is already relief built into the system to support farming and agriculture.

Orders of the Day

● (1830)

On the refundable tax credit, the total amount to be returned to farmers is generally equal to the estimated fuel charge proceeds from farm use of propane and natural gas for heating and drying activities. This aims to ensure that all the proceeds collected from this farming activity are returned to farmers in the provinces that are backstop provinces.

When I talk about backstop provinces, what provinces am I talking about? The provinces are Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. Farmers in those provinces are the ones I have been talking about.

Quebec is not covered by the federal backstop. Quebec had a price on carbon pollution before the federal one, so it was actually ahead. The farmers in Quebec, for example, do not pay the federal fuel charge, so they also do not receive the farmers tax credit.

The refundable tax credit for farmers does not undermine the effectiveness of pollution pricing because it does not return fuel charged proceeds according to a farm's actual natural gas or propane use. What it does is put a price on pollution and then it returns a portion of the proceeds to farmers to help farmers transition to ways to lower carbon emissions in farming.

By providing support to farmers, we are also maintaining the price signal to reduce emissions. In contrast, Bill C-234 would completely remove the price signal needed for carbon pricing to work by directly relieving the fuel charges on natural gas and propane used in eligible farming activities in addition to the existing relief for gasoline and diesel that already exists.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

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[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

The House resumed from December 13, 2023, consideration of the motion.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is nice to be able to resume where I left off back in December.

Just to refresh the memory of everyone in this place, we were discussing the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

I have been a proud member of that committee for six years now and I would say that it is the best standing committee out of any committee of the House, because we often arrive at our decisions on a consensus model. We certainly have our differences, but the

collegiality stems from the fact that, no matter what political party we represent, we all represent farmers in our respective ridings and have a great deal of respect for the work they do.

This particular study is unusual, if we look at the long list of studies the agriculture committee usually embarks on, in that we are dealing more with a retail issue, which of course is the subject of food price inflation. I am happy to say that this 10th report was the result of a unanimous vote on my motion for a study. The study was also backed up by a unanimous vote in the House of Commons when the NDP used our opposition day to move a motion backing up the committee's work.

Given the brutal food price inflation rates that many Canadians have been experiencing over the last couple of years, the political and public pressure of the moment, I think, really helped focus parliamentarians' efforts on this important issue in making sure we were paying it the attention it deserved, given what many of our constituents were telling us they were suffering through. Therefore, it was nice to see that unanimous vote and the fact that we were able to get into this study.

If we look at the news these days and the experts who research this particularly brutal problem, we already know that a record number of Canadians are having to access food banks. I certainly hear from my constituents in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford that they are having to make those difficult decisions every single week. It has affected not only the quality of food they have been able to buy, but also the quantity of food.

I think that is an enduring shame on our country, given that we pride ourselves on being an agricultural powerhouse. If we look at our standing vis-à-vis other nations around the world, we are a very wealthy country, but what we have seen over the last number of decades is that wealth is increasingly being concentrated in fewer hands, and too many of our fellow citizens are struggling to get by on the basic necessities of life.

I think this is a call to action for all parliamentarians. It is obvious that the policies we have put in place over the last 40 or 50 years and this sort of obscene corporate deference we have seen from successive Liberal and Conservative governments and the neo-Liberal orthodoxy that exists are not serving our fellow citizens right. We need to take a critical look at why that is.

This report contains a number of recommendations. I want to focus on a few of them, particularly on recommendations 11 and 13. Recommendation 11 is something that we heard not only in the course of this study, but also in other studies. It deals with the fact that many people who work in the food value chain, particularly the ones on the other side of the ledger from where the retail grocers come into play, have long been calling for a grocery code of conduct.

Initially, the calls were for a voluntary code. I think there was a tremendous amount of goodwill and a bit of leeway given to the industry to figure this out on its own and to come up with something whereby all players could develop the issue and have faith in it. However, what we have seen recently is that some of the big grocery retailers, namely Loblaw's and Walmart, are now indicating they are uncomfortable with the direction the code is taking. In my humble opinion, this code simply cannot work if it is going to exclude major players like Loblaw's and Walmart, so we may be arriving at a point at which the government needs to step in and enforce a mandatory code. That way, the rules are clear, concise and transparent, and all players in the food supply value chain can understand what they are and abide by them.

• (1835)

What we are seeing is that there is a complete lack of trust in the grocery retail sector, and for good reason. Grocery retailers have been accused and found guilty of fixing the price of bread. They have engaged in practices that, on the surface, look a lot like collusion. They have often followed each other's leads in setting prices and so on. Recently Loblaw's was forced to climb down from its decision to reduce the discounts. There used to be a 50% discount on items that had to be sold that day. Often people are looking for those kinds of bargains. Loblaw's was going to reduce that to 30%. That company consistently shows that it is unable to read the room and that it is completely tone deaf to the public environment in which it is operating.

Not only have consumers lost trust in grocery retailers, but on the other side, the suppliers, the food manufacturers and the hard-working men and women who work in primary production and farming have also lost trust, because when they are trying to get their goods put into a grocery market, and let us understand that 80% of Canada's grocery retail market is controlled by just five companies, which is a brutal situation and a totally unfair stranglehold on the market by those five companies, they were often subjected to hidden fees and fines for which they had no explanation.

As such, I am glad to see that recommendation 11 calls for a mandatory and enforceable grocery code of conduct.

I am also happy to see in this report recommendation 13, which asks the Government of Canada to strengthen the Competition Bureau's mandate and its ability to ensure competition in the grocery sector. The first two bullet points were about giving the Competition Bureau more legislative muscle through the Competition Act and making sure the competitive thresholds the Competition Bureau uses to evaluate mergers and acquisitions ensure that competition does not suffer.

I think, based on the hard work of this study and the recommendations of this report, we have actually seen legislative change come to this place, and it was great to see, in particular, Bill C-56 receive a unanimous vote in the House of Commons. It has passed the Senate, and it has now become a statute of Canada by virtue of the Governor General.

There are more measures contained in Bill C-59, and our leader, the member from Burnaby South's private member's bill also includes a number of very important changes. Of course members of Parliament are going to have the opportunity tomorrow, after ques-

tion period, to vote on that bill, and Canadians will be watching to see which members of Parliament are serious about stepping up to fix that particular problem.

I also want to talk about the supplementary report that I included as the New Democratic member of the committee, because committee reports reflect the majority view of the committee. In the case of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, that is almost always the unanimous view of the committee. I do not think I have ever really seen a dissenting report, but sometimes some recommendations that some members would like to have seen added to the report do not get in there.

I agree absolutely with the main thrust of the report. I think the recommendations were very strong. There were some additional ones, some supplementary ones, that I would have liked to see added. We heard from a number of witnesses who asked our committee to recommend that the government embark on legislative recognition of the right to food, so one of our recommendations would have been:

that the Government of Canada acknowledge its obligation as a party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights to respect, protect, and fulfill the human right to food by adopting a framework law that would enshrine this right in Canadian law and require the federal government to legislate binding, specific, and measurable targets toward realizing the policy outcomes it set out in 2019 in "The Food Policy for Canada".

Again, when so many in our population are going hungry, it is incumbent upon us as legislators and policy makers to really step up to the plate and meet that need in the moment with specific action. I think that, given that this recommendation came from people who are directly involved in the national food bank network and are dealing with this issue every single day, we would do well as policy makers to listen to that on-the-ground expertise and follow through.

• (1840)

I also want to take some time in the final four minutes that I have to really recognize two witnesses who appeared before our committee. They are both economics professors who go against the prevailing orthodoxy of corporate deference that so many economics professors practise. They are, particularly, Professor D.T. Cochrane and Professor Jim Stanford, who I think offer a refreshing and alternative view to the dominant orthodoxy, to look critically at why systems are the way they are.

I just want to quote Dr. Jim Stanford:

Greed is not new. Greed long predates the pandemic, but greed has had a good run in Canada since the pandemic. After-tax profits in Canada during the pandemic or since the pandemic have increased to their highest share of GDP in history. Amidst a social, economic and public health emergency, companies have done better than they ever have.

