



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

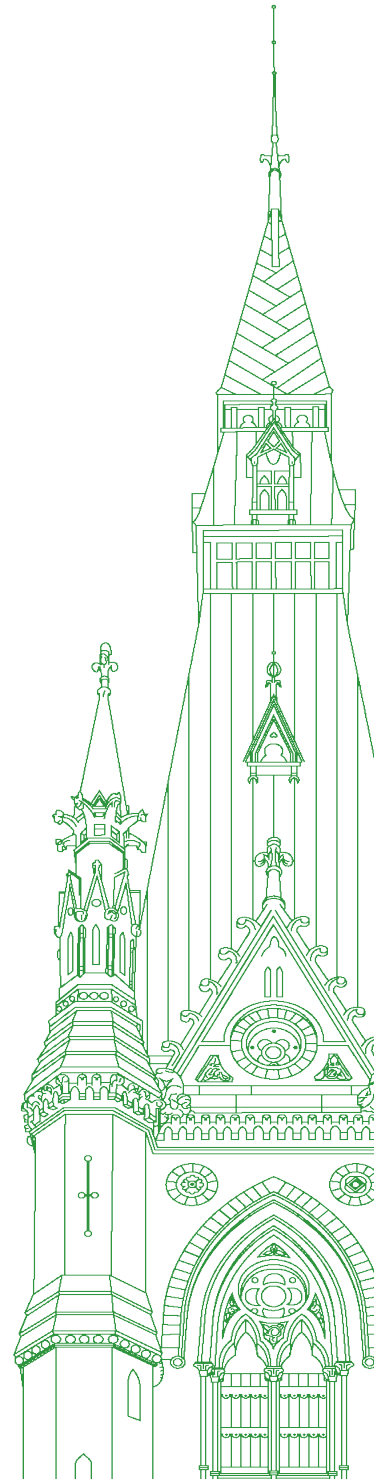
44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 19, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

PUBLIC SECTOR INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 38(3.3) of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, a case report of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), this report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

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[*English*]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Deputy Speaker: It is also my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 7(3) of the Auditor General Act, the spring 2024 reports of the Auditor General of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), these documents are deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and in accordance with the enhanced transparency requirements set out in the amended policy on tabling of treaties in Parliament, I am pleased to present to the House of Commons the Government of Canada's objectives for negotiations for a Canada-Ecuador free trade agreement.

The Government of Canada intends to commence negotiations with Ecuador as soon as practicable, but in accordance with the policy, the commencement of the negotiations will take place no later than 30 days from today.

* * *

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Special Advisor for Water, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), and consistent with the policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Amendments to Appendices I and II of the Convention on International Trade and Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora”, adopted at Panama City from November 14 to 25, 2022, and “Amendments to Appendix III of the Convention on International Trade and Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora”, notified on November 16, 2020; March 24, 2021; March 15, 2022; March 24, 2022; October 13, 2022; November 3, 2022; November 25, 2022; February 3, 2023; and February 20, 2023.

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[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

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

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, concerning Bill C-319, an act to amend the Old Age Security Act regarding the amount of the full pension, which I and all the members of my political party, the Bloc Qu  b  cois, are advocating for.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report it back to the House without amendment.

I sincerely thank the committee for its work and for allowing me to present the report this morning.

• (1005)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Ren   Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, entitled “Briefing by the Minister of Canadian Heritage on her Mandate and Priorities”.

Routine Proceedings

I thank the committee for this short report, which I am very proud to present today.

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[English]

MOTOR VEHICLE TRANSPORT ACT

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-385, an act to amend the Motor Vehicle Transport Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to introduce my private member's bill, an act to amend the Motor Vehicle Transport Act.

This bill aims to harmonize Canadian logging device rules with our southern neighbours. It proposes a 240-kilometre radius ELD exemption from the start and end points of a journey transporting livestock or insects, such as honeybees.

This common-sense Conservative bill would give agriculture transporters the flexibility they need to safeguard the welfare of livestock if they are faced with unforeseen circumstances while loading or unloading, as well as during their journey, that may cause drivers to go over their ELD allotted hours.

I would like to thank the constituent stakeholders whom I met with and worked with together to bring this bill forward. I also thank the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for its work in recommending the provisions of this bill in its 16th report.

Conservatives will always support Canadian agriculture producers to safeguard animal welfare and bring home the best-quality food in the world.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to present a petition signed by more than 16,460 Canadians from every province and two territories, including many Yukoners.

The petitioners call upon the Minister of Justice to bring forward an amendment to the Criminal Code to set out a specific framework for an advance request for MAID. This would be for individuals who have received a diagnosis of a capacity-diminishing, grievous and irremediable medical condition and who would wish an assisted death when they reach an advanced state of decline, their suffering becomes intolerable and diminished capacity prevents them from giving contemporaneous consent.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition for the people of Lillooet.

In 2002, train service to the town of Lillooet was cancelled, resulting in an 82% decline in tourism. Residents in my riding are

calling on the federal government to re-establish rail service to the village of Lillooet for economic and medical needs.

NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I would like to present today is on behalf of correctional officers who are calling on the Government of Canada to stop their failed experiment, noted as the prison needle exchange, at prisons in my riding.

It is not going to result in any better health outcomes. That has been stated by the professionals. Correctional officers want it cancelled now.

LETS'EMOT REGIONAL RECREATION AND AQUATIC CENTRE

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition I would like to raise is on behalf of residents in the eastern Fraser Valley, regarding the Lets'emot Regional Recreation and Aquatic Centre.

Residents of the District of Kent, Harrison Hot Springs and Seabird Island, Cheam, Stó:lo, Sts'ailes, Sq'ewlets, Skawahlook, Popkum and Peters First Nations, as well as Fraser Valley Regional District electoral areas C and D, want a regional aquatic centre. They just want the same thing that people have in larger communities: a pool.

TRANSPORT DRIVERS

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by Canadians calling on the government to address the challenges transport drivers in Canada face.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to make laws and regulations that protect these drivers. This protection includes a transport driver bill of rights; transparent industry contracts; the right for drivers to see what they will get paid; a must-have minimum rate of pay per kilometre for drivers and owner-operators; must-have paid layover, downtime and cancellation fees; access to bathrooms where drivers deliver their goods; a cap on brokerage fees; and mandated rest stations with washrooms across the country for the safety and well-being of drivers. They also call on the government to work with provinces and territories to twin the Trans-Canada Highway.

Transport drivers work hard to bring us what we need every day. They deserve to be treated fairly, with good pay and safe working conditions. The petition recognizes the invaluable service provided by our transport drivers and seeks to ensure they get the rights and protections they deserve.

● (1010)

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to present a petition this morning, signed by over 600 Canadians from across Canada.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to list Russia as a state supporter of terrorism. This measure would allow Canadians to take the Russian Federation to court to sue for damages. It would also send a message that Russia needs to be considered a pariah on the world stage because of its illegal invasion of Ukraine.

I would also like to add that this measure would be of no cost to taxpayers. I am pleased to have the opportunity to present the petition here today.

SPANISH LANGUAGE DAY

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to present a petition to this respected House on behalf of the members of Spanish-speaking communities in Canada, including those in my riding of Davenport.

Canada is proud to be home to over 1.2 million Spanish-speaking individuals, representing a huge cultural and ethnic diversity. For those of Hispanic and Latin American descent who have chosen Canada as a new home, the Spanish language holds profound significance, serving as a vital link to their heritage, identity and traditions.

The petition has gathered thousands of signatures and has the support of Spanish-speaking communities right across our great country, asking that Canada proclaim April 23 as Spanish language day at the federal level. It is a date chosen in memory of the great writer of Spanish letters, Miguel de Cervantes. This designation would serve as a symbolic gesture of solidarity and recognition, further empowering the Spanish-speaking community to thrive and contribute to the multicultural fabric of Canadian society.

FIRST RESPONDERS TAX CREDIT

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents in my riding. They are calling on the Government of Canada to support Bill C-310, which would amend the Income Tax Act to increase tax credits for volunteer firefighting and search and rescue volunteer services.

AIR SERVICE TO INDIA

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to present yet another petition in regard to Canada's airline service between Canada and India. As members know, our Indo-Canadian community has grown significantly over the last decade. It is arguably the fastest-growing community in Canada today. At the end of the day, with that growth and the demand for international flights even from individuals of non-Indo-Canadian heritage, it is believed that having more direct flights from Canada to India would be a positive thing.

From a personal perspective, they are really emphasizing that flights from the city of Winnipeg to New Delhi or Amritsar would be a nice thing to see.

HONG KONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have just one petition today.

It is deeply troubling to see the passage of article 23 in Hong Kong. This is another devastating attack on the people of Hong Kong. It creates a provision that would allow sentences of up to 14

Business of Supply

years of imprisonment if an individual fails to disclose that another person indicates an intention to commit treason. This builds on the national security law of 2020, but it is another devastating action that requires the condemnation of the government. The government should also call for the release of Jimmy Lai.

I am presenting a petition in relation to the situation in Hong Kong that calls on the Government of Canada to recognize the politicization of the judiciary in Hong Kong. In doing so, it could create a mechanism by which Hong Kong people with pro-democracy movement-related convictions could explain such convictions. Therefore, they would not be deemed inadmissible to come to Canada under the criminality provisions of the Immigration Act.

* * *

● (1015)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CARBON TAX

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC) moved:

That, given that 70% of provinces and 70% of Canadians oppose the Prime Minister's 23% carbon tax hike on April 1, the House call on the NDP-Liberal coalition to immediately cancel this hike.

He said: Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost. While the Prime Minister wants to drive up the cost of literally everything, common-sense Conservatives are focused on axing the tax, building the homes, fixing the budget and stopping the crime.

Today, we are going to focus on that first piece of it because, on April 1, the Prime Minister has a cruel April Fool's Day joke planned for Canadians. As if prices were not high enough already, the out-of-touch Prime Minister is going to raise the carbon tax by a staggering 23% in just a couple of weeks.

Business of Supply

I know that I speak on behalf of all my Conservative colleagues when I say that we sympathize with the struggles hard-working Canadians are going through. We see it in our ridings. I have been in grocery stores where well-dressed people who look like they have jobs and have means go through the meat aisle, pick up a package of beef, stare agonizingly at it, and then put it back when they realize they just cannot afford it. That is what life is like after eight years of this Liberal government.

On April 1, those prices are going to go up, yet again. Common-sense Conservatives are fighting all week to spike the hike and to convince the Prime Minister and his NDP coalition partners to, at the very least, not raise it any more. The first thing we can do to help Canadians is to hold the line on this punitive tax and to not make it any worse.

I will deal with some myth-busting of the carbon tax. Do members remember when the Prime Minister promised that the carbon tax would do a few things? First of all, he said that it would be revenue-neutral, that it would help Canada reach its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and that Canadians would be better off with it because of a rebate scheme he had developed.

At this point, I will remind the House that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Those are the three pillars that the Prime Minister built his carbon tax on: revenue-neutral, reduce emissions and help Canada reach its targets, and he would give out more than he would take in from Canadians. Let us bust all three of those myths.

First of all, it is not revenue-neutral. The government keeps a sizable percentage of the carbon tax. In fact, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, or CFIB, estimates that the carbon tax alone costs small business \$2.5 billion, which is \$2.5 billion sucked right out of the economy, and those costs that those businesses have to pay gets passed on to consumers. The government keeps far more of what it collects than it gives out with the carbon tax. That myth is completely busted. That pillar has been completely demolished.

On emissions reductions, let us take a look at what experts say about the Liberal government's plan. It has not helped it hit a single emissions target. The Climate Change Performance Index ranks Canada 62 out of 67 spots. Canada has actually fallen several spots on that ranking under the Liberal government, after eight years of the Prime Minister. Canada now ranks behind countries like Kazakhstan, Algeria and Belarus. Those countries are doing better than Canada under this government. The environment commissioner said that this government was stacking failures on top of failures; that is the environment commissioner the Prime Minister appointed. His own environment watchdog has concluded that this government is stacking failure after failure. It is clearly not an environment plan; it is a tax plan.

Let us take a look at the impact it has on families, which is the third myth that somehow Canadians would be better off if they paid this tax. That has been completely shattered. We know that it adds to the cost of fuel, heating and groceries. Let us take a look at some specifics.

• (1020)

Starting April 1, the carbon tax will add 17¢ to every litre of gasoline and 21¢ to every litre of diesel. We are looking at staggering costs that Canadians just cannot afford. The food experts, the people who monitor the grocery industry and the price of groceries in the aisles, are saying that Canadians are going to have to pay an extra \$700 in grocery prices this year, before the carbon tax hike is even factored in.

If we factor in all of the secondary costs, we can see the ridiculous rebate ruse that the Liberals are trying to sell Canadians. Somehow, magically, if people pay these higher carbon tax costs, the government will take the money, will swoosh it around in Ottawa, and then will spit it back out in various parts at various times, and somehow, Canadians will be better off. The only problem is that once one takes a look at that scheme, it falls apart almost instantly.

What the Liberals did was something very tricky. It was very clever, but very tricky. They designed the carbon tax rebate to only capture the direct costs, which is only what someone sees as the carbon tax on a bill, whether it is filling up one's car with gas or paying one's home heating bill. One will only see that line item cost. That is the only thing that the rebate scheme factors in. However, what it does not factor in is how all those costs in the economy get passed on to consumers. We pay that higher carbon tax every time we buy something that had to be grown or manufactured, that had to be transported, that had to be cooled or refrigerated or that had to be warmed or heated. Any time a retailer has to pay the carbon tax on their heating bills or on their utility bills, all of that gets cascaded on, and consumers and Canadians pay for that.

The rebate scheme captures absolutely none of that, but do not take my word for it. I know many Canadians might say that the Liberals have a tale to tell and that the Conservatives have their perspectives. Let us look at what independent experts say about this part of the carbon tax plan.

The Prime Minister's own budget watchdog, the independent, non-partisan Parliamentary Budget Officer, did this analysis and went through all of the numbers. He broke Canadian families into various groups that he calls quintiles. Basically, he took all Canadian wage earners and divided them up into different groups based on their income levels. This is based on income earners who are the middle group; these are middle-class Canadians who are average, middle-income earners. In Alberta, they would be \$1,400 worse off, and in Saskatchewan, they would be \$929 worse off once the carbon tax is fully implemented. In Manitoba, they would be \$1,000 worse off. In Ontario, they would be \$1,200 worse off. Nova Scotians would be \$1,100 worse off. Prince Edward Islanders would be another \$1,100 worse off. For the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, they would be \$680 worse off, even after the rebate scheme. We are talking about average middle-class Canadians.

If we look at one income bracket just below that group, they are still worse off too. They are not better off. These families are still paying more in the rebate, but that middle group is significant. That is almost \$100 a month that Canadian families just simply cannot afford. They cannot afford groceries, cannot afford to keep the heat on and cannot afford to pay higher costs through the carbon tax. Again, these are the independent analyses of the Prime Minister's own budget watchdog.

The final point I will make is the role the carbon tax plays in inflation. The government tries to say that the carbon tax is not a significant driver of inflation. Let us look at what the Bank of Canada governor himself said. I am just going to quote very briefly from committee evidence, and then I will yield the floor.

Mr. Tiff Macklem, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, told the committee that eliminating the carbon tax would drop inflation by 0.6 percentage points. My colleague from Northumberland asked him to clarify because 0.6% might not sound like a lot. However, when inflation is at 3.8%, with the target of 2%, and if the Bank of Canada can start cutting interest rates once inflation gets closer to the target, that means 0.6% is about a third of the 1.8% that Canada has to eliminate in inflation to get back down to the target so that interest rates can come down. In other words, the carbon tax is responsible for about a third of the extra inflation that is plaguing Canadians and is forcing the Bank of Canada to keep interest rates high. If the government eliminated the carbon tax, it would be one-third of the way to getting inflation back down to the target, which means interest rates and prices can come down.

● (1025)

This week, Conservatives are going to stand with the 70% of Canadians who oppose this carbon tax hike and the 70% of premiers who oppose the carbon tax hike. We are going to fight to spike the hike so we can axe the tax.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we saw the former leader of the Conservative Party twist, bend and jump all over the place to try to justify statistics so that Conservatives can continue their spin of misinformation.

Let us be very clear. There is a carbon tax, and there is a carbon rebate. It is as simple as that. Eighty per cent plus of people will receive more in the rebate than they will pay in the tax. No matter how many somersaults or twisting of the facts the former leader of the Conservative Party does, that is the reality.

Why do Conservative Party members not go around Canada saying they are going to be cutting the carbon rebate? They know full well that the disposal income for 80%-plus of people is going to go down under the Conservative plan.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, it is funny that the hon. member is the one who has to twist, turn and pretzel.

We have to hold up the rebate in just the right light, maybe on the second full moon of the month, and if we have it at the right angle, we might find where someone is better off. This is not my opinion. This is from the independent budget watchdog.

Business of Supply

I can tell all my colleagues participating in the debate today that the Liberals are going to do this all day. They are going to start talking about only the direct costs of the carbon tax, but we know all the experts' analyses have concluded when we factor in all the costs, that retailers have to raise their prices, that shippers have to raise their prices, that producers have to raise their prices and that companies have to pay out lower wages because they are paying a higher share of the carbon tax. When that is all factored in, Canadians are worse off.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has shown that 60% of Canadians pay far more than they get back. The fifth quintile, the fourth quintile and the third quintile of middle income-earning groups are hundreds of dollars worse off, even after the rebate program is factored in.

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative motion today is very short, clear and concise. They are relying on numbers, and I imagine that the Conservative Party is very thorough and does not pull numbers out of a hat. They claim that 70% of Canadians oppose the 23% tax hike that will take effect on April 1. However, if we look at the survey, we see that those numbers apply to the government's decision to exempt heating oil from the carbon pricing legislation, not to the legislation itself.

Did the Conservative Party forget to specify that in its motion?

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, that is not the case at all. We heard the pleas from Canadians who are suffering because of this punitive tax.

[English]

We know Canadians are opposed to the carbon tax, especially the hike in the carbon tax, and it is not just public polling that shows that. Seventy per cent of premiers have urged the government to, at the very least, not hike the tax that is coming on April 1.

The Prime Minister is very divisive. He likes to divide groups of Canadians against each other. He likes to divide regions against each other and provinces against each other, but he is actually achieving something, which is a little rare in Canadian politics. He is creating consensus and unity among premiers from various regions, from west to east, Liberal or Conservative. He is uniting them in opposition against his terrible tax plan.

The carbon tax hike is going to make everything more expensive. Canadians are going to be worse off. They are going to have to pay more, and they are going to lose more money at the end of the month. The rebate program does not cover it. Those are the facts.

Business of Supply

The least the Liberal government could do in a cost of living crisis, as young people are moving back home, as people are moving into tent cities, choosing between heating and eating, is to spike the hike so that prices do not rise any further.

• (1030)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the one area where I agree with the Conservatives is that the carbon tax has not brought down emissions, and it has not brought down emissions because the Liberals believe that the tar sands companies would do the right thing. We had Pathways Alliance and the net-zero plan. We have seen carbon emission decreases across the board, except in big oil where it increases.

As for the carbon tax, Suncor, which was one of the companies that made \$78 billion in profits last year, pays one-fourteenth of the carbon tax that “Joe who fills up his gas tank” has to pay. We gave these companies free money, and we continue to give them free money. They are burning our planet and have no intention of doing the right thing. The Liberals were suckers for believing that Rich Kruger, Suncor, Imperial and the rest of the tar sands companies actually cared about burning the planet. I am sorry. I will retract that because we know the Conservatives do not care about burning the planet either.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, my comrade over there from the politburo actually wants to make my speech illegal. If that member's bill passed and I gave the speech I just gave outside of this chamber, I could go to jail, because that is the mentality of the NDP. Its members want to control speech, stifle debate and impose their views.

However, he did touch on what happens in other countries. Remember, under the government's environment plan, when our European allies came calling asking for Canada's clean LNG to get off Russian oil, that member and his party stood with the Liberal government and said no. It was shameful.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has done a great job in the last little while of uniting the country. There is a great Canadian tax revolt against him and the constant never-ending tax increases that are coming. After eight years, Canadians know they have had enough. They cannot afford the cost of the Prime Minister any longer. He is uniting the country against him and the constant tax increases Canadians are facing.

Seventy per cent of Canadians are opposed to the latest spike in the carbon tax, which is a cruel April Fool's Day joke coming on April 1 that is going to see a 23% increase in the carbon tax at a time when millions of Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. The punishment and the never-ending tax increases under the Prime Minister, which are fully propped up by the NDP every step of the way, are all part of the plan to quadruple the carbon tax in the coming years.

Seventy per cent of Canadians and seven premiers from every part of this country are united against this latest tax hike. It has become so bad that the Liberal Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador has called out the Prime Minister and demanded a stop to this latest increase. Even provincial Liberal parties in New Brunswick and Kathleen Wynne's party in Ontario are against this.

The Ontario Liberal Party is now so tired of the Prime Minister. He is so toxic now and so unpopular that he is uniting the country against him, including the Ontario Liberal Party, which is now coming out and not just saying it wants to spike the hike but even saying it is going to axe the tax entirely. When the party of Kathleen Wynne will not even support the carbon tax anymore, one knows Liberals are on the wrong track. The great Canadian tax revolt is well under way.

The numbers speak for themselves. I am going to talk about a few numbers of fact about the struggle Canadians are going through. Seven hundred dollars is how much more a family of four in Canada is going to pay on their grocery bill in 2024. That does not even factor the increase of the carbon into it. This latest increase, a 23% hike, is going to drive up the cost of food, heating and filling one's car even more.

It is getting worse. Sadly, we have seen food bank reports over and over again these past few years talking about a surge in the number of visits in this country. The Liberals and the NDP say all the time that they have a plan and that their plan is working and helping. It is not. A recent food charity report said that food banks in this country are bracing after record usage in 2023. They are bracing for one million more visits by Canadians to food banks this year. This is insanity.

The Prime Minister and the NDP are absolutely tone deaf to keep doubling down, or quadrupling down, frankly, on the carbon tax and think this is not going to get even worse. It has become so bad for charities that 36% of charities last year had to turn people away because they were running out of resources. The Liberals and the NDP, this costly coalition, are about the only ones left in this country, and there are the very few, who are not getting with the program.

Canadians are tired of the tax hikes. They cannot afford 61¢ a litre on the price of gas in the coming years. It is driving up the cost of living. It is driving up the cost of groceries and the cost of doing business and is taking business away from this country. Even with the abundance of great agricultural land in this country, we are now seeing companies and grocery stores importing food from around the world rather than having it grown here close to home when Liberals are nailing greenhouses with the carbon tax and farmers with an astronomical amount in carbon tax. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars for one grain-drying operation in my riding, and they're on their way to quadrupling it. Enough is enough.

We know the Liberal math and their promises never add up. That is why the budget just does not balance itself. It is because their math never makes sense.

• (1035)

It makes sense to the average Canadian, who knows that it is driving up the cost of their household budget. It is driving up their mortgage now. It is driving up groceries. It is driving up heating. It is driving up having a car and taking one's kids to hockey or to go out and about like Canadians do.

The Liberals promised \$50 a tonne. That is as far as they were going to go with the carbon tax. They broke that promise and they tripled that to about \$170 a tonne, after promising it would not go above \$50. They promised rebates for businesses. For all of the carbon tax that small businesses and businesses pay in this country, they give them zero rebates, let alone the rebates they give to households, which we know, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer says, do not cover the carbon tax costs that families pay. Businesses get nothing.

Liberals broke their promise, and now they are trying to get us to believe in their talking points and their little chart, saying that Canadians are better off with the rebates they get.

It is nonsense. Nobody believes it and neither does the Parliamentary Budget Officer. In his report, the facts are clear. The average family of four in a Canadian province that is projected to get a certain amount back on the rebate are out hundreds of dollars, regardless of which province they live in. If one is in Ontario, one is out, on average, in 2024 and 2025, \$627. For Alberta families, it's \$911, and it's \$502 in Manitoba. The list goes on and on. The more they increase this carbon tax, the bigger the difference, debt and struggle Canadian families are going to face.

One of the important things is to read the fine print when it comes to these Liberals and their NDP coalition partners. They never just give a straight answer. Watch question period any day. They will never give a straight answer.

The carbon tax in the coming years is going to quadruple. Here is how. They do not just do it with one carbon tax. They have two carbon taxes. There is the first carbon tax, which is going to total 37¢ a litre on the price of gas in the coming years. The rebates, as I have just confirmed, do not even cover that. They now have a second carbon tax coming in every part of the country. They “word salad” these things. They changed the name, a “clean fuel standard”. It is a second carbon tax with zero rebates for anybody. That is going to be 17¢ a litre on the price of gas in the coming years.

If that is not bad enough, what really triggers and infuriates Canadians is the fact that the Liberals and the NDP do not have only one carbon tax. They have a second carbon tax and then they tax the tax. They put the GST and HST on carbon tax one and carbon tax two, for a total of 61¢ a litre. They are out of touch.

Here is the thing that, I think, puts the cherry on top of just how out of touch and aloof, after eight years of the Prime Minister, the Liberals and the NDP are. Over the last year, Canadians are united, as I mentioned, more than ever before against the carbon tax and against this latest April 1 increase. The PMO put out talking points last week. The title is “Is the carbon tax suffering from a failure to communicate?”

I am sorry. That was not the PMO. It was the CBC that wrote that article. I am sorry. I think it was probably provided by the PMO to the CBC to write, where they try to defend. Again, the entire argument, for the last year, from the Liberals is that it is just a communication problem, that they are just not explaining themselves enough.

Canadians know themselves. They cannot afford the Prime Minister. They cannot afford this carbon tax. They cannot afford a 23%

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increase on it on April 1, on its way to quadrupling in the coming years. If this was a communication problem, it would have been solved, because the Prime Minister loves photo ops. He loves all of these news conferences and these flashy word salads.

In the last year, as a million more food bank visits are expected this year, more people than ever before are using food banks. There are mortgage defaults. The economic news gets worse. The only thing the Prime Minister has done in the last couple of months is rename the carbon tax. That is how out of touch Liberals are.

This carbon tax and the cruel, latest increase, the never-ending increases, are not a communication problem. They are a tax problem. Canadians have finally realized. They have had enough. It is time.

• (1040)

Spike the hike. Axe the tax, and finally give Canadians some relief.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can understand the argument that the carbon tax would be inflationary. The problem is that the experts do not seem to think that.

For example, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, in September, said that the carbon tax only contributed about 0.15 percentage points to inflation. A Policy Options review in 2023 estimated that carbon taxes increased consumer prices between 2018 to 2023 by 0.6%. Stats Canada, in a B.C. study, figured that only about 0.33% of the increased cost of food was attributable to the carbon tax.

I am not sure where the Conservatives are getting their statistics from, but I would like to hear some of their statistics.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, Canadians agree with the common-sense Conservative consensus that is building across the country. They know it is common sense.

We cannot tax the farmer who grows the food, tax the trucker who ships the food and then tax the stores that sell the food. When they all get no rebate, they pass that cost onto the consumer. The Governor of the Bank of Canada has said the carbon tax is adding to inflation. Nobody believes this when the rebates do not even cover the first carbon tax, and it is on its way up to 61¢ a litre. We cannot add that cost to farmers, to truckers and to businesses.

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Liberals even tax the big bad polluting snowplows, the private and public snowplows. They are putting a carbon tax on clearing snow in this country. They are carbon taxing everything and it is driving costs up. We cannot go and add all these costs and taxes on and just expect it to evaporate. It is driving up inflation. It is driving up the cost of doing business and the cost of living. It is just common sense.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for us, today really feels like Groundhog Day.

It seems like every time there is a Conservative opposition day, it is always about the carbon tax. There are plenty of momentous issues we could be talking about this morning, but we are still talking about the carbon tax. It is so ridiculous.

My Conservative friends and colleagues often talk about the government's inflationary spending. According to the International Monetary Fund, in 2022, the government gave the oil industry \$50 billion in direct and indirect spending. Keep in mind that in 2022, the five biggest oil companies made a combined \$200 billion in profits. This is in addition to the fact that the Liberal budget plans to spend \$80 billion on tax credits for oil companies by 2035. That is not counting the \$34 billion that Trans Mountain is going to cost.

Does my colleague think that all this spending is inflationary spending, yes or no?

● (1045)

[English]

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is like the weather vane of Canadian politics. We just never know where it is going to take its stand.

That member is the one who stood up in the House and said, when talking about the carbon tax, that he wanted to radically increase the carbon tax. He loves the Liberal-NDP coalition. The Bloc Québécois is hopping right on board. They are out of touch and aloof, and we just cannot figure them out anymore, just like the member from the Bloc Québécois.

For that second carbon tax, which is 17¢ a litre added to the price of gas, they are sending that to Ottawa. They are putting a second carbon tax on the province of Quebec and sending all of that money to Ottawa. What has the Bloc Québécois become?

If he is saying there are better things to talk about, I am thinking that with April 1 coming and the need to spike the hike, where we have 70% of Canadians, seven premiers and people frustrated with these never-ending tax increases, he needs to go back to his riding and talk to some real people. They will tell him they are sick of the tax increases in the province of Quebec as well.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I like the member, but of course he does not remember the dismal decade, which was the Harper decade, where the Conservatives made it extremely difficult for people to even live. Seniors were forced to work for years before they got their pensions. Services were axed. I can see the Conservatives reacting because they know how deplorable their record was. They were absolutely ob-

scene. There was \$30 billion a year given to overseas tax havens. Money was poured into oil and gas CEOs. They ravaged this country.

One of the things that I think is very interesting is the climate changer performance index that the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle mentioned earlier. Let us go back to 2014. In 2014, under the Harper government, climate change deniers, we were the fourth worst in the world in terms of our performance against climate change. We know that costs Canadians thousands of dollars every year. Every Canadian pays the price of climate change.

My question is very simple: Why are Conservatives climate change deniers?

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the previous Conservative government, under which we had houses people could afford and food people could afford, and we did not need to have millions of Canadians going to food banks. I am proud of the previous Conservative government, under which there were not tent cities exploding everywhere in this country like they have been in the past few years under the Liberals.

For the record, the NDP owns every single bit of that responsibility, because it propped up the Prime Minister, but I cannot wait for the next election, for several reasons, whenever that may be. Many Canadians are saying, “sooner rather than later, please” because here is the NDP's pitch to help the struggling senior in Burnaby, British Columbia: Put a carbon tax on of 61¢ a litre, drive up the cost of food, drive up the cost of gas, drive up the cost of rent and drive up the cost of losing a home. The NDP, provincially and federally, is complicit.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. That is pure disinformation and the member knows it. B.C. does not have a federal carbon tax, so he is going to have to withdraw his words.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order; it is a point of debate.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, rarely will I challenge my colleague, for whom I have enormous respect, but I think it is not accurate that the member knows he is spreading misinformation. I think he just reads his lines.

The Deputy Speaker: I do not hear a point of order. The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry has the floor.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I always love to hear the NDP. I appreciate its members' interventions proving they just love the carbon tax. They have no problem quadrupling it. Canadians will decide in the next election. I cannot wait.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be sharing my time with the member for St. Catharines.

I am thankful for the opportunity to once again clarify how having a price on carbon is the most effective way of addressing climate change and curtailing its devastating effects on the health and safety of Canadians. I have had an opportunity to go on television a couple of times with my colleague, the failed Conservative leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. He and I have had a couple of debates on this issue, and I am proud to say that Canadians deserve action that addresses the horrific costs associated with climate change.

Also, today in the news, inflation numbers are in, and inflation is down around 2.8% from the high of at 8.1% in June 2022. Over the last three months, food and goods inflation have actually been negative. Groceries are going back down to normal. This is a really encouraging trend, and it is worth noting that it is happening in the context of our fighting climate change and lowering our emissions at the exact same time.

In 2023 we saw a record wildfire season here in Canada. More area was burned, more than double the historic record, and hundreds of thousands of Canadians were evacuated from their homes as a result. I remember that when I was kid, we used to talk about global warming, and there were always images of polar bears and the Amazon rainforest. However, climate change is not in some far-off place; it is right here. It was in the skies of Ottawa last summer when we were working here. There were people with asthma who could not come to work. People were not leaving their homes. There were respiratory distress alerts. In total, the area burned was 18 million hectares, which is two and a half times the previous record set in 1995 and more than six times the average over the past 10 years.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada also concluded that the average annual severe weather claims paid by insurers in Canada could cost more than double over the next 10 years, increasing from \$2.1 billion a year, which is what they are at right now, to over \$5 billion a year, and that must be accompanied by an increase in premium income. Climate change is not free, and pollution should not be free either. There are very real costs associated with having one's house burn down or having to flee one's home and job due to an evacuation order.