In response to one of my questions, he went on to say:

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At the top of the list, there's no doubt about it, is the oil and gas sector. The excess profits earned there since the pandemic account for about one-quarter of the total mass of profits across the 15 sectors I identified in that work. The increased prices that embody those huge profit margins then trickle through the rest of the supply chain. Food processors have to pay that, so they have higher costs, nominally, but then they add their own higher profit margin on top of that. The same goes for the food retail sector. By the time the consumer gets it, there's been excess profits added at several steps of the whole supply chain. That magnifies the final impact on consumer price inflation.

Two things have been true over the last number of years. Canadians have been suffering through brutal inflation. They have seen the cost of almost everything rise to almost unsustainable levels, in fact, to unsustainable levels for too many of our fellow citizens. That is one truth of which we can see empirical evidence.

The other truth we are dealing with is that since 2019, many corporate sectors have been raking in the cash. Those two facts exist side by side, and we know for a fact that when profits are increasing in many different corporate sectors that Canadians rely on, that money has to come from somewhere, and it has been coming directly from the wallets of the constituents that I represent, the constituents that every MP in this place represents from coast to coast to coast.

I will wrap up my speech there by saying that this was an important report and these are important recommendations. I am glad to have been a member of the committee that produced this report. Of course, I will be voting to concur in it. With that I will conclude my remarks.

• (1845)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague, with whom I sit on the agriculture committee. Obviously, in this report, there was an examination of some of the input costs that have caused food prices to rise.

My question for my hon. colleague is this. On our opposition day motion to report Bill C-234 back to the Senate unamended, will he be voting with us as Conservatives to make sure that farmers get help in decreasing the inputs when it comes to Bill C-234?

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, the short answer is, "Yes." I was here when the original Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act was brought into force. I think it was in 2018. The reason I support Bill C-234 is that when the Liberals originally authored their bill, they put exemptions in the parent act that listed qualifying farm fuels, qualifying farm machinery and qualifying farming activity. When I look at the language that is in Bill C-234, looking at the heating and cooling of barns and greenhouses and also at fuels used for drying grain, I think those are legitimate farming activities that are in line and in spirit with the original act.

I can conclude and say very publicly here in this House that, absolutely, New Democrats will keep our vote consistent with the third reading vote that we gave, along with the Green Party, along with the Bloc Québécois and along with the Conservatives. We are choosing to reject the Senate amendments to Bill C-234.

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I sit on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food with my colleague, and I have appreciated his collegiality and the degree of collaboration we have been able to find on our shared

values. As a relatively new member of Parliament, I always enjoy the opportunity to meet new people from across the country with shared interests.

This is a timely conversation for us to have, because just this morning, part two of this particular conversation continued to unfold at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. There is no question that Canadians are feeling the impact of food prices. It is on their minds. It is something we are aware of, something we are sensitive to and something we are acting on.

It is important, in the context of this conversation, to be mindful of how we have come to this point and what factors are contributing, whether they include the very difficult years of the pandemic and the postpandemic years we are in now; supply chain disruptions that have occurred as a result of conflicts, such as that between Russia and Ukraine happening in Europe at the moment; or various other contributing factors that we are seeing take place around the world. Canada is not immune to these challenges.

There are a few pieces in particular that I would like to highlight, and my colleague raised this a few moments ago, specifically, in relation to a grocery code of conduct. My understanding, having listened intently to the position of the government, my Conservative colleagues, my New Democrat colleagues and my Bloc Québécois colleagues, is this: We all agree that there needs to be a greater degree of transparency in order to deal with the volatility and instability existing in this industry and in the market in order to help Canadians with the increased costs of food.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Canadians want the big grocery chains to be transparent about the prices they are paying for their food. Many departments are involved; many regulations as well. There is no easy, single or universal solution. The food on our plates is tied to several international economic systems. Between the field and the plate, producers, processors and retailers are each dealing with supply problems and market access challenges.

We expect this code to improve interactions between retailers and processors by allowing predictable, transparent and equitable business relations. It is through collaboration between businesses that this code will be more effective, which, ultimately, will be beneficial both to the industry as a whole and to consumers.

[*English*]

One of the disappointing discussions that emerged out of the Standing Committee on Agriculture's study on this particular matter a few weeks ago, when we spoke to executives from Canada's five main grocery chains, was that there is not unanimity. In order for a code of conduct vis-à-vis groceries to be effective, we need to have the buy-in of all those involved. Unfortunately, we have not seen that to date. I note that my colleague from the NDP is right to raise that in the context of this conversation.

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I want to speak for a moment about a few of the arguments I hear come from my Conservative colleagues across the way, in particular, in relation to this conversation. Specifically, it is the notion, the insinuation, the argument they make every single day that there is a direct relationship between the increase in the cost of food in Canada and the price on pollution.

We can debunk this in a couple of ways. First, if we look at OECD data from within the last eight months, we can see that Canada is on par with the United States in terms of the cost of food in our country. I have asked this question of my Conservative colleagues before and have yet to get a sufficient answer: How is it that in two jurisdictions, one where there is a price on pollution and another where there is not, the food prices are essentially the same?

In addition to that, I think it is important to draw attention to some very interesting testimony that came out of the Standing Committee on Agriculture earlier today. There was an interesting conversation that took place. We heard from Sylvain Charlebois, one of the leading experts in Canada on this particular issue, as well as Tyler McCann.

It was very interesting. They noted, and I will draw the attention of the chamber to this first, that the climate crisis, the impact that climate change is having on farmers and on the industry, is one of the most, if not the most, significant detriments that we are facing right now.

It should not be free to pollute in this country.

Having said all that, I want to come back to the point I mentioned a moment ago, which I hear often from colleagues in the Conservative Party. This is that there is a direct correlation between the price on pollution and the price of food. They will argue that if one taxes the farmer, then they are going to pass the cost on.

Here is what is interesting: Mr. Charlebois and Mr. McCann said the same thing today, which was that there is no sufficient data, no statistical analysis from the past number of years, in relation to a price on pollution in Canada that can point to its relationship with the increase in food prices.

Mr. Charlebois mentioned it. Mr. McCann reiterated it in response to a question I asked. Even my colleague from Regina, interestingly, helped me out a little bit. I had mistakenly said that Mr. Charlebois had said that the price on pollution was not contributing to the increase in food prices; my colleague from Regina mentioned that, no, he did not say that. He just said that there is no proof, that there is no evidence to support it.

I thought that this was quite contradictory, that what my colleague was perhaps unintentionally clarifying for me was, in fact, a rebuke of the primary position we see and hear taken day in and day out by my colleagues across the way. I think it is important that we recognize, as has been discussed by other colleagues at committee, in the media and by other experts in relation to this issue across the country, that these are complex issues. Canada is not immune to the challenges we are facing. It should not be free to pollute in this country.

What we heard at the agriculture committee today, in part two of the report that we are talking about right now, is that there is no evi-

dence that can point to a relationship between the price on pollution and the increase in food prices.

With that, I will conclude my remarks and gladly speak to colleagues' questions during the next part of this conversation.

• (1855)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, one has to be very careful with the Liberals when they talk about truths and untruths. What Dr. Charlebois said was that there has not been enough data collected to see exactly what the effect of the carbon tax is on food prices. He also said that he called for a pause on the carbon tax to lower food prices. Charlebois has said that; conveniently, the member omitted this.

When one hears a story coming from the Liberals, it is always interesting to listen to the facts.

Talking to Mr. McCann, I also asked if the point of a carbon tax is to increase the price so that consumers change their behaviour. He said that this is exactly what the Liberals say the point of a carbon tax is.

The truth is that, when it comes to food inflation, food prices and the relationship with the carbon tax, it will come out in the wash that there is a correlation. When one talks to farmers and dairy farmers today, their highest input cost now is the carbon tax and the heating of their barns. If someone does not think that affects the price of what a farmer does, then they should maybe get out of downtown Winnipeg and go to a farm once their life.

Mr. Ben Carr: Madam Speaker, I have a couple of things to say. I would welcome anybody to review the testimony that was given today, and perhaps there will be a different interpretation of what was said.

The point of a price on pollution is to make sure that it is not free to pollute. However, they cannot then say that it will come out in the wash. Every single day we hear members of the opposition saying that the reason food prices are high is because there is a price on pollution, and yet the answer is there is no data available to show that, but we should trust them that it will come out in the wash.

I am sorry but I do not accept that as a legitimate or sufficient basis rooted in fact that permits them the ability to suggest with such emphasis and accuracy that that is in fact what is causing the inflation we are talking about in reference to this debate.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just have to scratch my head and try to figure out what the Liberals are saying.

They obviously do not have any business sense. They do not have to go to the farms in Manitoba, they could go to them in the Vancouver area. People are struggling to make ends meet. They are struggling throughout the country. I had a cab driver, on the way to the airport here in Ottawa, who said he is an immigrant here and he has to send his family back. He is going to try to downsize and work here, but life is so expensive with all the rising costs.

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In the Vancouver area, with the carbon tax, we are paying the highest gas prices in North America, and there are the home heating costs. It seems that the Liberal message and direction is more pain, that Canadians need to feel more pain.

We need to think of Canadians first, use some business sense and put Canadians first.

• (1900)

Mr. Ben Carr: Madam Speaker, I do not believe I have had the opportunity to interact with my colleague. I appreciate this as the first opportunity to do so.

I am not sure I actually heard a question in there. I will very briefly—

An hon. member: Are you in pain?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member had an opportunity to ask a question. If he has comments or questions, he should wait until the appropriate time.

The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

Mr. Ben Carr: Madam Speaker, I just want to quickly say that people in downtown Winnipeg, which my riding is not actually located in, are paying attention to these issues.

It is an issue that is a matter of great significance to Canadians across the country. In fact, the number one issue that I heard at the door when I talk to people, if it was not the health care system that the Conservative government in Manitoba has destroyed over the course of the past eight years, it was their concerns about climate change. This is something they are paying attention to.

It is important, when we are talking in this chamber about the way in which the industry, for all sorts of different reasons, is having an impact on the lives of Canadians, that we do not feed into the rural-urban divide. It is something that I am aware exists in this country. I hope my colleague will not try to bring us back into that.

Just in relation to a comment that was made by another colleague across the way, I would simply say that the information we have available to us, and this has been shared time and again, and I know my colleagues do not want to accept this fact, is the fact that eight out of 10 Canadians are getting more money back than what it is costing them in the increase as a result of the price on pollution. That would be my answer in very short form in relation to the member's question.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will give my colleague a bit of time as he is quite new here. Just because he repeats something louder does not make something true. Catherine McKenna learned that lesson the hard way.

I would say that more than eight out of 10 Canadians suffer under the carbon tax and get less back. What is not being taken into account is the gas, the groceries and the home heating. There are so many times that the carbon tax hits Canadians again and again. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has already said that that is not true; six out of 10 Canadians are worse off from the carbon tax.

I want to get back to what we had a conversation about when it came to the agriculture committee. I saw the smile on the member's

face, but what he could not say was how many farmers, not farm associations, but people who actively farm, he has met with have told him that the carbon tax has helped their farm and that they are better off with the carbon tax in place under the Liberal-NDP policy.

Mr. Ben Carr: Madam Speaker, I am certainly enjoying the spirit of the debate. I will try to decrease the volume so that if I repeat something I have said, I do not get accused of saying it louder and louder.

We know that eight out of 10 Canadians are better off because they are getting more money back than it is costing them when they are faced with an increase as a result of the price on pollution.

It is interesting because my colleague sits on the agriculture committee with me, and we have heard from lots of farmers, so he knows very well I have had conversations with farmers. He knows very well that conversations are taking place with farmers at that committee, that conversations take place with farmers whom I meet from my home province of Manitoba or from Saskatchewan and Alberta. They come to say hello and pay me a visit here in my parliamentary office on the Hill, and conversations take place with constituents in ridings where there are farmers.

The member was right to say that I represent an urban riding. I do not think that discredits me from having a voice on this, and I do not think he was suggesting that, so it does make sense that I am not speaking to farmers in my riding. However, I am speaking to people all of the time in relation to my work on the agriculture committee, and I will say that I have learned a lot, genuinely, from my colleagues from all parties, as I begin my career here.

I do want to thank the hon. member. It is very generous for colleagues to say that, because I am new, they are going to cut me some slack. I certainly hope that will be the case for some time to come.

• (1905)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I want to commend that member for his audition for cabinet because there was not an answer in that comment. He is prepping himself for question period already. I wish him luck with that. He has two years left to make that move.

As a member of the agriculture committee, can he name one farmer he talked to, who has boots on the ground, planting, harvesting, dairy farming or poultry farming, who has come to him and said that carbon tax has helped their operation, that they are doing better, that it is a good thing that the Liberals implemented a carbon tax and that they cannot wait for it to go to \$170 a tonne by 2030 to take \$1 billion out of their pockets?

Mr. Ben Carr: Madam Speaker, I want to be careful because the last time I said I spoke to farmers who were not opposed to the carbon tax, my colleague told me they were not real farmers. I am not sure who gets to decide who is a real farmer and who is not.

When I did have a conversation with those farmers, they told me very clearly that they had concerns about climate change and they had concerns about the impact that climate change is having on the planet and on the property that they have tended to for generations in their family. Therefore, yes, I have had those conversations. Whether my colleague is willing to accept that they are farmers is not for me to decide.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, although I really appreciate this prairie battle back and forth between colleagues, I also enjoy the opportunity to rise and speak to this very important issue as we go through the agriculture committee's 10th report.

I know everyone will be delighted to hear that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan, so members will get to hear more of what he has to say. I hope all members stick around to hear his insights on this topic.

When speaking of food inflation, this is an issue that people face right across the country. The cost of food is up; it is actually at 40-year highs and up 10% year over year. This has been a very sharp, dramatic increase in recent years. People are really noticing it at the grocery store. People are struggling to afford healthy meals for their families.

Moreover, as we look to the future, Canada's Food Price Report is predicting a 5% to 7% increase on the cost of food even further. We are already at 40-year highs. We have already seen a 10% increase year over year, and now the report predicts another 5% to 7% increase in the cost of food. The most substantial of these increases will be for some very regular items, like vegetables, dairy and meat products, that Canadians look to as staples of their diets.

To put this in perspective, an average family of four would spend \$16,288 per year on food in Canada. I know that is a sticker shock to a lot of people, but that is the reality people are facing. Unfortunately, we have noticed food bank usage is up.

In my riding, and I have spoken about this on the floor previously, I had a recent interaction with folks in Ignace who run the food bank there. It is a small community in my riding. It is shocking to them how many people are turning to the food bank, people who they never thought would have to turn to a food bank. One thing that was mentioned to me was the most heartbreaking moment in the day is when someone goes to the food bank and realizes there is actually nothing left. The food bank is literally running out of food in Ignace because of how expensive groceries have become for people.

That is not rural community but a small urban community that is isolated in northern Ontario. It is something that we are really unaccustomed to in the region. Of course, it is not just the costs; people are cutting back on their diets. We have heard stories of mothers watering down their kids' milk and cutting back on healthy food just to try to make ends meet. All around, it is a real affordability crisis when we talk about food inflation.

With this report, the committee has brought forward some suggestions. I would like to add a few more and to talk about some of the very real issues we are facing as a country. Food inflation is going up, and that is a direct result of a lot of the Liberal government's

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actions. An inflationary deficit is one of them. The Prime Minister has added more debt than all previous prime ministers before him combined. There is currently no plan to balance the budget.

What does that mean? It drives up their debt, which drives up inflation, and Canadians pay more on everything at the pump and at the grocery store. That is something we see as a major issue. The federal debt is actually projected to reach \$1.2 trillion. That would represent nearly \$81,000 per Canadian household. Each household would have to pay \$81,000 in order to pay off that debt.