We also know from experts and research that the most effective and efficient way to address climate change is to put a price on carbon pollution emissions, which are the chief cause of man-made climate change. The Conservatives on the other side might bellow at me and deny the existence of climate change, as they always do, but it does not change the fact.

Emissions are on their way down in Canada. We have reversed the disastrous Harper legacy of rising emissions up until 2015. We have done that by putting a price on carbon pollution. We have reduced our emissions, and that encourages reductions right across the economy while giving households and businesses the flexibility to decide what changes they are going to make. It also creates incentives for Canadian businesses to develop and adopt new low-carbon products, processes and services.

However, members do not have to believe me that it is being done right, as we are doing here in Canada. There is a gentleman, William Nordhaus, who has a Nobel prize in economics that he was

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awarded in 2018 for his work on carbon pricing and macroeconomics. He said that Canada is getting carbon pricing right, that it is both effective and affordable for consumers and it lowers emissions right across the economy.

This is because the bulk of proceeds from the federal pollution pricing system go straight back into the pockets of Canadians. In provinces where the fuel charge applies, eight out of 10 households continue to get more money back through their quarterly Canada carbon rebate payments than they pay as a result of the federal pollution pricing system. For the fiscal year starting on April 1, a family of four will receive, under the Canada carbon rebate, \$1,800 in Alberta, \$1,200 in Manitoba, \$1,120 in Ontario, \$1,504 in Saskatchewan, \$760 in New Brunswick, \$824 in Nova Scotia, \$880 in Prince Edward Island and \$1,192 in Newfoundland and Labrador.

When I was on one of the TV programs I mentioned earlier with the failed Conservative leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, I asked the member whether he had cashed his cheque, which would have been around \$1,300 as he has a family of more than four in Saskatchewan, and he refused to answer. The Conservatives repeatedly refuse to acknowledge that the rebate program is an effective way to combat the affordability crisis and it is an effective way to lower our emissions. More importantly, for eight out of 10 households, these amounts represent more than they will pay as a result of the federal pricing pollution system. Remember, the federal government does not keep any proceeds from the federal fuel charge. They are all returned to the jurisdiction in which they are collected.

● (1050)

Carbon pricing works and climate change is real. It does not matter how much the Conservatives yell and repeat their slogans and lines written by their campaign team; we know that there are many ways to make affordability a reality in Canada. That is why we have seen the inflation numbers come down. We have seen groceries become a bit more affordable in the last couple of months. That is really positive news.

According to economists, the inflation on food and other goods, like telecommunications, was actually negative over the last couple of months. This is in the context of pricing carbon. If Conservatives are going to say that pricing carbon leads to inflation, then how have we seen a rising price on pollution over the last three years associated with a decrease in our inflation? We know that there are many ways to make life more affordable, and affordability has been a top concern of the government since we got elected in 2015. Serious governments need to have a plan to fight for affordability, the environment, reducing emissions and to fight climate change at the same time.

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Conservatives have been talking about food banks a lot lately, which is important. I volunteer at food banks. I support a lot of poverty reduction and poverty elimination agencies, and I meet with officials from those organizations on a frequent basis. They have a lot of really good recommendations for our government. They have recommendations for a universal basic income and how to expand programs like the Canada child benefit. They have recommendations such as making sure that child care is affordable. Pharmacare is on their agenda. They want to make sure that Canadians can access their vital health care without having to make a decision between paying their bills and paying their medical expenses.

That is why we have been there. None of those food banks, food rescue organizations, poverty elimination experts or economists have pointed to a price on pollution as a cause for unaffordability or inflation, so we are delivering the support where it is most effective, to those who need it most.

People who live in rural communities, like many of my constituents in Milton, face unique realities. The measures we have introduced help to put even more money back into the pockets of families dealing with higher energy costs because they live outside large cities and have more expensive home heating and transportation costs. We have been very clear that we will continue to implement our pollution pricing system while ensuring that we continue to put more money into the pockets of Canadian households.

Most recently, through Bill C-59, the fall economic statement implementation act, which we voted on last night, we introduced measures to advance the government's fiscally responsible plan to build a cleaner, stronger economy. It introduces measures to create well-paying jobs, generate growth and build a cleaner economy that works for everyone by advancing Canada's plan to both fight climate change and lower our emissions, as well as to ensure that families can pay their bills. Making life affordable for Canadians while protecting the environment will always be a priority for our government, and it remains a priority today.

• (1055)

I would like to talk about two things. The first is about following through on a campaign commitment. The government was elected three times on a commitment to fight climate change and lower our emissions. Three times we campaigned on a promise to price pollution. In the hypocrisy of Conservatives, in their 2021 platform they planned to put a price on carbon with their then leader Erin O'Toole, but their failed Conservative leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, went back to his 2019 campaign promise of saying that Canada should be allowed to increase its emissions. He said it again yesterday on television. He has repeatedly said that Canada should be allowed to increase its emissions, which would make climate change worse; it would make sure that Canada is not a leader in fighting climate change on a global scale.

Integrity requires us to follow through on our commitments, and all of the Conservatives ran on a commitment to price carbon. Unfortunately they have taken their jackets off, flipped them inside out, tossed Erin O'Toole to the curb and are back to their 2019 campaign commitment of the failed leader of the Conservative Party,

the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, to ignore climate change altogether.

The second issue I want to address is political maturity. In 2015, emissions were on their way up. We campaigned on a commitment to reverse that trend, lower our emissions and be a leader in fighting climate change around the world. Conservatives, on the other hand, ran on a commitment to do nothing on the environment. They do absolutely nothing on the environment. Their party's official statement on climate change is that there is no human cause for inflation. It requires us to look in the mirror and ask what our plan is.

For two and a half years, Conservatives have said they would like to axe the tax. They have made bumper stickers and hoodies. It is their brand now: Axe the tax. Political maturity requires them to come up with an idea or a plan to replace it with something. If they want to axe the tax, then what are they going to replace it with? I would ask Conservatives what their plan is to tackle climate change.

• (1100)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to take to my feet and ask a question in debate today.

The member opposite talked about political maturity and doing what one says one would do. Does he realize that he ran on a campaign to never increase the carbon tax past \$50 a tonne? That is a commitment he made to the people of Milton. No wonder he is plummeting in the polls after that bush league speech.

The member bends over backwards, trying to ask, “Did he take the money?” He asked the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle if he had cashed his carbon tax rebate cheque. That is Canadians' money in the first place. They earned it.

The Liberals are trying to argue about how to best give the money back to Canadians. How about they do not take it in the first place and stop trying to give Canadians back their money. Let them keep it when they make it.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear a question in the member's statement. However, I will address something that he said. In 2019, that member ran on a commitment, with Erin O'Toole, to price carbon. He went door to door.

An hon. member: That was not in 2019.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, it was in 2021. I am sorry. I get confused because, in 2019, none of them even mentioned climate change as the failed leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, ran on a commitment to ignore climate change. The Conservatives realized that was a failed opportunity, and Erin O'Toole recognized that, if one would like to be the prime minister of this country, they needed to have a plan to lower our emissions and fight climate change.

Clearly the member opposite has amnesia, or he has chosen to go back on his commitment to price carbon. I have a question for him. The amount his family will be receiving in the Canada carbon rebate is \$1,504. That addresses affordability challenges for members of his community. It is also an incentive to lower our emissions.

I hope that the member will join me in making sure his community is aware of that \$1,504—

The Deputy Speaker: We will continue with questions and comments.

The hon. member for Victoria.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it does feel as though the Conservatives do not have any plan to address the climate crisis. They cannot even really admit that there is a climate crisis.

However, the Liberals have failed to communicate what their silver bullet solution is for carbon pricing. To double the rebate right now for rural Canadians and try to gain back some ground, they will be increasing the carbon price on small businesses. The Liberals already owe small businesses and indigenous groups \$3.6 billion.

Why would the Liberals not make big oil pay what it owes by implementing an excess profits tax? We just saw polling that says the majority of Canadians wants an excess profits tax on big oil and gas. Why will the Liberals not do it?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I always say it is refreshing when I have the opportunity to discuss how we fight climate change with the member for Victoria.

Instead of having to listen to Conservatives deny the existence of climate change and deny our leadership opportunity in lowering our emissions and fighting climate change, we get a refreshing opportunity with the New Democrats to discuss how we fight climate change.

I agree with the member. The excess profits of the oil and gas industry are absolutely obscene. Not only that, but what they have done with the oil sands is an environmental disaster. I had the chance to visit Fort McMurray, and we have also heard testimony in the environment committee about the poisoning of the Kearl site through tailings ponds leakages.

There needs to be more accountability from the oil and gas sector. It needs to pay for the mess it has made. We need to ensure that accountability and integrity are there throughout every aspect of our economy.

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Once again, I will say that it is refreshing to talk about how we will fight climate change in the House, not if we will fight climate change, which is always the case with the Conservatives.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate something that was brought up by my colleague here on this side of the House, which was that the Prime Minister said the carbon tax would not be increased past \$50 a tonne.

I recently read Jody Wilson-Raybould's book, in which she said that she had realized that the Liberals will say whatever they have to say to get elected. It is obvious that this is just another broken promise from them.

The member for Milton talked about emitting emissions. I have a very basic question. Does he believe that families that are heating their homes, putting fuel in their gas tanks to take their kids to hockey or to get to work, or feeding their families, are emitting emissions?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, it is a reality in Canada that we live in a cold country in the winter, but it gets pretty warm in the summer. A lot of our goods come from far away, and that requires a lot of transportation costs. Canadians have a carbon footprint.

There is a way we could increase that carbon footprint. We could ignore climate change and say to heck with it, we are just going to let carbon emissions fly and that we do not care about climate change.

However, there is an alternative. We could consider a heat pump. We could consider more fuel-efficient vehicles. We could consider more locally grown produce and meat. These are ways to lower our carbon footprint. We are supporting Canadians through those choices.

In Saskatchewan, where my colleague is from, there is a \$1,504 rebate.

• (1105)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that we are again discussing this today, after we have discussed it time and time again, but I think it was telling for the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek when the member for Milton said, which is quite reasonable, that we need to have a plan to fight climate change, and the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek said, no, we do not. That is the Conservative Party plan.

An hon. member: You are misrepresenting what I said. I said that you do not have a plan. You need to be truthful in this place.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, she is heckling me now because she is quite upset that I am calling her out. She thinks she can heckle and not be called out on it, but clearly, it is climate denial. She is trying to shout me down at the moment.

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Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I have been trying to listen to this dismal debate, but people shouting at each other has lowered the tone even more than it normally would be, so I would ask you to let people say their dismal points so they can go on the record without this kind of bitter batter back and forth.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like you to clarify if, in fact, it is a point of order when a member absolutely misleads the House about what another member said during debate.

The Deputy Speaker: I would caution members not to impugn what other members have said in their speeches to make sure that we treat everyone as honourable members, as we all accept in this chamber. I want to make sure we have a reasonable debate among members of the House.

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, the member across the way clearly misled the House on something my colleague said. I think it is incumbent upon you as Speaker to have him withdraw a comment that was a direct and absolute intentional misrepresentation of something one of my colleagues on this side of the House said.

The member is known for that. You know he is known for that, and it is about time somebody called him on it. I request that you do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the member yelled what I said she said. You can check Hansard and go back to the tapes. I am happy to come back if it was not what the member said. It was loud and clear, and it was caught by Hansard. I suggest you go back to check because it was very clear.

To allow other members to impugn what I heard seems to be hypocritical for those members. They did not hear it and were not being yelled at. I was sitting next to the hon. member. This is preposterous.

The Deputy Speaker: This is why we recognize an individual to speak, and there is a question and comment period afterward so people can be clear in their positions on whatever we are talking about. I would caution members not to put words in other people's mouths. It seems to happen an awful lot in the chamber, and it should not happen. I would ask members to be judicious in the words they use. We will go back to listen to the tapes if that is what we need to do to find out who said what when.

I will ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to continue, but I will caution him. Maybe he could move on to his next point.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, again the Conservatives are saying the quiet part out loud, which is that they deny the existence of climate change, an existential threat to humanity. They come back time and time again with slogans. I have said before that their only environmental plan is to recycle slogans in this place. They represent ridings across the country, ridings that are in drought, or that have suffered from fires, floods and hurricanes, which have been exacerbated by climate change. What do they do? They heckle, mock, and deny. They offer no plan for the future and mislead Canadians on what is actually increasing prices.

The major increase that Canadians are suffering from, especially on food, is with respect to climate change. I have asked a number of Conservative members over the course of the last couple of years to explain to me why prices for food in the United States have increased at the same rate they have increased in Canada. They have increased at the same rate, even though there is not a national price on pollution in the United States.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are still heckling me. They cannot even accept the evidence before them that it is climate change. They cannot accept it from the farmers in their own ridings. I have seen it in Niagara with vine loss.

• (1110)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, we need to be accurate because this is for the historical record.

My hon. colleague claimed that the Conservatives were heckling. I think it was just a bunch of grunts and snorts. I think he should be accurate about how the Conservatives are responding.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. While I do appreciate the levity that the hon. member tries to bring to the House, let us try to be serious in the discussion we are having today.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I expect a little better from the member in the seriousness of this debate. I know he believes passionately about this.

Speaking about farmers back home, just a couple of years ago we saw a 25% loss of vines in the grape industry in Niagara. We are seeing catastrophic losses in British Columbia. I know that some members represent those farmers. Again, as I said, there have been historic fires and floods. Those costs are borne by Canadians, and what do Conservatives have to say to those Canadians? They have no plan. There is nothing on the table, and those costs will continue to increase. People may not be able to get insurance. That is a reality as one's insurance costs will go up, but that is ignored.

It is funny. The first time I heard a Conservative politician even mention a rebate was when the premier of the government in Saskatchewan was trying to reassure Saskatchewan residents that they should not worry as they would still get their rebates, and that is because Canadians look forward to seeing that. Conservatives ignore that whole aspect of it. They do not address it, and they make up numbers on the cost of the price on pollution, even though they know full well that Canadians, especially lower-income Canadians, are much better off.

By cutting the price on pollution, the biggest recipient would be the oil companies, and they would not pass that along. As we have now seen, oil companies are having record profits. It is a commodity-based industry. They are not going to pass that profit onto us. This is about the Conservatives standing up for big oil, which is truly unfortunate.

I believe some of them do understand that there is a climate crisis before us, but why is there no plan? All of them ran on pricing pollution. A couple of years ago it was fine for them to go door to door to say that they were going to price pollution. It was not a plan that I particularly agreed with, but it was nice that every party in this country, including every member sitting here, ran on pricing pollution, knowing we need an environmental plan.

This evening there will be tributes to the late prime minister Brian Mulroney. In all of the speeches yesterday, there was talk of him being a great statesman. We are lucky as Canadians to have had him at the helm to work with the United States and other countries to get things done, whether that was for apartheid or environmental issues. One of those issues was pricing pollution. I think we can all remember the scourge of acid rain, what it was doing, the concerns Canadians had and the way to fix it.

An hon. member: It was not a carbon tax.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member heckled me that it is not a carbon tax.

The way to fix it was to price pollution, to price the thing one did not want so one has less of it. This is cognitive dissonance. They cannot get it through their heads that this works. They can yell and try to shout me down, but it worked. Former prime minister Mulroney worked with his counterparts in the United States. They are laughing, which is unbelievably shocking.

However, it worked. They worked with premiers across parties. They worked with the Liberal premier in Ontario. They worked with the president of the United States. They worked across the world to get a price on pollution so that they could eliminate the scourge of acid rain. We saw that it is not an issue. Canada can be a leader, which we choose to be, or we can go the Conservative way and just deny this incredible threat that is facing us.

In 2015, Canada was on track for our emissions to grow to 815 megatonnes by 2030. Conservatives had no climate plan. It was free to pollute, and oil and gas companies were allowed to emit unlimited pollution.

• (1115)

Our latest update projects that our emissions will be 467 megatonnes in 2030, which is 43% below where they should be. I would have thought that in this place we could all agree that we do not like pollution. I would have thought that this would be a consensus we could all come to. Unfortunately, it is not. As a result of our work, our emissions have declined by 7% since 2015 for the first time ever and we are on track to meet our climate targets.

I occasionally speak of them as my two favourite constituents, Hannah and Ethan, who are my son and daughter. They are seven and five years old. I am disappointed that we do not have conversations about what the future will look like for them in 2030 or 2050. We look at a party that only wants there to be profits for oil companies right now. I am hoping that for the rest of day we can have that debate.

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

Business of Supply

First, I want to wish my father a happy birthday today.