It is clear that we must balance the budget, but the government must bring back some fiscal prudence to ensure that we can balance the budget, lower the deficit and end the inflationary deficit driving up the cost of living for Canadians.

● (1910)

That is one suggestion I would like to put forward and something that our Conservative Party and our leader, the member for Carleton, have been advocating for a number of years now. It is a great suggestion.

Another one that I am sure, Madam Speaker, you will be well aware of, is that we are calling on the government to pass Bill C-234, which would exempt farmers from the carbon tax.

Northwestern Ontario is not the largest agricultural region in the country by any means, but there are a number of local farmers and producers in the area, specifically in Dryden and the Oxdrift area where the Cloverbelt Country producers provide locally grown vegetables and beef products. This is an important issue locally in northwestern Ontario and, really, right across the country as, of course, it is not just the farmers who have to pay it, but everyone who has to pay this tax as it gets passed on to the price of food.

In fact, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has estimated that farmers paid almost \$14,000 in carbon tax in the first year it was imposed. The independent Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that an increase in carbon taxes to \$170 a tonne, which the government would sure like to do, would cumulatively cost farmers over \$1 billion by 2030. That is a staggering number. Farmers are already struggling and the price of food is already getting out of control. I could not imagine how farmers would be able to operate and how people would be able to afford food with further increases.

To make it worse, the government actually introduced a second carbon tax, the clean fuel regulations, that would cost the average household an extra \$573 per year. That is without any rebate. Now, we often hear the government touting its carbon tax rebate but this portion of it, the second carbon tax, comes with absolutely no rebate whatsoever.

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Conservatives on the agricultural committee have brought forward some suggestions. I am not a member of that committee, but we have some great members who are representing us well in that regard. The Conservatives on that committee are suggesting that the government remove the carbon tax that is applied to all of the food inputs, not including farm fuels. That is what we want to achieve through Bill C-234. We are also calling on the government to complete a comprehensive study on the economic impact of the carbon tax and clean fuel regulations and how both of those affect the cost of food production, the price of food and the entire food supply chain as a whole.

Above all, we must pass Bill C-234 in its original form. This is a very important bill brought forward by our colleague and something that is going to make a world of difference, not just for farmers, but everyone who has to buy food, which is everyone in Canada, of course. It is such an essential item. With the cost of living spiralling out of control, the very least we can do is to axe this carbon tax on farmers and families. We obviously, as the Conservative Party, are going to axe the tax completely and get rid of it for good but, in the meantime, we are hoping that the governing NDP-Liberal coalition can meet us halfway, realize that people are struggling and work to pass Bill C-234 as quickly as possible.

• (1915)

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, part of me wishes that actually the member got louder and louder; he was speaking so gently and so nicely. I hope he will speak up in the response. I also just wanted to very quickly say that he is actually my member of Parliament at our family cottage that has been in the family for a long time. I believe that my aunt was a teacher of his in Kenora. I can see that some of her wonderful teaching traits rubbed off on him.

I wonder if my hon. colleague, the hon. member of Parliament for Kenora, could speak to what he is seeing, if at all, the impacts of climate change are in the community that he represents and what conversations may be taking place with his constituents in relation to that issue which, of course, as we know, is directly related to the food industry and therefore the subject at hand.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I look forward to putting a big election sign on the member's lawn the next time an election comes around.

Northern Ontario, northwestern Ontario specifically, definitely sees the impacts of climate change. There is no question about that. It is seen on the ice roads into northern and remote first nations that communities rely on. The seasons are getting shorter and shorter, as a prime example, and that is going to create a lot of logistic challenges moving forward.

Unfortunately, we have not seen a viable climate plan from the government. It brought forward a carbon tax, which is a very good government revenue-creating device. It is a great way to tax Canadians and make life more unaffordable, but it continues to miss climate target after climate target under this plan. It is not working and all Liberals say is that they need to keep making it more and more expensive.

As I learned from the member's family member, when something is not working, one does not keep doing it even more, but re-evalu-

ates it. That is exactly what Conservatives want to do. We want to axe the tax and let Canadians decide in the next election what path they want to go down. We are sure that they are going to see that this plan is failing, our plan will axe the tax and help fight climate change using technology, not taxes.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wonder why, in spite of the hardships that increasing the carbon tax year after year is having on Canadians and that it is not making any environmental difference, the Liberals, supported by the NDP and the Bloc, are insisting on moving forward with this.

I would ask the member to comment on that.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, that is a question we have been trying to understand on this side of the House. Why are they moving forward with this?

Recently, my colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa uncovered the fact that the government is not even tracking whether the emissions are reduced or not by the carbon tax, so it has no measure of whether it is working. We can see that emissions are rising under the Liberals' watch, so it is clear that it is not working. However, we know the pain it is causing from an economic point of view for Canadians. They see it at the gas pumps or when they go to the grocery store. It is a tax on everything.

Conservatives are going to keep fighting to axe the tax, and that is exactly what we are going to do after the next election. Until then, we are going to keep up the fight and keep advocating for Canadians. We hope the other parties join us in that.

• (1920)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, this is such an important debate, and I am glad we have the chance to discuss food affordability in this place. I am thankful for the opportunity to engage in this discussion.

I am wondering if the member could talk about how the increased cost of food is a feature of the Liberal carbon tax. It is designed to make things unaffordable for Canadians. I wonder if my friend from Kenora could opine on that.

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, that is a very good point. The government has been very transparent that the whole point of the carbon tax is to try to change behaviours by making things more expensive. We are seeing it with gas, groceries and home heating. Unfortunately, it seems to be working too well and making things more expensive for Canadians.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to join in the debate today around the price of food inflation; the report that came from the agriculture committee, which I am proud to sit on; and some of the ideas we have heard over the last little while about how increases in the cost of food have affected Canadians in their day-to-day lives.

Orders of the Day

My friend from Battle River—Crowfoot just had a great point that he asked my colleague from Kenora about, and I asked this of Tyler McCann in committee today. I asked whether the point of a carbon tax, which the Liberals and NDP opine is the great resource they are going to use to lower emissions, was to change consumers' behaviour. Mr. McCann said yes, it is. We can go on Environment and Climate Change Canada's website, and see that the point of a carbon tax is to change people's behaviour based on an increasing price of a product.

It just so happens to be a product we are talking about today, which is food. I said in committee that it is amazing that a government is now fighting its own policy. Liberals and New Democrats are scrambling over each other to say that the carbon tax has not worked, because it did not increase the price of food. It was really one of the first times in my life in public service that I have seen a government arguing that a policy did not work when it did.

I see this in other areas of people's lives too. We see it in transportation, where mothers are having a harder time filling up a tank of gas to take their kids to hockey games, to ballet classes or to music lessons. In rural Canada, we have to drive. There is not public transportation service like there is in downtown Toronto, so people are making a choice about how many extra shifts they have to pick up to cover the next tank of gas. We see it with seniors, who are still in their homes, asking how many sweaters they are going to have to put on because they cannot afford to keep the heat up.

We see it time and time again. The Liberal-NDP carbon tax is making people change their behaviours in Canada, because it has made everything so much more expensive across our country.

We know it is working, because there was a little caucus revolt in the Liberal Party recently; Atlantic Canadian members, along with the Conservatives, who have called for a long time to axe the tax as part of our plan, said they had to exempt home heating. The proof is in the pudding. Why would the Liberal members in the Maritimes fight tooth and nail? It is because they are having political issues to get a carve-out from the carbon tax, since home heating is costing too much. It is almost like it is working, but the people within the Liberal Party and the NDP did not realize how much pain they were going to inflict on Canadians.

There is no other solution to heat a 100,000-square-foot barn. Today, in Ottawa, I met with a dairy farmer from just outside Regina. He said his heating bill for the barn has increased and increased. I have a SaskEnergy bill from another farmer, a chicken farmer. For one month, their gas supply cost is \$1,092. Their carbon tax, with the GST on top of it, is \$1,071. They are almost paying more in taxes on a monthly bill, \$20 less, than they are for the gas they are supplying to heat their building. Maybe I am giving them the benefit of the doubt, but I do not think the Liberals and the New Democrats realized how much this was going to hurt.

From APAS, in Saskatchewan, Mr. Boxall was at our committee when we were talking about food prices. He said that, on the average farm in Saskatchewan, the carbon tax cost will be between \$14,000 and \$25,000. However, when it goes to \$170 a tonne by 2030, Canada's Food Price Report for 2023 stated that a farm could pay \$150,000 in carbon tax per year.

● (1925)

We asked Mr. Boxall in committee how that was going to affect farms. He said that:

It will have a huge impact—\$150,000 on a 5,000-acre farm. It's unfathomable that we will get there on a carbon tax alone. It makes my skin crawl to think that's where we'll be, and then to be turned around and not recognized for the work that is done, ensuring that we have proper grasslands and that we have proper management of our farm soil. Farmers are the biggest stewards of the land in this country, and we care more about the environment than we ever get credit for. It really is going to be detrimental to Saskatchewan farmers.

That says it all. This Liberal government continues to punish our farmers, the people who put food on our plate, without a second thought of what the effect is going to be.

We talked to some witnesses today in the agriculture committee and one witness laid out three things that this government has done and wants to do that will affect food prices. Number one, he said, was the carbon tax. Number two was P2 packaging where the government wants to make sure that, in Canada, we cannot use plastics to ship fruit and vegetables, which the U.S.A. has already said it is not going to do, and so it is going to cut the supply of fruit and vegetables in our country. Number three is the fertilizer reduction targets. Those three things are what this witness said is going to inflate the cost of food exponentially year after year. This is from people who are on the ground from the fruit and vegetable growers in Ontario.

So, are we not going to believe a carbon tax bill that we saw from Saskatchewan where they were paying almost as much in taxes as in gas supply? Are we not going to believe members from the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, APAS, who are on the ground tilling the soil and planting the seeds who have said that \$150,000 for a 5,000-acre farm will destroy farms in Saskatchewan, because it will make them unsustainable, which will lower supplies again? Are we not going to believe a dairy farmer who says that it is going to cost more and more each year to heat their barn with this carbon tax?

Orders of the Day

The PBO said that, by 2030, farmers will be paying \$1 billion a year in carbon tax. My friend for Huron—Bruce, who has put this through on a private member's bill, talked about the GST and HST that we pay on the carbon tax, which is about \$490 million a year. So, combined, the carbon tax and then the tax on the tax is going to be \$1.5 billion automatically out of farmers' pockets, and people do not think that is going to have an effect on food prices. That is irrational. It is taking \$1.5 billion out of farmers' pockets.

How are we going to make that up? Two things will happen: one, consumers will see that on the till at the grocery store, and prices will increase because farmers have to make that up; or two, farmers go out of business, and no farms, no food. If we lower the food supply in Canada, that will also increase the food cost. Members can see, and I agree with my friend from Winnipeg, that either way, consumers in rural or urban Saskatchewan are going to have to pay more for food.

At this point in time I would like to move an amendment, which will be seconded by the member for Battle River—Crowfoot. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following: "the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, presented on Tuesday, June 13, 2023, be not now concurred in, but that it be recommitted to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food with instruction that it amend the same so as to: (a) take into consideration that Bill C-234, An Act to amend the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act, has been amended by the Senate in a way that will prevent farmers from getting a carbon tax carve-out for grain drying, barn heating and other farm operations, and that since the Parliamentary Budget Officer has made clear that this bill, in its original form, would save Canadian farmers \$1 billion by 2030, reducing the cost of food for Canadian families currently struggling to afford groceries; and (b) recommend that the House adopt the motion rejecting the Senate amendments as soon as possible.

• (1930)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is in order.

Continuing with questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre has the floor.

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I see that we are surrounded by folks who are about to be riveted by the exchange, and I do not want to delay too long the late show, which I know is about to take place between my two colleagues.

I would just like to ask my hon. colleague from Regina if he could comment on the shift in economic policy we are seeing in places such as the European Union, where they are beginning to incorporate tariffs on imports from jurisdictions that are not seriously tackling a price on pollution. I would be curious to know what he or his leader would do, should they find themselves faced with having to create policy on behalf of the Government of Canada, in relation to our trading partners, on imports and that very critical component of a price on pollution, which they are starting to take seriously.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, I will say this about what is going on, and members will not see this on mainstream TV. In Europe right now, farmers are in an uprising because of the terrible policies governments have foisted upon them. Whatever is going on in Europe and the European Union, they should keep it there because their farmers are protesting and taking to the streets.

We should make sure that our farmers are happy, that we put policies in place that respect farmers, that we listen to what farmers are doing on the ground, and that we make sure they get it right so we do not copy anything that is going on right now in Europe when it comes to farm policies.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this debate. I know that the agriculture committee had very valuable conversations when it heard from a host of witnesses.

I specifically want to ask my friend from Regina—Lewvan about his interactions with farmers and others within the food supply chain. We have endeavoured to explain that rising costs are a feature, not a flaw, of the Liberal-NDP coalition's carbon tax, and the carbon tax affects every stage of the process. Take a loaf of bread. From the farmer who grows the grain, to the trucker who ships it, to the baker who bakes it, to the grocery store that sells it and to the person who buys it, through every step of the process of that slice of bread getting on somebody's plate, the carbon tax is being paid.

I wonder if my friend from Regina could share the conversations he has had with farmers and those at every other stage of the supply chain about the impact that the carbon tax has on what Canadians ultimately pay for the food they buy at the grocery store.

• (1935)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, today we got an Order Paper answer for the Conservative member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, which said that the Liberal government is not even tracking how much the carbon tax is reducing emissions. It really is mind-blowing that the Liberals have a flagship policy but are not tracking it to see whether it is successful or not.

What I am hearing from people on the ground is that they believe that the fact of food price increases because of the carbon tax is not a flaw but a feature of the Liberal-NDP carbon tax. They believe this is what it was intended to do, because they do not realize what the policies are that actually affect farmers, and how much they do so. I do not believe that the NDP and Liberal members thought the carbon tax would go up to \$15,000 for a 5,000-acre farm in Saskatchewan, but that is the effect it has had. Just imagine when the carbon tax goes to \$170 a tonne. What is that going to do to consumers across Canada when they go to buy groceries?

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Farmers are price-takers. Input costs are going up and up, and they see a government that wants to keep kicking out their feet, instead of giving them the opportunity to be successful, by putting policies in place.

I am so proud of our agriculture producers. There is a study by from the Global Institute for Food Security, out of Saskatchewan, that said our producers create fewer emissions than any other comparable jurisdiction in the world. Agriculture in Canada produces 8% of our total emissions. We should be trumpeting that at every international event we go to and showing how proud we are of our farmers. They are producing more and doing it with fewer emissions than farmers in any other country. That is what we should be talking about on the world stage to make sure that more countries are following Canada's leadership when it comes to agriculture and agriculture emissions.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to enter into debate on such an important subject: food security and the price Canadians pay for food.

I appreciated the amendment that my friend from Regina moved, which I had the opportunity to second. It gives very clear instructions to ensure that this concurrence motion not be concurred in and that it be sent back to committee so we can really get to the root cause of what is forcing Canadians to pay more.

I asked a question earlier about the entire food supply chain, because a lot of people in our country, I think, take for granted the fact that we do have a secure food supply chain. We go to the grocery store, and there is food on the shelves. We have rules and regulations in place that ensure Canadians can trust the food they buy. There is an ingredient list on there that they can count on to ensure there is trust in the process. When meat is brought through the supply chain, it is safe, and we do not have to worry about diseases and things that, throughout human history, have been detrimental to the longevity of people.

I am proud to be the fifth generation to farm in Alberta's special areas and for five generations, I have been proud to help steward that land. I will get to that discussion in a moment. When it comes to where food starts, it starts with the farmers and the ranchers, those who grow and raise the food we eat.