On a more sombre note, I also want to recognize the life of a constituent, Ms. Gemma Bittante, who passed away recently. She was a pillar in my life, a pillar in the Italian community and somebody who will be greatly missed. She gave hours and hours of volunteer work and made me hot dogs when I was just a little kindergarten student. May perpetual light shine upon her. I wish her family the best in this difficult time.

I listened with intent to my hon. colleague's speech. He spoke about disincentivizing, and that is my word, not the word he used, certain behaviours and we tax those.

In my view, the problem with the carbon tax is that we cannot disincentivize people from eating, and the carbon tax impacts the price of food. One cannot disincentivize people from driving when they have a rural location.

How can this lead to the result that the Liberal Party wants when the reality is that people need to do the things it is trying to curtail?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, again, the rebate is not mentioned, which covers the things he is talking about. Farmers are exempt. Farm diesel is exempt from the price on pollution.

We can incentivize car companies, for example. The auto industry is one of the most innovative in the world when it comes to greening up. We have much more fuel-efficient vehicles precisely because of initiatives by government and regulation in terms of making cars less polluting.

I know that they would like to throw that away, but I honestly believe that the member, who comes from a province that has suffered from the severe impacts of climate change, wants to see action rather than saying that we do not care, which seems to be where the Conservative Party is right now.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, former environment minister Catherine McKenna, who worked to implement the carbon tax, spoke to the media yesterday.

She said that the Liberal government had done a poor job of selling its own environmental and economic measure and that it was a shame the Conservatives had completely taken control of the narrative. She wondered how this could have happened.

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According to her, the Minister of Finance apparently was not too keen on the idea of environmental measures and was more on the side of the oil companies. This is information that was recently revealed by the media.

Can my colleague tell me when the Liberals are finally going to take back control of the narrative and defend the measure they put in place, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Incidentally, this measure is not going to do the job on its own. The government should put other measures in place so that we can meet our greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the Province of Quebec has shown us how effective a price on pollution has been, which was in existence well before the federal price and well before we got elected. Some members of the Conservative Party were members of a British Columbia Conservative Party that brought in a price on pollution because they knew it was effective.

I think it is going to take all of us to dispel the misinformation that is being spouted by the Conservative Party on this issue, to care about the climate, to care about our children and future generations or to at least have the Conservatives come up with some kind of plan.

Someone called the price on pollution a magic bullet. It is not, but the Conservatives offer nothing. We could maybe demand that they offer something to explain to Canadians what they are going to do.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we lived through the dismal decade of the Harper years, when Canada was the fourth-worst country in the world with respect to emissions around climate change. We saw the doubling of housing prices under the Conservatives. We saw the doubling of food bank line-ups under the Conservatives. We saw people forced to work longer and longer as the retirement age of seniors was scrapped. It was terrible.

My question for the Liberals this. Why have they continued so many of the same practices? The massive handouts to oil and gas CEOs have continued under the Liberals. Yes, they have moved up from the absolutely deplorable record of the climate-denying Conservatives, but only a few spots.

The reality is that the Liberals should be putting in place things that the NDP have been pushing in the House of Commons as the adults in the House, such as ensuring that we actually have an excess profits tax, that we end oil and gas subsidies and that we actually invest in clean energy.

Why are the Liberals not doing the things that they know they have to do, if we are really to beat this battle against climate change?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, we are doing it. We are ending fossil fuel subsidies. We are engaging in serious plans on technology and on other issues. It is not just a price on pollution; it is a comprehensive plan. We are working on it, and we are happy to work with the NDP on this issue. We have been taking action since 2015, and we will continue to do so.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, with whom I will be sharing my time, I find the motion a bit odd. It is based on a survey, not facts. It is a motion that misleads Quebecers and Canadians. It says the carbon tax increase planned for April 1 will take place immediately when it is in fact staggered until 2030 or 2031.

To be clear, it is not our job to tell the opposition parties what to do with their opposition days, but the Conservatives are obsessed with the carbon tax. They cannot sleep at night, and have no other content, so this is their focus. It is their choice. Nonetheless, their motion could at least contain facts. That would be a good start.

It is not a motion based on science. The Conservative Party could have talked about global warming and offered alternative solutions, but it did not. Nor is it a motion based on respect for Quebec, since nowhere does it mention that the federal carbon tax does not apply to Quebec. I will therefore repeat so it is clear for the Conservatives: the carbon tax does not apply to Quebec, either directly or indirectly, through regulation or through the back door. Lastly, this motion is not even about sound management of public funds, since it does not address the \$83 billion the government has earmarked for oil subsidies.

Yesterday, in the rather embarrassing speech given by the Leader of the Opposition in honour of Mr. Mulroney, it was stated that Mr. Mulroney reduced the size of government. The Conservatives could have tabled a motion to cut the size of government by \$83 billion, but they did not, because they are oil Marxist-Leninists. The motion tabled for consideration was written and proposed by someone incompetent who would be fired from any workplace where facts, knowledge and rigour are required. We can draw our own conclusions.

Now, I would like to take advantage of this lull to thank the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis. I feel this is the right time. Under the Charest government—because, as we know, she is a Liberal—she was part of the cabinet that brought in the array of decrees that introduced the Quebec emissions trading system. Because of the now-Conservative member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, whom I thank from the bottom of my heart, the carbon tax does not apply in Quebec.

It does not apply directly. It does not apply either by law or under the clean fuel regulations, which the Conservatives have dubbed the second carbon tax in an attempt to mislead Quebecers. We have more stringent legislation, and our businesses know that we will continue to be consistent, that we will apply it. Our businesses have already started complying, and it is working.

The Conservatives' latest assertion to dupe Quebecers is that it applies to Quebec through the back door. Listening to them, it is as though this glass of water in front of me is made of propane and that lemons are made of Alberta diesel. They claim everything we buy is made in Alberta.

We even hit a world record recently. As we know, there is parliamentary work to be done here. The work of Parliament must be taken seriously. Yesterday, in committee meetings, where we are supposed to work on important issues for Quebecers and Canadians, the Conservatives paralyzed proceedings with motions on the carbon tax, suggesting that it applies to Quebec. In the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, they moved motions regarding the carbon tax as it relates to immigrants, when it does not apply in Quebec and they are not even in Canada. That is what the Conservatives have come to—

• (1125)

[English]

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

[Translation]

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am a member from Calgary, and I sit on the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. No motion was received on behalf of my party regarding the carbon tax. Could my colleague correct the record?

The Deputy Speaker: I think we could save that for questions and comments.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, they were moved, actually. They may not have been debated, but they were moved.

I am going to say something that will please the member from Calgary even more, since he likes this sort of thing. The Conservatives moved a motion on the carbon tax at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. I just want everyone to think about that for a moment. Let that sink in. The Conservatives moved a motion on the carbon tax at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

However, that is nothing. Yesterday, they debated motions on the carbon tax at the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, and the member for South Shore—St. Margarets asked telecom CEOs what effect the carbon tax would have on cellphone bills. The CEOs of the biggest companies looked at him like he came from another galaxy. They told them that it had no effect on Quebecers' cellphone bills. However, he kept going and kept asking the same question again, as though a committee worked the same way torture does, as though the more he laid into them, the more they would talk. He was told again that it had no impact.

However, the world record was set at the Standing Committee on Official Languages. The member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier debated two motions at the Standing Committee on Official Lan-

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guages. The member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier is the only one of the 42 million people in Canada who speaks French to diesel. He is the only such person in Canada, because he is trying to get into cabinet. He is prepared to do anything, including grovelling, and he believes propane is bilingual. He is the only person like that in Canada. I could not make this stuff up. There are lists of things like that.

This is a party that has no respect for parliamentary institutions, no respect for the intelligence of Canadians and Quebecers, and no respect for facts. This party has no respect for anything. Meanwhile, they are not attacking the oil subsidies. They say they want to shrink the size of government, provided that oil is not affected.

There are two kinds of Conservatives who foist this kind of debate on us. The first kind are the creationists, for whom human biology originates with Adam and Eve in fig leaves, the apple, the serpent and all that. They believe that the Earth is flat and that climate change does not exist. They are told to be quiet, but they exist and there are many of them. These people believe things that are not true, but I think that they are sincere in their beliefs.

Then there are the other members of this party, particularly the Conservatives from Quebec, the ones who are pro-Charest, former Liberals and former members of Action Démocratique du Québec. These people supported the Quebec system, and today they want to become ministers. What do they say? First they say that this is not an environmental plan, but rather a tax plan, even though anyone who has studied taxation beyond the fundamentals was taught that, in a modern tax system, taxation has an impact on the environment. These members are lying to Quebecers.

They say that it is not working because greenhouse gas emissions have increased. They are incapable of understanding that, without appropriate pricing, emissions would have increased more rapidly. These people have driver's licences, yet they do not know the difference between braking and reversing. I would certainly never lend them my car. These people say that, because China has done nothing, we will do nothing. The Conservatives have decided to look to Communist China for policy inspiration. They are waiting for the Communists to act first. What next? Will they congratulate Putin on his re-election? It almost seems that way. These Conservatives are inconsistent. The reason they are acting this way is quite simple: They are exploiting people's distress.

That is why today's motion refers to a survey, not to facts. That tells us how they think and how they practise politics. It tells us what they think of people's intelligence and how they will govern when the time comes. It will be by survey.

Meanwhile, in Quebec, we made the transition. We were smart about it, because we realized that everybody else was transitioning and that western Canada could not separate itself from the rest of the world, any more than Quebec could. That said, we can and should separate from Canada.

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What did we do? We banked on the environment and the transition. Today, it is working, and companies from all over the world are coming to set up shop in Quebec, where there is clean energy, because, in a few years' time, their customers will be asking for decarbonized goods. In fact, we now wonder if we will have enough megawatts of clean energy to have them come here, create jobs and generate economic growth. We have created five industrial clusters in Canada with superclusters and oil money. Within the next decade, we should be able to create 47 new ones.

• (1130)

Meanwhile, the Conservatives want to live in the Stone Age. They want to live in the past.

If anyone wants to know whether I support this motion, I will let my colleagues figure out the answer. I think that the smart people will be able to guess that the Bloc Québécois will vote against it.

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my Bloc Québécois colleague's comments, which were very on point. I would like to make a correction: Four motions, not two, were debated yesterday at the Standing Committee on Official Languages concerning official languages and diesel.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of the Conservative Party's old electoral platform from the last election. How does he think the Conservatives can reconcile that electoral platform with the fight against climate change and their discourse today, which is completely inconsistent with it?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, because I am in the House for this debate, I will not be able to attend Mr. Mulroney's funeral, so I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to the family and my deep respect for Mr. Mulroney, who was a Progressive Conservative and who believed in the market. He knew that incentives could change behaviour. That is why, when it came to acid rain, Mr. Mulroney was very proud of the Montreal Protocol, which introduced an emissions trading mechanism.

Earlier, a Conservative member yelled out that it was not a carbon tax. It is a pricing mechanism. These two mechanisms have their pros and cons, but they are market-based.

The Conservatives no longer believe in the market. They believe in using public money and giving that money to companies they are friends with. If that is what the Conservative Party is like, I think many people who voted for them in the past are going to have second thoughts.

• (1135)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the speech made by my colleague from Quebec. He was very interesting, and very passionate, but does he live in the real world? I am not certain.

He said that the Conservatives took advantage of people's troubles. That is interesting. Could people's troubles be caused by the carbon tax itself? The cost of living is rising. Inflation is on the rise, too. Could the relationship between the two be the cause of Canadians' troubles? Will he continue to downplay Canadians' troubles?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, my colleague did not ask that question when the price of gas went down at Thanksgiving last year. He was too preoccupied with the price of turkey.

Since he asked earlier, I will give my colleague the list of the committees at which the Conservatives moved motions about the carbon tax yesterday, bringing the meetings to a standstill: the Standing Committee on National Defence, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Standing Committee on Science and Research, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, the Standing Committee on Industry and Technology, the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, the Standing Committee on Finance, the Standing Committee on Health, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, the Standing Committee on Official Languages and the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs. They brought all that to a standstill yesterday.

It was a demonstration and a quantification of how little respect they have for our institutions.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. I really enjoyed his comments about propane and diesel and the French language. This is a prime example of the Conservatives' almost pathological obsession with attacking the price on pollution. It is an obsession that blinds them to the climate crisis, which is real and has an impact on forest fires, droughts and floods.

What does my Bloc Québécois colleague think about the Conservatives not having a climate and environmental plan?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, there is something missing from the Conservatives' platform, and that is the principle by which everyone must pull their weight.

The logic behind the Conservative Party of Canada not having a plan is that, since China is being regressive, they will be regressive too. Since others are not doing the right thing, they will not do the right thing either. The Conservatives' logic, especially under their new leader, is to compare themselves to whoever is the worst, since that is the only way they can look good. I think that that is not the type of excellence we are used to seeing from political parties.

Obviously, we all have our differences, but I think that, at one time, in Mr. Mulroney's time, for example, the Progressive Conservative Party had far more dignity and was far more consistent.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member who just spoke. I dream of having that kind of presence and the skill to deliver that kind of speech.

What I want to do is present the facts that were recently reported by Radio-Canada about the whole carbon tax issue. I think it is extremely relevant to today's debate.

As my colleague said, today's fairly concise Conservative Party motion is based on the results of a survey of Canadians. The motion reads as follows:

That, given that 70% of provinces and 70% of Canadians oppose the Prime Minister's 23% carbon tax hike on April 1, the House call on the NDP-Liberal coalition to immediately cancel this hike.

The Conservative Party claims that 70% of Canadians are against this carbon tax hike, so I took a look at the survey to see if that is actually true. I discovered that the poll was about the government's measure to exempt home heating oil from the carbon pricing act, not about the existence of the act itself.

The Conservative Party therefore chose to put their spin on the numbers, perhaps because "Axe the tax" makes a good slogan. However, it is not really true that 70% of Canadians are against the 23% increase that will take effect on April 1, because this increase will be gradual. It is true that, at some point, the carbon tax will reach a certain amount, but these amounts will be spread over several years, until 2030. What they are claiming here is a bit of a stretch. As my colleague who spoke before me was saying, this is one of the reasons why the Bloc Québécois is against the Conservatives' motion.

I looked for other figures. It is funny, because I found the same numbers, that is, 70% and 23%, but they refer to something completely different. I found out that 70% of the global GDP has a carbon price. More than 48 countries around the globe have a carbon tax or a cap and trade system. It is now standard in most industrialized countries to put a price on pollution, and that is what Canada did a few years ago.

The 23% is simple enough. According to the same study, 23% of global greenhouse gas emissions are covered by a price on pollution. I thought it was funny to find these same numbers but then realizing they mean different things. Obviously, I did not pull these figures out of a hat; they were published by France's ministry of energy transition. It is interesting to see what other countries are doing instead of complaining of what we have at home.

The Conservative motion asks that "the House call on the NDP-Liberal coalition to immediately cancel this hike." That is interesting because it is the first time the coalition is being called "*la coalition entre les libéraux et les néo-démocrates*" in French. Normally, the Conservatives use different formulations when they talk about the coalition. In English, they say that it is the NDP-Liberal coalition, or a coalition between the Liberals and the NDP, but when they are talking to Quebecers in French, they say that it is a coalition between the Bloc Québécois and the Liberals. Unfortunately for them, the motion does not include this nuance. It mentions only a coalition between the Liberals and the NDP.

Let us get back to the famous carbon tax hike. It will indeed reach \$170 by 2030. For now, it is set at \$65 per tonne. Unlike what the Conservative Party would have us believe, it is not the Bloc Québécois that says we must increase the price on carbon pollution to help Canada achieve its greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. It is the Parliamentary Budget Officer, or PBO. The Office of the PBO is a well-respected institution. I think that the Conservative Party should believe the figures published by the PBO. Not so very long ago, he said that, to achieve the Paris Agreement targets by 2030, we would have to increase the price on carbon to \$239 per tonne. The carbon tax is a tool Canada uses to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, and this tool should benefit people who are a bit more economically conservative. It is therefore a little hard to

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understand why the Conservatives are so against the price on pollution.

Radio-Canada's Fannie Olivier published an analysis a few days ago entitled "À quoi ressemblerait un Canada sans prix sur le carbone?" or what would Canada be like without carbon pricing?

● (1140)

The Conservative Party is threatening to axe the tax as soon as it comes to power.