Then, there is the food supply chain, from the farmers and ranchers who start the process, whether it is a grain operation, like my family is proud to be a part of, whether it is a rancher, and I am proud to represent so many of them, or whether it is more modern techniques like greenhouses.

Then there is a stage that one would call the entire food supply chain. I will get to the specific relevance of the carbon tax in just a moment, but when the carbon tax is applied at the first stage of the process, and when the Liberals increase the carbon tax to the degree they are planning to, it will cost an average farmer \$150,000 a year, and those costs have to go somewhere.

However, in every step of the food supply chain, there are increased costs. From the farmer to the trucker who moves it from the farm to a storage facility, there are increased costs.

I will use the example of a loaf of bread. The carbon tax is on every step of the process, from the transportation of the raw commodities to be ground into flour, to the flour going to the baker and then into the ovens. It sounds like the Liberals now want to have a special tax for wood-burning stoves, which is quite something. Let us talk about ludicrous and ridiculous.

Then, there is the cost of packaging that food for the supply chain and the cost of its transportation to the grocery store. There is a carbon tax on the cost of heating that grocery store. There is a carbon tax on the cost associated with somebody driving to the grocery store to get their groceries. There are costs at every step of the process. That is the consequence of the carbon tax. Rising costs are a feature, not a flaw, of the Liberal carbon plan.

As I wrap up my discussion, I would say it is time to stop punishing those who are best equipped to lower food prices. It is time to start celebrating and rewarding them and to make sure they are well-equipped to be the champions of the environment and of lower prices. That means axing the tax so that Canadian farmers and the entire Canadian food supply chain can bring down the price of food so that Canadians can afford to eat.

Let us bring it home for Canadians in a way that ensures we do not send Canadians to food banks for the bare necessities. Let us bring prosperity back to this country and lower prices. That is what the Conservative plan will do when we axe the tax and bring home lower prices for everybody.

• (1940)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, Conservative priorities are to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. When it comes to our plan to axe the tax, let us be clear that increasing the cost of transportation is not a bug associated with the carbon tax, but a designed feature of it. The purpose of a carbon tax policy is to increase the cost of transporting people and goods, supposedly to deter that transportation. The problem is that people still need to eat and to get around, and in the process, they end up paying more without the supposed impacts on emissions.

That is why Conservatives are proposing to axe the tax, and we are opposed to the intentional policy of the NDP-Liberal coalition to increase prices on the transportation of food, people and other goods. Can the member speak to the importance of, and the benefits associated with, our proposal to axe the tax?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, that is exactly the important point that it seems like every other political entity in this place forgets. At every stage of the food supply chain or when it comes to transportation, whether that is a mom taking her kids to hockey practice, a school bus taking kids to school, trains carrying the goods from our ports, ships taking our goods overseas or bringing in goods from other places, increased cost is the design of the carbon tax. That is not serving the best interests of Canadians.

Orders of the Day

What is so unfortunate about this entire conversation is that for the last eight-plus years that this has been a debate, the Liberals have claimed one thing on the carbon tax but, truly, it is meant to punish Canadians at every step of the process, to change their behaviour. That is the way that they describe it.

It is time to axe the tax so that we can bring down the price of everything for Canadians and ultimately empower Canadians to make sure that they are best equipped to make decisions that work for them. It is freedom and it is time to bring home that freedom, whether it is at the grocery store or every other aspect of Canadian society.

It is time to bring it home.

• (1945)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, time and time again, we hear from the Liberals and the NDP, the costly coalition, that the government is doing well. They speak numbers about where they are at, according to other OECD countries, when it comes to GDP or debt-to-GDP ratio.

We heard in Saskatchewan, under the socialist NDP for so long in the 90s, that the government was doing well.

If this Liberal-NDP costly coalition is doing so well, why are Canadians hurting so much?

Why is food bank usage at two million people per month?

If the government is doing so well, why have Canadians never had it so bad?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I think of some quotes of some famous Conservative politicians throughout history.

Ronald Reagan said that the most terrifying words in the English language are “I’m from the government, and I’m here to help.”

The late, great Prime Minister Winston Churchill, of the United Kingdom, said, “I contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle.”

The evidence is clear. We see the evidence today in the heartbreaking stories that my Conservative colleagues and I hear on a daily basis. When the government does well, Canadians are hurting.

It is time to make sure that we bring some common sense back to the agenda and objectives of government, to make sure that when it comes to the carbon tax, we take those billions of dollars out of the hands of bureaucrats and politicians in our nation's capital and make sure that we bring down the price of food.

I recently heard a heartbreaking story of a senior at a grocery store who had to put items back because her bill was too expensive. She knew she could not afford it.

When the government is doing well, it means that the people of that country are suffering. It is time to bring home some common sense and remember that the government should be the servant, not the master, of the people. That has been forgotten in our country.

Conservatives will right that ship and ensure that, once again, the government serves the people of this country.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I hear from the opposite side that they are always talking about the carbon pricing system, half of it, but I do not hear them ever talking about the rebate that people in their communities are receiving.

The average family of four in Alberta would be receiving \$386 four times a year, plus, if they are in a rural area, they actually get a rural top-up.

When they are talking with constituents about carbon pricing, are they also asking constituents how they feel about the fact that they are not going to be getting that rebate cheque? That is money right into their accounts, \$386, four times a year, plus the rural top-up.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, sometimes they just make it way too easy. We have a Liberal member bragging about giving Canadians back the money that they took from them. Forgive me if I disagree with Liberal logic on this.

When Conservatives say we want to axe the tax, we simply want to empower Canadians, who are in the best position to make choices when it comes to the food they eat and the vehicles they drive, and not raise costs only to then send it back to a few people based on a formula, which they certainly did not consult with the people of Alberta on.

In fact, the majority of provinces in this country have actually elected governments that do not support the carbon tax. That is something the member should not forget when trying to impose that left-leaning ideology that has been so destructive on the people of my province, as an example.

It is time to bring some common sense back to the conversation. The member talks about the so-called rural top-up. It is 10% more, yet there are devastating impacts. The Parliamentary Budget Officer himself made it very clear that 60% of Canadians end up paying more in direct and indirect costs, because every stage of the food supply chain, the transportation sector, etc. ends up paying the carbon tax.

It was dishonest of the Liberals to claim it was a revenue-neutral tax, because it is not; it costs hundreds of millions of dollars a year to administer. Then they say that Canadians get more back than they pay into it. That was dishonest as well. At every step of the process, it is time to axe the tax, so that we can empower Canadians to make the decisions that are best for them.

In this case, they so flippantly suggest that they are somehow solving the problem by intentionally raising prices. No. Let us lower the price of food for Canadians, so that Canadians can afford to eat, heat their homes and live the Canadian dream that the Prime Minister and the Liberals have taken away from them.

• (1950)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, our Liberal colleague just gave us a glimpse into the Liberal psyche. She said we never talk about the rebates when it comes to the carbon tax. My colleague from Battle River—Crowfoot hit the nail on the head: We do not have to give the money back to Canadians if we do not take it in the first place.

My colleague mentioned a couple of really great things when it comes to Conservative principles. Another one is Margaret Thatcher. She said the best thing I have ever heard about socialism: “The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people’s money.” That is what the Liberal government is starting to do. We cannot tax Canadians into oblivion and then wonder why they cannot afford food. We have taxed Canadians so much. That is why there are two million Canadians lined up to go to the food bank.

Does my colleague agree that Liberals would not have to give so much money back to Canadians if they were not taking it in the first place?

Mr. Damien Kurek: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that, because my colleague from Regina—Lewvan is absolutely right. He mentioned the socialist extremes that Saskatchewan faced throughout some of its history and how that ideology held that province back.

I know that for the four years during which the accidental NDP ruled over Alberta, there was pain and suffering. Hundreds of thousands of jobs were lost, and taxes were imposed that certainly the people of Alberta did not vote for. I know now, across this country, we are seeing the devastating consequences of a government that thinks it is, and this comes back to the comments I made before, the master and the king, that it has the right to impose upon the people.

It is time to reorient the priorities of government. It is time for a Conservative government, which will make sure its people are the masters, not the government, and respect Canadians’ decisions and their hard-earned dollars. We will axe the tax and bring home lower prices for everybody.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate.

There being no further speakers rising, pursuant to order made earlier this day, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested.

Pursuant to Standing Order 66, the recorded division stand deferred until Wednesday, February 7, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Adjournment Proceedings

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates has been gripped by the arrive scam scandal: the way the government spent \$54 million on a glitchy app that did not work and the fact that it chose GC Strategies, a two-person company that did no actual IT work and simply subcontracted all the work.

How did this happen? Who was responsible? Who had the relationships with GC Strategies? Who created the procurement system that allowed a two-person company that does no IT work to get this contract and, essentially, to simply be able to receive and subcontract the work? This is the work the government operations committee has been trying to get to the bottom of.

The government is now intimidating witnesses who spoke out at committee. Here is what happened. Supposedly there was an ongoing internal investigation within the government into what happened in the context of the ArriveCAN procurement. The investigator in this case is not independent; this is an internal investigation. The so-called investigator reports through the existing chain of command within CBSA. He effectively reports to people who could be under a cloud of suspicion in the context of the investigation.

On November 7, 2023, two witnesses, Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Utano, came before the government operations committee. In response to questions, in particular from Conservatives, they gave devastating testimony. They identified people inside the government who, they said, were lying and were covering up information. They identified conversations that happened between the minister’s office and the senior public servants that were filtered to them. While other public servants were very reserved and limited in their responses to questions, Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Utano gave very direct and very forthright responses that were critical of actions taken by others, especially more senior people within the chain of command.

Surprisingly, almost immediately after that, on November 27, Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Utano received a letter saying that they were the subject of internal investigation. They had not been notified of this before. Coincidentally, apparently, they were told they were under investigation immediately after they offered critical testimony at committee. Then the government went further and suspended these senior public servants from their jobs without pay, even though the internal investigation has not been completed. There is an ongoing internal investigation not complete, yet two people have been suspended without pay.

Adjournment Proceedings

This is very suspicious. The government is under a cloud of suspicion over this procurement, so it has an internal investigator; however, the internal investigator has not even completed the investigation but has submitted interim findings that apparently point the finger at people who have been critical of the same senior public servants to whom this investigator in fact is subject, and they have been suspended without pay.

This very clearly, given the timeline, looks like retaliation against public servants who have spoken out about the arrive scam scandal. There is a big problem here. There is the underlying issue of corruption in the arrive scam contracting, \$54 million to a company that did no actual work but just subcontracted all of the work, but then there are people who have provided testimony about it, not the testimony the government wanted to hear, apparently, who are suddenly suspended without pay.

How does the government justify retaliating against witnesses who criticize it?

• (1955)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we expect procurement processes to be properly followed and any person who commits wrongdoing to face the appropriate consequences.

As my colleague knows, the president of the CBSA has referred allegations of misconduct received in 2022 to its professional integrity division, which has been actively working on its administrative investigation since then.

The president of the CBSA has already implemented changes in how the agency manages and oversees procurement. Better controls and oversight have been put in place, including those people with procurement authority in headquarters retaking their training. Also, it is having a senior committee review every task authorization and is centralizing procurement responsibilities within the organization. These controls will be calibrated over time with a fuller of understanding of what happened and why. This will also be informed by the internal review that is ongoing with respect to the contract documents associated with ArriveCAN.

The CBSA has also suspended its contracts with three companies, including GC Strategies, through a stop-work order from Public Services and Procurement Canada. While investigations are ongoing, it is committed to acting on findings from all audits and reviews to inform the future of contractual arrangements. The CBSA will continue to work with PSPC to improve procurement practices and processes.

I will conclude by stating that the current investigations should not in any way undervalue or dishonour the incredible work the frontline border officers and all CBSA employees do every single day to serve and protect Canadian citizens at the border and in support of our country's prosperity.

• (2000)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, in the midst of this gross corruption scandal, we continue to get bureaucratic non-answers from the NDP-Liberal government.

I had a very simple question that was not answered, so I will ask that simple question again. Why were two senior public servants suspended without pay in the middle of an investigation only after they had offered testimony critical of more senior public servants and the government? Why were they suspended after their testimony?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, we understand and take very seriously the concerns that have been expressed by the hon. member. This government is committed to transparency and accountability. The CBSA and the RCMP are investigating the allegations and the government welcomes these ongoing investigations.

The CBSA was fully engaged with the Office of the Procurement Ombud and will implement its recommendations. The agency will also make improvements based on the upcoming report of the Office of the Auditor General and its own internal review of contracting. The president has also already implemented measures to strengthen and improve procurement processes and internal controls.

I assure all Canadians that the government will continue to prioritize efficiency, accountability and transparency in the management of public resources.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, in October of this past year, I asked the government about its selective reversal of the carbon tax for Atlantic Canadians who heat their homes with fuel oil. Incidentally, about 25% of Atlantic Canadians heat their homes with fuel oil, as opposed to 6% in the rest of the country and about 0% in my province of Alberta. However, there is no reduction offered elsewhere in Canada, just in Atlantic Canada. The rationale was explained by the government's Newfoundland regional minister, who said that perhaps people need to elect more Liberals in the Prairies. It is a rare moment of frank honesty from a Liberal minister on how to get financial advantage in Canada. It is easy. Just get on the Liberal gravy train.

However, I am sure it gutted the two Liberal members from Alberta. Respectfully, both of these members have proven good at one thing in particular in Parliament, which is mindlessly reading out clearly ridiculous Liberal talking points on a number of issues. The member for Edmonton Centre, the one who responded to my question, is a minister. He just obfuscated in response to my question. I do not blame him. His colleague the minister from Newfoundland's public assessment about his lack of engagement on this file for his constituents must have stung for quite a while.

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Let us get some real perspective on this. The carbon tax on clean-burning natural gas rose this past April by about 27%, to \$3.33 per gigajoule. It is going up again this April Fool's Day to \$4.21 per gigajoule. It is interesting that this tax on clean-burning natural gas is more than the cost basis of the commodity itself. The average in 2023 was only \$2.50. Incidentally, people pay GST on top of the carbon tax, a tax on a tax that is also increasing.

On January 13 this year, residents in the riding of Edmonton Centre felt temperatures drop to -45°C. The average home was using about twice as much natural gas as usual to keep residents safe and warm. Here is the outcome. It gets cold in the Prairies every winter, and the government benefits by collecting more taxes. Cold weather in the Prairies is a gift that keeps on giving to the government, but it is not free. It is an increasing transfer from the pockets of constituents of Edmonton Centre and other Canadians on the Prairies to the Liberal government. Therefore, the member for Edmonton Centre should feel the sting when his colleague announced his ineffectiveness in representing his constituents to all Canadians.

I know the response to my question is going to include one or a few Liberal bromides, such as we should not worry and the government is spending this money to make all things better, neither of which have proven effective. I am going to hear about the virtues of heat pumps and that oil heat in Atlantic Canada costs more than natural gas, so it is only fair, but whatever is said, it will not excuse the Alberta Liberal members of the House for failing to speak for their constituents and the regionally disproportionate share of the carbon tax the government collects from Canadians who live on the Prairies.

I am asking again if the government's exemption from carbon taxes by region, for political purposes, should properly be reduced for all Canadians, regardless of how they stay safe and warm in the winter.

• (2005)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to address a couple of issues in what the member opposite just raised.

The first part is to take into account the very real issue of climate change. It is frustrating when I hear from members opposite not only that they do not have a climate plan but also that they have accepted and are willing to just let the planet burn at this point. That is unacceptable.