Let us go back to 2016 when the Prime Minister took advantage of a debate on the ratification of the Paris Agreement to announce a price on carbon. He told the provinces that they would have to comply. He gave them two years to do so. Then, he would start imposing a tax of \$10 per tonne that would gradually increase. Obviously, a few provincial environment ministers did not take that very well. In Quebec, we were not concerned, because we already had a cap and trade system in place with California that has been working perfectly well since 2013. Therefore, this carbon pricing has no impact in Quebec. My colleague explained that. The carbon tax does not apply to Quebec, despite what some may think, because, unfortunately, people have been spreading misinformation. Some provinces even challenged the tax before the Supreme Court, but they were unsuccessful. There is a real power struggle with the provinces.

It must be said that the Liberal government, as I mentioned earlier, has not done a very good job of explaining this environmental measure. It recently created a loophole in its own legislation by introducing a three-year exemption for heating oil with the aim of quelling discontent in the Atlantic provinces. That did nothing to help its popularity ratings, unfortunately.

What would happen if we woke up tomorrow and there was no longer a carbon tax in Canada? Sébastien Jodoin, a professor in the faculty of law at McGill University, says that there would be significant consequences, starting with the hit on the pockets of many Canadians. That is interesting. Conservatives often tell us that people have no money, that they are poor, that the carbon tax is making those who are poor even poorer. However, we know that 80% of Canadians who pay the tax receive a refund from the federal government that exceeds what they pay. Should carbon pricing be abolished, they would have less money in their pockets. I find that interesting.

Pierre-Olivier Pineau, Chair in Energy Sector Management at HEC Montréal, says that "the great irony is that the majority of Canadians in provinces that pay the federal tax, earn money from it. Abolishing it would impoverish Canadians." That is interesting. Unfortunately that is not a speech we hear often from the Conservative Party. Obviously, removing it would also have an impact on greenhouse gases. The government is trying to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions with this measure. Getting rid of it would have consequences in the short, medium and long terms.

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The carbon tax currently being used by the Government of Canada seeks to reduce one-third of the emissions in the country by 2030. It must be said that the way things are going, we are nowhere close to meeting our greenhouse gas reduction targets by 2030. I would even go so far as to say that we need other measures, starting with the money that is given to the oil and gas companies. These companies make billions of dollars in profits every year and the government keeps taking taxpayer money and giving it to those people. I think we could take that money and help people cope with the cost of living. We could invest in green energy, such as wind, solar and hydroelectricity in Quebec. We need investment in these economic sectors that are good for the planet. We need to find other ways. If the Conservative Party wants to abolish carbon pricing, then it needs to come up with other, meaningful ways to fight climate change.

I want to come back to the fact that 23% of global emissions are now covered by a carbon pricing or emissions trading system. That statistic is also from the World Bank. In her article, Fannie Olivier said that the number of countries that have such a tax has significantly increased in recent years. We are talking about nearly fifty countries or states that have made the leap. Take, for example, Vietnam, or even Turkey. Doing away with the tax on carbon would really go against what is being done internationally.

I still have a lot more I would like to say, but I see that my time is up, so I will stop there.

• (1145)

[English]

Mr. Kyle Seeback: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Pursuant to Standing Order 43(2)(a), I would like to inform the House that the remaining Conservative caucus speaking slots are hereby divided in two.

[Translation]

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have an important question for my Bloc Québécois colleague.

According to her, the carbon tax should be \$239 per tonne rather than \$170. Did she take into account the implicit carbon tax created by the subsidies to battery plants? The Liberal government has given approximately \$45 billion in subsidies to foreign companies so far.

Does she agree with the figure given by the Quebec government, which determined that the implicit carbon tax was \$800 per tonne, money that comes out of Canadian taxpayers' pockets?

• (1150)

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I would rather not be misquoted. What I was saying about the \$239 per tonne is that that is what the Parliamentary Budget Officer is proposing. It is not the Bloc Québécois that is proposing it, it is the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

What he is saying is that, with the current tax, about eight in 10 Canadian households get more money back than they pay with the tax. That seems clear enough to me.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate many of the comments the member and the speaker before her have put on the record.

The question I have is with respect to the spreading of misinformation. If one takes a look at social media, there is a great deal of information out there that is just not true.

Can the member provide her thoughts on the impact this has on sound, good public policy, when we have the official opposition spreading misinformation to the detriment to the policy itself?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, disinformation is becoming more and more of a problem. Now we are seeing it with respect to this government measure.

If I had one piece of advice to give the Liberal Party, the party currently in power, it would be to take back control of the narrative on its own environmental and economic measures. Why is the Conservative Party making axing the carbon tax the slogan for its next election campaign on the pretext that it is what is making Canadians poorer? We agree on the fact that the carbon tax does not contribute that much to inflation. It contributes only 0.1%.

The former minister of environment and climate change, Catherine McKenna, says that it is supposed to be a good environmental and economic measure. Why do the Liberals not say so? I urge them to speak up.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoy working with my colleague on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

However, there is something I am having a hard time understanding. Quebecers have a good understanding of the impact of climate change. There is no doubt that climate change is having an impact, that climate change is costing Quebecers a lot of money, and that something needs to be done.

However, there are Conservative members in Quebec who deny the existence of climate change. The Conservative Party systematically refuses to put the least policy in place to counter climate change. That is what I have trouble understanding.

I would like to know whether my colleague can explain to me how Quebec's Conservative members can deny the existence of climate change.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Mr. Speaker, no one can really explain this. No sane person in Quebec thinks that climate change is not real. We are living it. I am living it in my riding with coastal erosion. It is a scourge and we need to do more to fight it.

One of the first things we can do is put a price on pollution, but we also need to stop subsidizing oil companies, which pollute enormously.

In Bill C-59, which we voted on yesterday, there are still billions of dollars in tax credits for these oil companies that make billions of dollars in profits. If we took all that money and helped Canadians cope with the rising cost of living, it seems to me we would be further ahead. It seems to me we would be further ahead if we invested in green economies and green energy.

I will stop here. I hope the NDP will support these measures.

[English]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

The Conservatives seem to be oblivious to the fact that the climate crisis is happening; that it is costing Canadians billions of dollars; that it is costing farmers their crops; that it is costing indigenous communities, as they are evacuated from their homes each wildfire season; and that it is costing British Columbians their homes and their livelihoods during extreme flooding, as well as their lives and their loved ones when there are record-breaking heat domes.

The climate emergency is here. The Conservatives refuse to present a plan to tackle the crisis; instead, they are more interested in helping out CEOs in big oil and gas than truly helping Canadians who are struggling. Alberta declared the beginning of their wildfire season in February. Last summer, kids could not play outside because of the smoke-filled air. People could not go outside without choking on dust and smoke.

At the end of 2023, 18.5 million hectares of forest had burned, forcing thousands from their homes. Many people lost everything. For some context, the worst wildfire season up to then burned 7.6 million hectares; that was in 1989. Now it is at 18.5 million hectares, more than double the total land size of Portugal. These wildfires are getting worse because there are massive droughts impacting whole regions across the country. The soil is so dry that, when the fires start, they can keep burning and nothing gets in the way.

The impacts are not just on our forests. Farmers across Canada are having to face these awful drought conditions. In Canada right now, including in Alberta, there are states of emergency because of the drought conditions. There are negotiations about water allocations, discussions on who gets to use the water. Farmers cannot rely on natural rain, and there are massive threats of crop failure.

In my home province of British Columbia, the provincial government is already preparing for a catastrophically dry summer. Yesterday, an \$80 million fund was announced to help farmers invest in water infrastructure.

Conservatives are blaming the high cost of groceries on the carbon tax, but what about crop failures? What about the devastating conditions farmers are facing because of the climate crisis? What are the Conservatives doing to address this water crisis that our farmers are forced to deal with? I will note that it was a New Democrat provincial government, not a Conservative one, that announced the water infrastructure fund.

The Conservatives have no plan to address the climate crisis. They have no plan to stop wildfires. They are going to let our kids

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continue to choke on smoke in the summer, when communities are forced to evacuate their homes. The Conservatives think it is okay to let the biggest polluters off the hook for literally burning our planet.

I want to talk about the carbon tax. Obviously, Conservatives want to get rid of it. They want to make it free for the biggest polluters, big oil and gas companies, to pollute. Meanwhile, they would cut and gut the rebates that put more money back in the pockets of Canadians. Getting rid of these rebates, which most Canadians receive, will hurt lower-income Canadians the most.

However, the Liberals' pricing scheme has allowed the biggest polluters, the biggest corporations, to pay less than everyone else does. The problem with the current construction of the carbon tax, and the PBO has put out a number of reports that confirm this, is that 80% of Canadians get more money back than they pay. This is a fact the Conservatives continue to choose to ignore.

Even if the Conservatives only care about pocketbook issues, if they deny the reality of climate change, if they ignore the fact that the climate crisis is a pocketbook issue, they should want to give Canadians a break on their home heating. They should want to make big oil and gas companies pay what they owe. However, when the NDP presented a motion to do just that, to take the GST off home heating, and to include those who use electricity to heat their homes, the Conservatives and the Liberals voted against it.

• (1155)

The motion also called for an excess profits tax on big oil and gas companies, a policy that recent polling shows the vast majority of Canadians support. To make life even more affordable, the NDP suggested making heat pumps free for middle and low-income Canadians. When it comes to addressing the climate crisis and the cost of living crisis, the NDP is the only party that is offering solutions.

Canadians want real solutions. They are struggling to make ends meet and they need support, but not by taking away hundreds of dollars in rebates for a tiny break on carbon pricing, leaving Canadians worse off than they were before. They want real solutions that will help them afford their groceries, rent, child care and their medication.

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The Conservatives will never make the housing market more affordable. They will never fight for national pharmacare, medication for the people who need it. They will fight against pharmacare. They will never take on the grocery store chain CEOs, the big pharmaceutical companies, real estate developers or big oil and gas CEOs, because these are the people who make up their governing body. Half of the Conservatives' national body is made up of lobbyist from these sectors, and lobbyists are flocking to the Leader of the Opposition's cash for access events. However, these are the same companies and the same CEOs who are cozy with the Liberal government.

Canadians want a government that will look out for them, but the Liberals and Conservatives are looking out for the interests of CEOs and lobbyists. Canadians also want a government that will address the wildfires, floods, droughts, deadly heat domes and the climate-related emergencies they are facing. Canadians are scared about the future. Despite the Liberals' words saying that they believe in climate change, they invite oil and gas CEOs to help craft their climate plan. They water down key policies like an emissions cap on oil and gas and refuse to take the excess profits off big oil.

Canadians are frustrated with the carbon tax, because when it comes to the Liberal government, they are not seeing the climate action that is needed to address the climate crisis. When the Liberal government declared a climate emergency in 2019, the very next day it bought a pipeline.

More recently, even though it has been promised for years, when it comes to eliminating domestic fossil fuel subsidies, when it comes to handing out billions of dollars to big oil and gas companies, the Liberals presented a plan, after delay and delay, that was littered with loopholes, allowing these big oil and gas CEOs to keep lining their pockets, continuing making record profits and continuing to accept government subsidies.

When it came to capping oil and gas emissions just a few months ago, the Liberals watered down the cap so badly that it does not even line up with their own weak climate plan, with our Paris targets. It feels like the Liberals have truly stacked their emissions reduction plan on carbon pricing. It is not a silver bullet.

Then the Liberals botched their communications to Canadians so badly that of course Canadians are frustrated. They are paying more at the gas pumps, more to heat their homes, more on groceries and more for their medication. All they hear is the disinformation the Conservatives are feeding them, but the truth is that the Liberals are not making it easy for everyday Canadians to get off fossil fuels.

Our NDP team knows that the climate crisis is a pocketbook issue. We have proposed many ways to make life more affordable and to tackle the climate crisis. We need to take the GST off home heating, give Canadians heat pumps and invest in public transit. We need to fix the greener homes program and ensure that big oil and gas is paying what it owes.

Neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives have the courage to take on big oil and gas, but we do. Canadians want a government that looks out for them.

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the greener homes program, which is a Liberal government program. When the member talks about heat pumps, again, it is a Liberal government program. There are many things such as the electrification of vehicles. The incentives that are provided by this government are extensive. However, that is not necessarily what my question is about.

The Conservatives will say that the residents of Winnipeg North will not benefit from the carbon rebate, when 80% of people will get more money back than they pay. They are saying that they are going to axe the tax in British Columbia, but there is no carbon tax. I am wondering if she could address the issue of misinformation.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, I want to quickly start with heat pumps, because that is what the member also started with. The greener homes program was riddled with problems. So many middle-income Canadians could not navigate the system and could not afford to pay the money up front. Low-income Canadians were excluded altogether. That is why New Democrats forced the government, through our supply and confidence agreement, to include a commitment to provide energy efficiency to low-income Canadians. We are going to keep pushing the government. It is unfortunate that it cancelled that program and has not provided a plan to replace it, a meaningful plan to help low-income and middle-income Canadians heat their homes efficiently.

On disinformation, it has been beyond disheartening and atrocious to see Conservatives tour around Canada, not only making up facts or maybe generously telling fiction to Canadians about how carbon pricing works, but also going to my home province of British Columbia and pretending that there is a federal carbon tax there. We just heard similarly from my Bloc colleagues. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition is in Quebec saying that he will axe the tax. It is a disservice to our democracy and Canadians. Canadians deserve better.

• (1205)

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my hon. colleague realizes that coal consumption worldwide hit record usage last year. In 2024-25 we are going to hit another record.

I will quote Premier Furey, the Liberal Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, who said, "The issue for this particular tax is there are limited options to change right now in Newfoundland and Labrador....In the absence of the ability to change, what does the tax really accomplish?" It accomplishes nothing.

What would accomplish something would be to cut the red tape and shorten the approval process for building mines to mine things like lithium, nickel, copper and whatnot, the rare earth metals needed for the green transition. The approval time to build a new mine to mine these precious metals required for the transition is 18 years. In the U.S. it is 40% less and in Australia it is 25% less.

I would like to know what the NDP-Liberal costly coalition's plan is to reduce approval times to mine green metals.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Mr. Speaker, this is a perfect example of a Conservative climate plan.

Yesterday, I heard Conservatives and Liberals arguing back and forth about who built more pipelines and who could get pipelines approved more quickly. This is not a future for Canada. Once again, we see the Conservatives denying that the climate crisis is real and failing to tackle and meet this moment, while Canadians are worried about not only their future but their present reality.

The member mentioned coal. Thermal coal exports tripled since the current government came into power. Imagine a government committing to phase out thermal coal and end thermal coal exports, but instead it triples them. It does not tell Canadians that it has done this. It waits for a New Democrat to find out that information and make it public. That is why I have tabled a motion in the House to ban thermal coal exports.

We need to tackle the climate crisis like we want to win.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party and its representatives in the House can be criticized for many things, and I point that out whenever I can, but I want to start by saying that one thing we cannot fault them for is their lack of determination. There is a definite consistency in their obsession with the price on pollution or the carbon tax. One thing is for sure: They are not giving up. They keep coming back to us with this fantasy of doing nothing to fight climate change, this climate crisis affecting the entire planet.

Every day, every week, we hear that the situation is worse than what the experts thought, worse than what the experts at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, have been telling us for years. Let us look at some very recent and quite harrowing examples.

Let us start with the price on pollution or the carbon tax, which has been in place in some provinces for a few years now. I would remind the House that this does not apply in Quebec, despite what my Conservative colleagues from Quebec are saying, which is that a trucker who fills up in Ontario could feel the effects. It is minimal. It is almost insignificant. Quebec has had a carbon exchange for years now, which is a slightly different tool from a price on pollution or a carbon tax.

What the Conservatives never say and what the Liberals have such a hard time explaining is that there is a financial compensation program for middle-class families as well as for the poorest workers in the provinces where this carbon tax applies.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is a leading authority on Parliament Hill, 80% of Canadian households in

provinces where this applies get more back than they pay in carbon taxes, a legitimate price indicator tool to change behaviours.

It also seems really strange to me that the Conservatives have spent years refusing to apply a market rule that could change the behaviour of individuals and big corporations or maybe both.

The people in greatest need, those struggling to pay rent or buy groceries, will receive financial compensation. The Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us that 80% of Canadian households will receive more money back than they pay out. The Conservatives say nothing about that and the Liberals, for whatever reason, are incapable of explaining it. The political communication has been terrible.

According to Statistics Canada's models, 94% of households with an annual income below \$50,000 will get back more in rebates or compensation than they pay out in carbon taxes applied to their daily or weekly purchases. Obviously, we will never hear that from a Conservative, and that is a real shame. Facts are facts, and I think our debates in the House should be grounded in facts.