We are seeing drought right now in Alberta, for example. People are talking about the fact that they are not going to be able to use as much water in their daily living. We have been seeing wildfires across the country, including in northern Ontario; massive hurricanes impacting Atlantic Canada; and all sorts of other natural disasters. Those things are impacting people's daily lives. When people's homes are at risk and are being damaged by these things, it is impacting the cost of living. It is leading to increased insurance costs because of the fact that people are having to do repairs or are losing their homes. The way that the fees are being considered by insurance companies is takes into account these natural disasters.

Climate change is real.

The next part, though, is about carbon pricing. It is so frustrating to listen to the complaints being made about carbon pricing, because they are factually inaccurate. I say that because there is an economist from the University of Calgary, the home city of the member opposite, who did a study looking at how the carbon pricing system works in federally backstopped provinces. The conclusions to that study were that, if the carbon price was cancelled tomorrow, the people who would benefit the most are the people who earn over \$250,000. That is not the affordability crisis that people in my community are talking about.

People in my community, when they talk about issues, talk about how we help the people who have the greatest need. Those are not the people who earn over \$250,000, and those are the people who would be benefiting from the proposal that the Conservatives are putting forward. It makes no sense. They do not like hearing about how eight out of 10 people are better off with the carbon rebates and the system that we have in place for carbon pollution pricing, but it is true. As I said, it has been backed up by further research, including from his own home province. I would hope that the Conservatives would take that into account when they are doing this analysis.

When we are talking about issues around how we help people with fuel switching or reducing the cost of heating their homes, the oil to heat pump affordability program actually does that. That is applicable in the provinces that are signing up to help make it work. I would ask the member to please look into that option as well.

If we are talking about affordability, because that is the other main issue that we are bringing forward, we are also talking about things that we have made changes in, such as the Canada child benefit. There has actually been a massive reduction of child poverty right across our country. The Canada child benefit is a program that we brought into place. The Conservatives were sending \$100 cheques to millionaires. We changed that system so that, now, the people who need it the most are getting the help. Statistics Canada, in their studies, has found that it is having an impact.

We are fighting climate change, and at the same time, we are going to be working on affordability and reducing poverty across our country.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, as I predicted, there were Liberal bromides in there by the dozen. I am not sure, but there was confusion in the talking points that came back at us here. However, we heard a whole bunch in there. We heard "climate change is real". We heard "let the planet burn," as she stated in her speech. I do not think anybody has ever said that.

The question was about fairness of the applicability of the carbon tax and how it is not being applied fairly. It is being applied politically at this point in time, as opposed to judiciously across the country. I did not hear one response in that jumble that actually told us why it costs less for Atlantic Canadians than people on the Prairies are being charged. That is a mindless approach rather than how we actually need to address the way we tax Canadians.

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This is a tax on Canadians, and nothing but. It is a regionally specific, very targeted tax on people who do not have as much political representation as that member would like them to have in her party.

● (2010)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I am going back to the main issues I spoke about. This is about fairness and making sure that we are protecting Canadians right across this country from natural disasters that are impacting their homes and their livelihoods.

We are taking actions. These actions include the carbon pricing system and others as well, which are so important as part of an entire, cohesive system that works together. We are going to keep on standing up for Canadians and fighting climate change. I hope that the members opposite will join us in that.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to finally be able to rise and be a part of the discussion here this evening. I am looking forward to bringing it home for the evening. I rise tonight to follow up on a previous question posed about the carbon tax impacting first nations.

Before I get to that, I just want to talk about the current state of Indigenous Services Canada as a whole. The government is spending a lot of money. It likes to talk about how much it has increased spending, but what we have seen in recent reports is that when it comes to Indigenous Services Canada, this increase in spending has not led to a similar equivalent increase in the ability of the department to achieve its targets. Despite the money going out the door, it is not actually getting to where it needs to go. The government is funding high-priced consultants and bloating the bureaucracy, but it is not getting to the first nations or the indigenous communities that rely on this critical funding. That is why, unfortunately, 10 drinking water advisories remain in the Kenora district out of 28 overall on first nations across the country.

This is especially of concern to me, because I recently found out through a written Order Paper question to the government that 94% of Indigenous Services Canada employees at the executive level received bonuses last year. That represents a cost of over \$3.6 million to the department. Again, this is a department that is not achieving the targets that it set for itself, yet the government has seen fit to give big bonuses to executive-level staff. I know the 42 chiefs of first nations in my district could have found much a better use for that \$3.6 million. I believe that just shows how out of touch the government is.

I said that to set the groundwork, because, with all of that happening with the current government, it is also driving up the cost of living for first nations with the carbon tax. We know that this is a tax on everything. It impacts all of the goods that people need to buy. In fact, Chiefs of Ontario, which represents 133 first nations, nearly a third of which are in the Kenora district, is taking the government to court. They are actually arguing that the carbon tax leaves them worse off and breaches the principles of reconciliation. Once again, they are arguing that the carbon tax breaches the principles of reconciliation, a very serious claim and, I think, one that up until now the government has completely disregarded, as it did in my previous question.

I would just like to ask once again when the government will finally show some common sense and axe this tax for good for first nations, farmers and families right across the country.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am going to focus on the part the member opposite raised that concerns carbon pricing because that was the subject of this Adjournment Proceedings question. Therefore, while I have a lot of respect for the member opposite, I will ask him to seek his answers about the Indigenous Services Canada issues he is raising at another time.

When we are talking about carbon pricing, I appreciate the question he has raised. I just want to talk a bit about the way the carbon pricing system works, where there is a federal backstop such as in Ontario. The federal carbon price is revenue-neutral, with proceeds from the federal carbon pricing system being returned to the jurisdiction where they are collected. Provinces and territories that requested the federal system receive these proceeds directly; they can use it as they see fit. However, in other jurisdictions, which would be like those in Ontario, the federal government is returning proceeds to individuals, families, business owners, farmers and indigenous governments through direct payments and targeted programs. This helps make the carbon pricing more affordable and enables households to make investments to increase energy efficiency to further reduce emissions.

The question that the member had raised was specifically regarding indigenous communities, so I do want to address that piece. The Government of Canada recognizes the unique circumstances of first nations, Inuit and Métis people and is returning 1% of the fuel-charge proceeds to indigenous governments in jurisdictions where the federal fuel charge programming is in effect. A total amount of \$282 million, representing 1% of the proceeds collected from 2020-21 to 2023-24, is being returned to indigenous governments in eight provinces: Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Environment and Climate Change Canada is working collaboratively with first nations in Ontario, including the Chiefs of Ontario, on the process to transfer \$160.6 million in fuel charge proceeds to indigenous governments in Ontario specifically.

The Government of Canada's objective is to return these proceeds in a way that supports economic reconciliation and that helps to strengthen indigenous-Crown partnerships on climate action. The Government of Canada acknowledges the concerns that the Chiefs of Ontario and other indigenous partners have raised and continues to explore potential solutions to address the impacts of carbon pricing on first nations, Inuit and Métis people.

● (2015)

Mr. Eric Melillo: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the response from the member opposite. She mentioned that it is 1% of proceeds, as she put it, that the government is returning to indigenous communities. That is obviously a very low amount and, frankly, does not cut it, as evidenced by 133 first nations taking the government to court. These are communities, many of them remote, northern communities, in my area that rely on heating fuels and rely on transportation, either by vehicle on the ice road in the winter or by aircraft, just to be able to get out of their community and to access critical services. They need to use gas to do that, and this carbon tax is driving up the cost of everything. Why do the Liberals not finally axe the tax for good?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, Canada has repeatedly heard from first nations that ambitious global and domestic action

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is needed to address climate change. It recognizes the importance of first nations climate leadership and the need for the federal government to support self-determined action to advance climate priorities. That is why Canada has committed to advancing first nations climate leadership as the cornerstone of Canada's response to climate change.

In collaboration with the Chiefs of Ontario and other first nations partners from across Canada, we are working together to develop a first nations climate leadership agenda. It is an important opportunity to develop a joint road map on how to improve Canada's partnership with first nations on climate, and it will enable us to meaningfully implement the declaration in our climate action.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:18 p.m.)

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