The Conservative Party is moving its 29th motion on the carbon tax in a very specific context. We keep hearing in the news that the planet is headed for a dead end. We are being told that we are moving in the wrong direction. This has consequences. The Conservatives have no climate plan, and that is disturbing. Their inaction is troubling. They appear to be wilfully turning a blind eye.

I would now like to read some excerpts from an Agence France-Presse article published in La Presse this morning that reveals some very worrisome information. I will start with this:

Records broken for ocean heat, sea level rise and glacier retreat...2023 capped off the warmest 10-year period on record, with the UN warning on Tuesday that the planet is "on the brink".

The Tuesday referred to in the article is today. The study came out this morning.

A new report from the World Meteorological Organization or WMO, a UN agency, shows that records were once again broken, and in some cases smashed, for greenhouse gas levels, surface temperatures, ocean heat and acidification, sea level rise, Antarctic sea ice cover and glacier retreat.

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● (1210)

That is pretty much the perfect storm for making things worse. Even with our targets for reducing greenhouse gases to prevent natural disasters, to prevent people from suffocating, to prevent people from dying from pollution, things are likely only going to get worse.

The article goes on to say the following, and I quote:

The planet is “on the brink” while “fossil fuel pollution is sending climate chaos off the charts”, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned.

“There is still time to throw out a lifeline to people and the planet” but, according to him, we need to act “now”.

The report confirms that 2023 was the hottest year on record, with an average surface temperature of 1.45°C above pre-industrial levels.

The objective of the Paris Agreement was to limit the global warming increase to 1.5°C compared with the temperature in 1830 or 1850. In 2023, the increase reached 1.45°C. There is no doubt about it, we are going to hit the 1.5°C limit. Perhaps we will manage to keep it to a maximum increase of 2°C, but at that rate, not only are we not making any gains, we are going backwards, and backwards faster than we thought.

“Every fraction of a degree of global heating impacts the future of life on Earth”, warned the head of the United Nations.

“The climate crisis is THE defining challenge that humanity faces and is closely intertwined with the inequality crisis—as witnessed by growing food insecurity and population displacement, and biodiversity loss”, said the WMO secretary general....

As I said earlier, 2023 marks the end of the hottest decade on record since 1850. The situation is catastrophic.

On an average day in 2023, nearly one third of the global ocean was gripped by a marine heatwave.... Towards the end of 2023, over 90% of the ocean had experienced heatwave conditions at some point during the year.

In 2023, global mean sea level reached a record high...reflecting continued ocean warming (thermal expansion) as well as the melting of glaciers and ice sheets.

Sea levels are rising because the glaciers are melting. In particular, a big chunk of Antarctica is breaking off. If it melts, average sea levels will rise by several metres, so if we are being honest, for Bangladesh, this is going to pose a few problems. For the city of London, it is going to pose a few problems. For New York City, it is going to pose a few problems. What the Conservative Party is proposing is to carry on, to forge ahead. According to this party, everything is going to be fine, we are going to find a technological magic wand and we are going to capture all the carbon with a big vacuum cleaner that is going to go everywhere. That is not how it works. The technology is unproven.

I could talk about last year's wildfires. There was smoke everywhere, in Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, over Montreal. Things will be worse this summer. Not enough rain fell and we did not get enough snow this winter. We will experience more drought and have more wildfires this summer. It is happening around the world.

I am going to quote from an RTL info article posted a few days ago about the situation in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It says:

Rio de Janeiro residents are looking for “open spaces” and shade in a park as a new heatwave descends upon Brazil, with record high temperatures.

That was the situation this past Sunday in Rio de Janeiro.

The heatwave that Latin America has been experiencing since the beginning of the year brought the perceived temperature up to a record 62.3°C in Brazil this weekend....

That is not livable. Obviously, people are at risk of getting sick. They are at risk of dying. All of the health care professionals who are concerned about the climate crisis and the environment are saying that this is a matter of human lives. It is also an economic matter. Some insurance companies are refusing to cover apartments and houses that are too close to the water. Drought, flooding and forest fires are happening and will only get worse. Quebeckers and Canadians are the ones who will pay the price given the impact on their lives and their bodies. Unfortunately, the Conservative Party is not presenting any solutions.

● (1215)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I salute my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite Patrie and thank him for his speech.

I will have the opportunity later to say more about what we have been proposing for years now on climate change, because, yes, we recognize that climate change is real and that we need to do something about it. After eight years of the Liberal government, however, the results are not there.

What does my colleague think about the action of his neighbour, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change? After eight years of the Liberal government, the UN ranked Canada 62nd out of 67 in terms of effectiveness against climate change.

Is he aware that the Liberal carbon tax has put Canada in 62nd place, that Canada has never managed to meet its targets in eight years and that we are a long way from the ambitious targets of the Paris Agreement, while this government and his Liberal neighbour, the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, have done absolutely nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

What does he think of his neighbour?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, when I said that the Conservative Party is not very good at fighting climate change, I was not suggesting that the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie is doing a fantastic job on this front. I have to agree with my colleague: Over the past eight years, the Liberal government has failed in the fight against climate change. Even the former Liberal environment minister, Catherine McKenna, is very critical of the government.

I would like to remind the House, as my colleague from Victoria did earlier, that, in his mandate letter, the current Minister of the Environment was told to ban thermal coal exports. However, coal exports have tripled under this Liberal government, even though it presents itself as a climate action champion. The Liberals have been totally hypocritical.

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● (1220)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I asked the member's colleague from British Columbia a question, and I will be more focused on the question itself in regard to how the leader of the Conservative Party is touring the country and literally spreading information that is questionable and that many would say is intentionally misleading. Examples of that include the province of British Columbia, where the carbon tax does not apply, and the member's home province, where the carbon tax does not apply. To people like my constituents in the province of Manitoba, he is saying there is no net benefit, in terms of dollar value, from the carbon rebate versus the carbon tax, when over 80% do receive more than they actually pay.

I am wondering whether the member could provide his thoughts in regard to the ongoing spreading of misinformation by the official opposition.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, despite the Liberals' pathetic record on fighting climate change, my colleague is absolutely right that the Conservative Party, and the Conservative Party leader in particular, are giving Canadians bad information.

I challenge the member for Carleton and leader of the Conservative Party to quote the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who says that 80% of Canadian households will receive more money in rebates and compensation than they pay in carbon tax. I challenge the leader of the Conservative Party to say that loud and clear in the House.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the speech by my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, who always delivers passionate speeches on the fight against climate change. I agree with him.

The only thing is that the NDP is hard to follow. In the last two budgets, the government, whose record he just panned, brought in six tax credits worth a total of \$83 billion by 2035. The NDP is getting all worked up over climate change and the fact that the Liberals are not doing enough about it, but it voted in favour of those budgets.

How does my colleague reconcile these two things?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Madam Speaker, the NDP has not shied away from criticizing those measures, which are actually hidden subsidies to oil and gas companies. My colleague from Timmins—James Bay is introducing an important bill on behalf of our party to ban oil and gas advertising, similar to how we banned tobacco advertising.

At the same time, we have forced the Liberals to do things they had never done before that are going to help average Canadians. For example, people who make less than \$70,000 a year will have access to a dentist.

I have given 15 presentations in seniors' residences in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. People are extremely pleased with our efforts because we are delivering concrete results that will change people's lives and change the face of the world, no pun intended.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, while the common-sense Conservatives focus on their Conservative priorities, which are to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost after eight years.

After eight years of this Prime Minister, everything costs more. Two million Canadians now line up at food banks. A few days ago, Montreal police were forced to intervene when chaos broke out at a food bank that did not have enough food to feed all the hungry people. I would point out that these people are going hungry while living in Canada.

After eight years of tax hikes and inflationary deficits, people can no longer pay their rent. The cost of housing has doubled. In the Prime Minister's hometown of Montreal, the cost of housing has tripled because of his inflationary policies, even as he has spent \$89 billion on housing. After eight years of this Prime Minister, we are experiencing a crisis of crime, auto theft, extortion and violence caused by repeat offenders.

After eight years, this Prime Minister is not worth the cost. He only wants to raise taxes on Quebecers and other Canadians, and I would like to point out that he is doing that with the Bloc Québécois's support. The Bloc Québécois wants to drastically increase the tax on gas and diesel for Quebecers in the regions. With the Bloc Québécois's support, the Prime Minister wants to destroy certain natural resource industries.

On May 1, a decree will be issued to shut down the forestry sector for reasons that make no sense. This decree infringes on Quebec's jurisdiction. That is why the common-sense Conservative Party supports the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent's bill that would scrap the duplicate approval process for natural resource projects. We want Quebec to have the power to decide how it will protect the environment and jobs. We trust Quebecers, while the Prime Minister and the centralizing Bloc Québécois are trying to concentrate all the power in Ottawa by destroying jobs in the Saguenay region and elsewhere in Quebec. We are the only party with common sense.

When we say that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, it is because he claims that the tax hike is intended to protect the environment. A headline in today's *Journal de Montréal* reads, "For the first time, Canada is the most polluted country in North America". This comes on the heels of the news that Canada ranks 62nd out of 67 countries on fighting climate change.

All these taxes, all the attacks on our natural resources, have done nothing to improve the environment. All they have done is make life harder for Canadians and Quebecers. Fortunately, the Conservative Party has a common-sense plan to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. That is common sense. That is what we are going to offer.

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• (1225)

[English]

By the way, I will be splitting my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, so it is not just the rest of my speech that you will have a chance to enjoy, Madam Speaker, but also his incredible oration. It will be a real treat to hear from him.

After eight years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost. He is not worth the cost of food, which has had the worst inflation in over four decades, with two million people, a record-smashing number, lining up at food banks across the country. Chaos broke out the other day at the food bank in Montreal, where the police were forced to intervene, as the food had run out and many stomachs were still hungry waiting in line. A third of charities are turning Canadians away because they no longer have the resources to feed them after eight years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister.

After eight years, we now have a Facebook group called the "Dumpster Diving Network", where 8,000 Canadians share tips on how they can climb into a garbage can and pull out food to feed themselves because they cannot afford groceries. There is nothing left on the shelves at the local food bank; therefore, people have to go digging in garbage. This is the dumpster economy that the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister has given us after eight years. He is not worth the cost of food.

He is not worth the cost of housing, which has doubled after eight years of funding local bureaucratic gatekeepers who block homebuilding and printing cash, which inflates housing prices.

After eight years, he is not worth the cost of taxes. He punishes work. People make it and he takes it. He punishes the people who get out of bed in the morning and work hard by taking the cash off of their paycheques, paycheques that have less purchasing power because after eight years of doubling the debt and printing \$600 billion of new cash, he has caused the worst inflation in four decades. That has spiked interest rates, which now force many Canadians to sell their homes or face bankruptcy, which is rocketing higher. In fact, the pace of increase in bankruptcies is vertical. If we look at the graphs, it is straight up, as more and more businesses are declaring bankruptcy because the Prime Minister's inflationary spending has sent interest rates on their debts skyrocketing.

It is in this miserable environment that the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister proposes yet another cruel tax hike. He plans to do it on April Fool's Day. It is an April Fool's Day tax hike. Just like him, this tax is not worth the cost.

Let us go through the facts.

There has been a lot of disinformation spread by the NDP-Liberals and their friends in the bought-and-paid-for media about the economics of the carbon tax, claiming that people are better off by paying the tax. Here are the facts from the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Albertans, this coming year, will pay, on average, \$2,943 per family while they get only \$2,032 back in rebates. That is a \$911 net cost. In other words, they pay about 50% more than they get back. In Saskatchewan, the average family will pay \$2,618 this coming year and get only \$2,093 back, a net cost

of \$525. In Manitoba, they will pay \$1,750 and get back only \$1,250, for a net cost of \$500.

In Ontario, the average family will pay \$1,674 and only get back \$1,047, a net cost of \$627. In Nova Scotia, they will pay \$1,500 and get back \$963, for a net cost of over \$500. In Prince Edward Island, it will pay \$1,605 and get back only \$1,055, for a net cost of \$550. In Newfoundland, it will pay \$1,874 and get back only \$1,497, for a net cost of \$377.

I dare the Liberal media that have been pushing this disinformation to contact the Parliamentary Budget Officer, run all those numbers by him and ask him if I have it right. We already did, and he confirmed that we do.

• (1230)

Why does this matter? It is because we have to stop the disinformation, the disinformation that has not only polluted the debate but sent countless people to food banks as they cannot afford to pay their bills, the disinformation that will grow in importance as the Prime Minister quadruples the carbon tax. The gap between the cost of the tax and the rebate people get back grows massively, forcing more people to live in these awful tent cities and lose their homes, forcing seniors to choose between eating and heating as they shiver, hungry, in the cold, in their modest homes.

That disinformation is dangerous. It must be corrected because the truth is that the carbon tax is just like the Prime Minister. It is not worth the cost.

Only common-sense Conservatives will spike the hike on April 1. After the carbon tax election, we will axe the tax. Let us bring it home.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the leader of the Conservative Party could explain. When he talks about the spreading of disinformation, I would ultimately argue that he is the king of doing just that through social media.

Why does the leader of the Conservative Party instruct his members not to participate in political panels? I was on CTV yesterday and there were no Conservatives around. I was on other CBC panels and there were no Conservatives around. It is an avenue through which Canadians can find out what it is the Conservatives are saying. However, when it comes time for it, the Conservatives are nowhere to be found because they know that there is more accountability when they are on those political panels.

Why does the Conservative leader support the absence of Conservative members on panels and public meetings?

• (1235)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that they provided the leader of the official opposition with their attention and they did not interrupt him. I would ask them to do the same when someone else has the floor. I think that this is the respect they can give them.

I also know that the leader of the official opposition is very able to answer questions and comments and does not need any assistance.

The hon. leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, one can tell that Liberals are losing the carbon tax debate when they say that we all have to spend more time talking to the state-controlled media that covers for him. We know that one of the reasons why the Liberals helped Bell raise the cost of cellphone and other services is that Bell owns CTV, which reciprocates with wonderful Liberal propaganda.

Our focus will be talking to real people, folks who are struggling to pay their bills after eight years of the Prime Minister, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, doubling housing costs and now quadrupling the carbon tax. Real Canadians know the cost. The Liberal media can do anything it wants to try to cover up the fact that this is a tax grab and it is a scam. We will go around the state-controlled media, directly to the Canadian people, and we will share our message that we will spike the hike and axe the tax.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, today, the leader of the official opposition brings up the idea that he is interested in Canadians and he is interested in making life more affordable for Canadians, but we know that he voted against a national school program. We know he voted against our motion to take GST off of home heating. He voted against dental care. He voted against child care. Even yesterday, shockingly, he voted against getting humanitarian aid to Palestinians who are starving to death.

He does not care about Canadians. He does not care about people around the world. He has already said he would cut foreign aid. He has already said that he would cut all of these programs that make life more affordable for people. He is a one-trick pony with nothing to offer Canadians and Canadians know that.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, that is another nasty partisan attack from the desperate NDP. She is an Alberta NDP member who is being abandoned by her own provincial party. The NDP in Alberta is so ashamed and embarrassed of her that it is breaking ties with the federal NDP. In fact, the provincial NDP in Alberta knows that her party sold out Albertans to sign on with the most anti-Alberta Prime Minister in 40 years.

She is now voting to bring in a \$2,943 carbon tax on her own constituents. Every family in her riding will pay almost \$3,000 in carbon taxes because she voted with the Liberal Prime Minister, against her constituents, to hike the tax.

Only common-sense Conservatives stand for Albertans, to spike the hike and axe the tax.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been looking back in Hansard. In the last few years, 36 members of the Liberals, which is actually 37 because one member

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added it today, stated that the carbon tax was revenue-neutral. Who says it is not? Public accounts actually said, last year, that \$670 million of the carbon tax was used for government programming.

Does that sound like the carbon tax is revenue-neutral as the Liberals are claiming?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, no, it sounds like the government wins and the taxpayers lose. It takes in more money in direct tax revenues from the carbon tax than it pays back out in rebates. Worse than that, according to the PBO, the carbon tax destroys so much economic activity that it leaves people worse off than the direct carbon tax that they paid, and that is why, when we combine the economic and the fiscal cost to the average family, Canadians are losers.

However, the good news is that when common-sense Conservatives spike the hike and axe the tax, Canadians will be winners again.

• (1240)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak to this motion, but I have to say, it is such a challenge to follow in the footsteps of my leader on this very specific issue.

[Translation]

Canadians are once again being forced to deal with an unfortunate government decision to take even more money out of taxpayers' pockets.

According to the Liberal plan, in just a few days, on April 1, the carbon tax will increase. We are not talking about a small hike of 3% or 4% because of inflation. We are talking about a 23% increase. Such a dramatic tax hike is something that happens rarely, if ever. Unfortunately, the Liberal carbon tax has the blind support of the NDP and the enthusiastic support of the Bloc Québécois, which desperately wants to drastically increase the carbon tax. That is their choice. It is their decision. It is not ours.

Canadians are struggling right now. We saw some sad incidents in Montreal where the police had to intervene because hundreds and hundreds of people were getting impatient when trying to access the food bank. Canada is a G7 country. Montreal is the capital of francophone America, but unfortunately, it is facing terrible situations like these. This is not the Canada that I love. Canada needs to do a lot better.

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People are being crushed under the weight of financial hardship, and housing prices and rents have tripled. Meanwhile, this government, to help taxpayers, wants to raise the carbon tax on April 1. That is not the right choice.

Some will say we need to address climate change. Yes, we recognize that climate change is real and must be addressed, but with pragmatic measures, not dogmatic ones. What is the government's track record? Think back to when the Liberals got elected in 2015. They were so proud to say, "Canada is back." A few weeks after the election, the Prime Minister arrived in Paris, all proud and happy, saying that Canada was back and that there would finally be concrete measures to control global pollution and that Canada would be a leader. The founder of Equiterre, who is now a minister and is currently being sued by Equiterre, was saying he was proud to be Canadian and to see the Prime Minister talking like that.

[English]

Is Canada back? Canada is way back. That is the reality.

[Translation]

After eight years of this Liberal government, after eight years of lecturing from the Liberal Prime Minister, after eight years of imposing and increasing the Liberal carbon tax, what has this government achieved? Zilch. Not a single target has been reached, except during COVID-19. I hope the plan is not to shut down the economy, as we had to do during COVID-19, in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Canada is not among the 13 countries that met the Paris Agreement targets. Canada actually ranks 62nd out of 67 countries in terms of climate change performance. Despite all the announcements, all the words, all the commitments and all the ambitious targets, the Canadian government, this government's Liberal Canada, comes in 62nd out of 67. That is not according to the MEI, the Fraser Institute or the Conservative Party. That is according to the UN. Every year, the UN presents its rankings at COP. At the latest COP, which was held in Dubai, Canada ranked 62nd. I will have the opportunity to talk about the minister's trip to Dubai in committee a little later. This is not something we are happy about. It hurts to say it, but it is the truth. The Liberals were too focused on a dogmatic approach instead of a pragmatic one.

If the Liberal carbon tax worked, we would know it, but it is not working. That is why the Conservative leader, the member for Carleton and leader of the official opposition, mentioned an article published in today's edition of the *Journal de Montréal* under the headline "For the first time in history, Canada is the most polluted country in North America". According to the article, the 13 most polluted cities in North America are all in Canada. That is the Liberal record after eight years of government lectures. No one is happy about it, but that is the reality.

We believe that we have to get rid of the Liberal carbon tax, and we are not the only ones who feel that way.

• (1245)

Seven of Canada's provincial premiers cannot all be wrong at the same time. Seven provincial premiers have asked the Liberal government to drop this policy, which will cause inflation and, most

significantly, leave taxpayers with even less money in their pockets. One such premier is the very Liberal premier of Newfoundland. Although I do not know him personally, he is someone who, like all Canadians, sees a tax hike of this magnitude as a very bad idea. The 23% increase comes at a time when everyone is struggling with housing, the cost of living or the price of food. Regrettably, we are not even talking about the price of food anymore, but about the incidents happening at food banks. That is not the Canada we want.

For that reason, as Conservatives, we support pragmatic approaches above all. Climate change is real and we have to deal with it. In his speech at our national convention in Quebec City last September, the "Quebec City speech", as we call it here, our leader described our party's vision and the pillars of action that we intend to focus on in our fight against climate change.

This was done at a Conservative national convention. Some 2,500 delegates from across Canada, representing all 338 ridings, gathered in my region, Quebec City. I am very proud of that. The reason I am explaining the partisan political framework for this announcement is that, quite often, when people do not want to talk about something, they announce it on a Friday afternoon at 4 p.m. in a brief press release. They say thank you, have a good night, and no one talks about it. In contrast, I am talking about a milestone speech for our party.

[English]

In English, I would say that it was a milestone speech by our leader in front of 2,500 members and supporters of our party, from coast to coast among the 338 ridings, who attended this convention. That milestone speech by our leader, *le discours de Québec*, was very important. We set the table for the next government, if we receive that support. We would be honoured to receive the support of Canadians.

[Translation]

This environmental plan is built on four pillars. The fundamental objective is to reduce pollution. The government has demonstrated that pollution cannot be reduced by taxing it. We believe that what we need are very pragmatic measures, not dogmatic ones.

The first pillar would be to provide tax incentives for companies to use high-tech solutions to reduce pollution. The companies are the ones creating the greenhouse gases, and they know why they create pollution. It is up to the companies to decide for themselves. They are the ones that know why they create pollution and how to reduce it. They should be incited and encouraged to do so through tax incentives.

The second pillar of the Conservatives' action on the environment would be to green-light green projects. Now more than ever, we need green energy such as wind, solar, hydroelectric, geothermal and nuclear power. We need these green energy sources. We need to green-light green projects. I am pleased to see that my colleagues opposite are smiling at this proposal. We introduced Bill C-375 to speed up the process. I am pleased to know that the Liberals are going to vote for it, and no doubt the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands will have an opportunity to explain why he thinks this is an excellent idea.

The third pillar would be the Canadian advantage. Here in Canada, we have everything we need to deal with climate change and everything we need in terms of natural resources, energy and knowledge. We just need to use them. I am from Quebec. HEC Montréal published its "State of Energy in Quebec" report a few weeks ago. It found that consumption of petroleum products increased by 7% over the past year. The thing that worries me the most is that 48% of the products consumed comes from the U.S. energy sector, more specifically from Texas and Louisiana. I have nothing against those two states, but as long as we are using fossil fuels, we should be getting them from Canadian sources instead of sending millions of dollars to another country.

The fourth pillar, and quite likely the foundation of all of this, would be to work hand in hand with first nations to address climate change.

We are against radically increasing the carbon tax on April 1. Seven provincial premiers cannot all be wrong. On the contrary, they are right. I would like this government to give Canadians a break and scrap the idea of increasing the Liberal carbon tax.

• (1250)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about the leader quite a bit, but I think he is being a little humble. He, too, was a leader. He was the leader of the ADQ, which later became and is now known as the CAQ in Quebec.

When he was the leader, he voted with the National Assembly of Québec, unanimously, to bring in cap and trade, which is another form of a price on pollution. As a matter of fact, the last person to speak in the National Assembly was this member, when he said, "We are satisfied that there will be a register of greenhouse gas emissions, and the fact that all the information will be public confirms the desire for transparency that unites us here in this House." That is what the member said just before he participated in a unanimous vote to bring in pricing pollution in Quebec.

I am wondering if he could inform the House as to why he has had such a dramatic change of heart, and if he no longer believes in that system that he voted for.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I have seen the member do far better than this. However, to address, first of all, the quote that the member gave, I can repeat it without any question, because it has nothing to do with the price on pollution. We were talking about the registry on emissions of gas. That has nothing to do with this policy. That happened 11 years ago.

Business of Supply

Since then, after more than 10 years of the application of a cap-and-trade system, we recognize, and I am not quoting myself but the environment minister of Quebec, that with that system, \$233 million is leaving Quebec and going to California.

I do not think that California is a third world country.

[Translation]

It is not a developing country.

[English]

I do not think it needs Quebec money. I think Quebec can deal with this situation by itself.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question. For a moment, let us pretend that he is in front of a jury and has to tell the whole truth.

If we were to abolish the carbon tax or oppose the increase, does that mean that tomorrow morning, no one would need to use food banks, rents would drop drastically, the world would be a better place, the cost of groceries would go down and we would be contributing to climate change?

Is this really what my colleague wants Quebecers and Canadians to believe?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I notice that the member used the word "drastically". That happens to be the word that her colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert used when he said that the government and governments should drastically increase carbon taxes.

I assume that the member and all Bloc Québécois members are quite happy that the Liberal carbon tax is going to increase by 23%. Perhaps that is not enough in their eyes, and it should go up even more.

People are having to line up at food banks. This is hurting all Canadians and Quebecers, in every riding. There is not one riding that is more affected by this reality than any other.

Thankfully, there are volunteers who work very hard, like those I had the opportunity to meet and support this weekend. When people are out there lining up, is it a good idea to raise taxes and take even more money out of their pockets when they are already struggling? The answer is no.

If some people think it is a good idea, all they have to do is keep voting for the Bloc Québécois. They want to drastically increase carbon taxes, but we do not.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I like my colleague very much, but we lived through the Harper years, when the lineups at food banks doubled and the cost of housing doubled. We also heard the same speeches as the one the member just gave.

Business of Supply

In 2006, the Conservatives told us that they would take care of the environment. What happened? We became the fourth-worst country in the world with respect to emissions that contribute to climate change. The Conservative government was a disaster for the environment.

My question for my colleague is simple, and I know that he is sincere. Why does he align himself with the Conservative Party, a party that denies climate change?

• (1255)

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I also have a great deal of respect for my veteran colleague, who obviously does very good work in the House. However, he is totally wrong. I started my speech by saying that climate change is real and that we need to address it. We need to deal with it constructively and effectively. We do not believe that the Liberal tax on carbon will resolve this situation. The Liberals' dogmatic approach of drastically increasing taxes, which is supported by the NDP and the Bloc Québécois, is not going to solve anything. Instead, we need meaningful action to reduce pollution.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg North.

The only thing the Conservatives want to axe is the rebates people are getting. They have no interest in helping to provide for Canadians, especially in their time of need, and we have seen that through various votes. We have seen that through the initiatives that the Leader of the Opposition has taken this week, what he has said and what he has directed his members to do, which I will get to in a second. What they really want to axe is the Canada carbon rebate. That is it.

The Canada carbon rebate currently provides, or will provide, in this fiscal year, on average, to each family, the following: Alberta, \$1,800; Manitoba, \$1,200; Saskatchewan, \$1,500; Nova Scotia, \$825; P.E.I., \$880; Newfoundland and Labrador, \$1,192; New Brunswick, \$760; and in my province of Ontario, \$1,120. That is an average.

I will give members the raw data as to how people are benefiting and how more people are better off through those rebates they are getting than what they are paying.

I took the opportunity to do the exercise myself. I went back to 2023 and dug up all my gas bills from Enbridge for heating my home. I calculated the federal carbon amount that was added to each bill, and after adding up through 2023, it came to \$379.93 that was paid in 2023. I drive an electric car, but I wanted to be as fair as I could, so I looked up how much fuel is needed for a car for the average person. The average is 1,667 litres. I then multiplied that by the federal carbon tax for 2023, and it brought me up to \$238.

Let us assume that because I live in a household where we have two cars, we have to multiply that by two. After all is said and done, taking into account what I paid to Enbridge for the carbon tax and what I would have paid through purchasing gas at a gas station, the total amount that I paid in 2023 was \$855. In my household, I receive the rebate directly into my bank, and when I looked at my

bank statement, the amount I received in 2023 was \$885. Before even considering any initiatives that I could have taken, and I have taken some, for example, I am driving an electric car, but before even taking any initiatives—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I hear Conservatives heckling me. I will not name names, because that would not be fair, but I have sat in the House and had Conservative members walk up and say, "Hey, Mark, by the way, just so you know, I drive an electric now, and I absolutely love the car." Of course, they would never actually get up in the House of Commons and say that, because that would go against their entire narrative. In the interest of protecting the identity of the people who have done that, I will not say who they are, but I get a kick out of how they are heckling me now while I am saying this.

Before I even attempt to do anything to improve my carbon footprint, just from the basic math, I am already ahead. The reality is that 94% of households with incomes below \$50,000 a year get rebates that exceed their carbon taxes. I have demonstrated to members that in a household of four with two vehicles, it is already very plausible.

When we start to tap into some of the many initiatives that the federal and many provincial governments have to make one's home more efficient, to install heat pumps, for example, to make conversion away from fossil fuels, we can very quickly see that if I put a heat pump in my home, that \$379 I paid in 2023 no longer exists, and I will be receiving in excess of \$380 a month. If we also add into that the various other initiatives I could take and the choices I could make, I would end up even further ahead. It is very clear that the vast majority of Canadians receive more than they pay.

• (1300)

I was very relieved to hear today, and I have heard on a number of occasions, the House leader, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, at least starting to talk about the rebates. Earlier today, I actually heard him concede that, by his information, 40% of households are getting more back. I say that we are at a place where we can work toward educating the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle. I do not think we are that far off before we can get him from that 40% to the real number of 80%. At least Conservatives are starting to come around.

However, make no mistake about it. Conservatives want to axe the Canada carbon rebate, which is money that is being put into the pockets of Canadians that is helping to deal with the effects of climate change and incentivizing them to make more energy efficient choices in their homes or in what they drive. Even if one only moves from a gasoline-only vehicle to a hybrid vehicle, one will start to see savings. One does not even have to go all electric. Again, that just further increases the excess amount one receives as opposed to what one pays.

I do not want to leave the impression that Conservatives are interested in any way in helping Canadians. That has been said in the House already. The Leader of the Opposition, on March 14, sent a letter to his MPs saying that Conservatives will stand in the House and will force votes they can oppose on many different items in order to perpetuate and continue the false narrative Conservatives currently have that the vast majority of people are not getting more back more than they are paying.

Let us talk about some of those things. Perhaps Conservatives will be a little smarter this time around when we go through a marathon voting session. Perhaps they will more strategically pick what they might want to vote against, because they are lining themselves up to vote against things that are based on communication from the Leader of the Opposition and that are based on a false narrative; he believes the price on pollution is not actually putting more into the pockets of Canadians.

Conservatives are lining themselves up this week to vote, once again, against three motions that affect Ukraine. These represent over 15 million dollars' worth of equipment to Ukraine, Operation Unifier supports Ukraine with \$130 million, and then \$285 million goes to Operation Reassurance to assist Ukraine. They are going to vote against RCMP members who have been injured on duty, which is at a cost of \$20 million. Over \$1 million is for Reaching Home programs to help address homelessness, and \$12.5 million is for the collection of banned assault firearms. The very heat pump program I talked about earlier, which provides over \$40 million in grants to Canadians, they will be voting against it. There is an anti-racism strategy, a round table on missing and murdered indigenous girls and LGBTQ+ people, which is over \$1 million, and of course, there is the Canada housing benefit, which represents over \$100 million.

The Leader of the Opposition has set up a false narrative that people do not get back more than they pay into the price on pollution when the vast majority do. He is willing to hedge his bets on that false narrative and, at a cost of doing so, is going to vote against all those items I just listed.

I would strongly encourage the Conservative Party of Canada members to have a good look and self-reflect on where they have come over the last number of years, from Stephen Harper, who spoke in favour of a price on pollution, up to their most recent leader and their most recent election campaign, when they knocked on doors and talked about pricing pollution. It is time to have serious look in the mirror and to reflect on exactly what it is they stand for. The reality is that the only thing they are showing themselves to stand for now is misinformation.

• (1305)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked about electric vehicles and about having options moving forward, and I think doing more for the environment is always possible. They have done very little in their eight years. We see that they are 63rd out of 68 countries in reaching environmental targets, so they have been failing. Basically, they have a tax plan.

A little over two years ago, my wife and kids were caught in a storm with my friend. The storm was so bad that they hit the ditch.

Business of Supply

If they had been in an electric vehicle, because they were in that ditch for eight and a half hours and no one could get to them, they would have frozen to death. It was lucky my friend had filled up the vehicle. An electric vehicle would not have lasted that long in -30°C weather.

How much is the life of my family worth to him when he forces choices on Canadian people?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would like the member to perhaps fly into Toronto one day. I would be happy to pick him up at Pearson, and I would like to drive him to Ottawa so that he can have the experience of driving in an electric vehicle. What he just said there is factually incorrect. They had a full tank of gas, and they could have kept the heat on for eight hours. That is great.

If I have a full battery, I can keep the heat on for days. The heat is not what drains an electric car battery; it is the actual driving, as is the case for a combustion vehicle. That comment is based on a widely circulated, hugely misinformed meme that is out there, and I cannot believe he even brought it up in the House of Commons. I know the meme he is talking about. It is false, and it is misinformation. If my battery is full and I end up in a ditch, I can sit there for three or four days if I am just producing heat.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do want to remind the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan that he had an opportunity to ask a question. If he has anything to follow up with, then he should wait until the appropriate time.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I always kind of question the government's budgetary choices—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order.

[English]

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands and the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan seem to want to go back and forth. As I said, it is not the appropriate time. I am sure the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands wants to hear the question that is being asked of him so that he will be able to answer it. Again, if individuals have questions and comments, they need to wait until the appropriate time.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Madam Speaker, my question is really about questioning the government's choices. There are a lot of things I do not understand about this country, but let us just focus on the Liberal government's budgetary choices.

Business of Supply

There is a homelessness crisis going on right now. It has been going on in Quebec for five years. In fact, since the federal government launched the national housing strategy, homelessness in Quebec has doubled. There is also homelessness in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton. This is really serious. There is only one federal program that deals with homelessness, and that is the Reaching Home program. Now we have learned that the program will be cut by 3% for the next two years. This 3% cut seems crazy to us. It seems like the Liberals want to show the Conservatives that they are capable of fiscal restraint, so they are making cuts all over the place, including to services for the homeless.

Recent budgets announced \$83 billion in tax credits for oil companies by 2035, and yet services for the homeless are being cut by 3%. I would like my colleague to explain that to me.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, if the member is concerned about homelessness and initiatives this government has put forward, I would encourage him to not be tempted into voting against all the opposed items the Conservatives will be putting up. As I indicated, two of them, the Reaching Home program to address homelessness and the Canada housing benefit, are on the chopping block as a result of the opposed items the Leader of the Opposition has put forward.

The reality of the situation is that, while he says we are subsidizing the fossil fuel industry, we have phased out the fossil fuel subsidies. The only way we continue to subsidize, in any way, the fossil fuel industry is to help to deal with abandoned orphan oil wells. That member might think that it is not our problem, because they were companies from 50 years ago. We should leave the wells there, and that would be the end of that. Unfortunately, governments at the time did not think it was good to ensure that the proper money was in place to deal with those wells later on, so now society has to pick up the tab. That is the unfortunate reality. However, it is something that we have to do in our environmental interests.

• (1310)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I think we need to talk about going well beyond subsidies. We know that in Great Britain they had an excess profit tax on oil and gas; that is the Conservatives in Britain. We cannot even get Liberals to do that. Right now, the Liberals have ended the Canada greener homes loan program. I have constituents who want to access that program. I have contractors saying they are going to have to lay people because they were employing people and were supporting Canadians who wanted to do the right thing.

My questions to my colleague are these: Will they charge an excess profit tax on oil and gas? Will they not just fund the greener homes loan program but also actually provide it with the necessary resources to make it through a full budget cycle so that all Canadians can access it?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, if the member for the NDP brought forward an opposition motion that we charge an excess profit tax on the oil and gas industry, I would vote for it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam

Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise to speak to the important issue of a price on pollution and the carbon rebate.

I want to take a bit of a different angle on just how isolated the Conservative Party of Canada is today. When we look at the issue of a price on pollution, we will find it actually originates in 2015 in Paris, where the world came together and said not only that climate is change real but also that we need to take a policy direction around the world to try to limit the amount of emissions and ultimately reduce them so we would have a better environment worldwide.

What we have witnessed over the years is a high level of participation from countries around the world. For example, the European Union, which is made up of many different countries, including France, Italy and so many others, came up with the green deal, which in essence is about a price on pollution. We can also look at countries like Ireland, England and Mexico. We often say that the United States does not have a price on pollution, but that is not quite accurate because there are many American states that do.

Not only does Canada have a national price on pollution, but the provinces of British Columbia and Quebec also have a price on pollution. In the House of Commons today, the Liberal Party, the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and the Green Party are in favour of a price on pollution. We used to have a Conservative leader, Erin O'Toole, who was in favour of a price on pollution. Then we have to factor in where the Conservative Party is today. The Conservatives have isolated themselves to say that they do not support a price on pollution, even though under their former leader Erin O'Toole, in that policy platform, all the Conservatives, including the current leader, advanced, promoted and encouraged a price on pollution. It is in their platform.

What we have witnessed since the new leader was minted not that long ago is that the far-right element of the Conservative Party has taken control. The whole idea of the MAGA Conservatives has taken control through the leadership of the Conservative Party today. Because of that, Conservatives have changed their mind. They now say they are not in favour of a price on pollution. The world is changing and is recognizing the importance of a sound policy decision, but an irresponsible Conservative Party today is saying no to a price on pollution.

England today is saying to countries around that world that if they are going to be exporting products to England and do not have a mechanism for a price on pollution, they are going to have to pay additional fees on that merchandise going into England. That is something it is acting on and is going to be putting into place. What does the Conservative Party really think about a price on pollution and the impact that will have on trade?

Business of Supply

We saw that with the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement, where Conservatives were prepared to use it as their sole issue as part of the rationale for opposing the Canada-Ukraine agreement, because there was reference to a price on pollution. It was not always their sole issue but was their second issue. If we think about it, Ukraine has had a price on pollution since 2011. Ukraine wants to be able to have a formal trade agreement with the European Union, which also has a price on pollution.

• (1315)

However, the Conservative leadership and the members across the way have closed their eyes like an ostrich, put their head in the sand and do not recognize good, sound policy. I can say that is not in the best interest of Canadians, just like it was not in the best interest of Canadians when the Conservative Party voted against the Canada-Ukraine trade agreement. That is the reality. The statements and the policy direction of the Conservative Party, with the far-right element, is to the detriment of good, sound public policy, which is going to be there for future generations of Canadians and others. Canada needs things such as trade agreements. We need international trade; that is a good thing.

The rest of the world is recognizing that the environment matters and that the price on pollution is an effective tool, but we have the leader of the official opposition going around saying he is going to get rid of the price on pollution. How backward-thinking is that when we contrast it to what the rest of the world is doing? That is not responsible public policy-making.

Instead, the Conservatives are more focused on developing a bumper sticker that they believe is going to get them votes. They believe they are going to be able to fool Canadians. That is the bottom line. They have no faith in Canadians' understanding the reality; we see that in what they are telling Canadians.

The question I had earlier today for the leader of the official opposition was this: Why does the Conservative Party not participate in political panels on CTV or CBC? Canadians still view those networks.

One member is saying, "No, they do not."

Mr. Speaker, CTV and CBC would argue differently, and so would I. I think CTV and CBC have played a very important part in public debate for generations. The leader of the Conservative Party says they are state-operated organizations. How ridiculously stupid is it to make that sort of assertion? The leader says it not only here in the House; he says it outside the House also as he chooses to avoid true accountability on some of the stupid things he is saying, things that are absolutely misleading.

He will go to the provinces of British Columbia and Quebec and try to give the false impression that they have the same sort of carbon taxing system as Manitoba, Atlantic Canada, Alberta and others have. That is just not true. He tries to tell people in the provinces where there is a carbon tax, a federal backstop of a carbon tax, that they are paying far more into the carbon tax system than they are receiving.

Again, we have said very clearly, as the member for Kingston and the Islands has pointed out by his specific example, that a vast

majority of people actually receive more money back from the rebate than they pay through carbon tax on gas and heating their homes. That is something the Parliamentary Budget Officer has made very clear. Over 80% of people will receive more dollars back than they will put directly into the carbon tax. That is indisputable. Members of all political parties, except for the Conservatives, are acknowledging that.

• (1320)

What does that mean? When the leader of the Conservative Party travels the country and says he is going to axe the tax, it also means he is going to get rid of the rebates. When Conservatives talk about getting rid of the rebates, they are telling well over 80% of my constituents that they will have less disposal income because of that particular action. I find disgraceful what the leader of the official opposition is spreading across the country.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, Dan Kelly from the CFIB has recently said he was horrified to see the government's new plan with respect to rebates for small businesses. Small businesses actually bear most of the burden of the carbon tax but get almost nothing back. In fact, the government promised that they would get more than they are actually getting.

Does the member support improving the situation for small businesses or just letting them die on the vine?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member opposite is trying to change the narrative of what I said. I said that 80-plus per cent of the constituents I represent, and I emphasize the word "plus", are getting more money back through the carbon rebate than they are paying in carbon tax. That is a fact. The member opposite, in asking the question, did not challenge that fact because, as he knows, it is the truth. However, the leader of the Conservative Party says he is going to cut the tax and cut the rebate. That means less disposable income for 80-plus per cent of the constituents I represent.

To me, that is very deceptive. That is why the Conservatives do not want to participate on political panels, because there is a higher sense of accountability than the garbage they are putting out through social media.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I do not know if my colleagues from English Canada are aware that what we have been hearing in the House this morning is a ringing endorsement for Quebec sovereignty. In Quebec, we are concerned about fighting climate change. Our province has the lowest greenhouse gas emissions, by the way, because we have taken action, because we rely on hydroelectricity and batteries.

This morning, we have been hearing two things. On the one hand, we hear that the government has been spending a lot of money for years and has the world's worst record. Canada has the worst record when it comes to fighting climate change, despite quite needlessly throwing billions of dollars out there, with help from the NDP, which supports the government most of the time. On the other hand, we have the Conservatives saying that they are going to do even less.

Business of Supply

All Canadians are saying that no matter how much they spend or do not spend, they are getting nowhere. This is really a ringing endorsement for Quebec sovereignty. I hope that all Quebecers are watching this debate today and taking note.

• (1325)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I hope that people in all regions of the country are taking note of the debate.

Manitoba, like Quebec, is a major investor in hydro and green energy. There are all sorts of opportunities in virtually every region of the country. Never before have we seen as much investment in greener jobs, and those greener jobs are going to translate in every region of the country. The federal government is providing incentives and encouraging that development. Quite frankly, I would challenge any member opposite to point to a government that has done more to support greener jobs in our economy in every way.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member has spoken a lot about the disinformation that the Conservatives have been spreading, and I agree, but the Conservative member asked him a very fair question about small businesses.

We know that the federal government currently owes small businesses and indigenous groups \$3.6 billion. Those are rebates that the government has promised small businesses, and they are still waiting. The government has also said it is going to give small businesses less because it has doubled the rebates for rural Canadians. Why would it make small businesses pay for that when we could be making big oil and gas pay for it? The output-based pricing system is unfair. Suncor pays 14 times less than an average Canadian does in carbon pricing. Why not make big oil pay what it owes?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I believe that Canadians, as a whole, recognize the principle that the polluters need to pay. The government has recognized this and, ultimately, moving in very significant ways, has put a price on pollution. Today, it is oriented. We continued to go in the right direction on that matter in all aspects.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today on behalf of the people of Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame and, in fact, on behalf of all the people of my great province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

What is not a pleasure is what Justin Trudeau has done—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will remember that he is not to mention individuals who sit in the House of Commons by their names, no matter what position they have.

I am sure the hon. member for Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame will retract that and get back on track.

Mr. Clifford Small: Madam Speaker, after eight years of the costly NDP-Liberal coalition and under the Prime Minister, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have seen their cost of living go right through the roof.

Now, the carbon cult plan is to raise the carbon tax by 23% on April 1. It is yet another in a long line of cruel April Fool's Day jokes that we are going to encounter until 2030, when the price on carbon reaches 61¢ a litre.

On Saturday, the Voice of the Common Man, known as VOCM to most people, had a poll. It showed that 90% of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are against the April 1 increase in carbon tax of 23%. I guess people might wonder why the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are so against the costly coalition's increase in carbon tax. It is simply because Newfoundland and Labrador's geographical area is very remote. Everything comes to Newfoundland by the use of fuel. Whether it is food, building supplies or even fuel, it arrives by fuel.

The fishing industry takes quite the hit, whether in terms of the processors that use fuel to cook the crab, the trucking companies that truck it or the fishermen who drive around and move their supplies. The carbon tax has quite the impact. It impacts the price the fishermen receive.

It impacts the mining industry. There is a mine in my riding that shut down, and one of the main reasons was the high cost of fuel.

It has a massive impact on the forestry industry and the tourism industry. People cannot afford to travel to Newfoundland and Labrador anymore.

The Speaker is very aware of how much it costs to get to Newfoundland and Labrador, as I know she has family connections in one of the great communities in my riding, Belleoram. The Speaker is well aware of the crippling effect of high fuel costs.

If it costs more for fishermen to harvest the fish or processors to process it, or for farmers to grow vegetables and wheat, or whatnot, and for truckers to truck those products to the grocery stores, which are paying more in energy bills, at the end of the day the consumer foots the bill.

Seventy per cent of Canadians are against this 23% increase in carbon tax, and seven Canadian premiers have come out against it. This includes the great supporter and childhood friend of the Prime Minister, the Liberal Premier of Newfoundland, Andrew Furey, who just sent a letter to the Prime Minister, pleading with him to pause the increase. He said, "I respectfully request that you consider pausing the implementation of the April 1st carbon tax increase".

We will see if he listens. All along, Premier Furey supported the carbon tax, but now he sees the light. Yet his good friend, the Prime Minister, consistently breaks the promise he made to Canadians to hold carbon pricing at \$50 per tonne. The new goal, of course, is \$170 a tonne.

Then there is the constant bragging that carbon tax is revenue-neutral. It is not. People do not have to take my word for it: The independent watchdog, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, says that Canadians will pay more in carbon tax than they receive in rebates. At the same time, the Liberal-NDP coalition has not met one single solitary climate change target, and it will not.

The member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl continues to talk about the cold hard cash that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are going to find in their pockets. Increases such as the one coming on April 1, which lead to a total increase by 2030 of 61¢ a litre, are not putting cold hard cash in anybody's pockets. I will tell the House what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are finding cold: the temperatures in their homes. They cannot afford to heat them. That is where we will find the cold.

Last week, Liberal Premier Furey said, "The issue for this particular tax is there are limited options to change right now in Newfoundland and Labrador.... In the absence of the ability to change, what does the tax really accomplish?"

• (1330)

Hiking the carbon tax will accomplish more of the same, more of nothing. Our common-sense Conservative leader and I toured Newfoundland and Labrador over the last year. We were in Labrador. We were in St. John's East. We were in St. John's South—Mount Pearl. We were in Avalon and Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, my great riding of Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame and Long Range Mountains. We heard the message loud and clear that life is simply unaffordable these days.

On a recent visit to the Community Food Sharing Association in St. John's last week, we were shown quite a disturbing picture. Their demand has risen by over 40% in the last three or four years. They are now having to try to save food banks that are about to close their doors because they cannot find the resources to supply the needs of the public. We heard the struggles. We heard the pleas, such as those we heard from the food bank.

If the six NDP-Liberal MPs from Newfoundland and Labrador are hearing the same pleas, which I am sure they are, we really hope they listen to the requests of the people who elected them, the people who sent them here. They sent them here to be their voice in this place. They come a long way every week. I am looking over at my colleague, the member for Bonavista—Burin—Trinity. I travel on a plane with him quite a bit. He comes a long way from out where he lives. It is quite the trek. He is bringing those concerns from all the way out there in Bonavista—Burin—Trinity to the House. I am sure that the folks out in Clarendville, and New-Wes-Valley and places like that are hoping that he remembers the pain that the hike in this carbon tax is going to bring to those folks on April 1 and beyond, as it continues on into 2030. I hope that my hon. colleague and, along with him, his five NDP-Liberal colleagues support our motion to stop the hike in the carbon tax when the vote comes up later this week.

There is hope, because if the six NDP-Liberal members from Newfoundland and Labrador continue to neglect their constituents, there is going to be a price to be paid. These are the people who elected them to come here, to represent them and to be their voice in Ottawa. If they continue to not speak as their voice and vote

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against Conservative motions, such the one before the House to spike the hike, the price to be paid is not going to be a price on pollution. It is going to be a price on NDP-Liberal seats in this place. We plead with them, as their constituents do, to vote with Conservatives, spike the hike and heed our plea.

Common-sense Conservatives, very shortly, will axe the tax, build the homes, stop the crime and balance the budget.

• (1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, aside from slogans, let me make a plea to the member who just spoke. On April 15, the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, a good many of them his constituents, will have a cheque deposited in their account. A family of four will get \$298. When that is added up, it will be well over \$1,000 for the year. If the member votes in favour of this motion, what he is really doing is voting against that rebate cheque being deposited in their accounts.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has made it very clear that 80% of Canadians get more back in their rebates than they actually pay out. That is a fact. I will say that on CTV on a political panel. The member opposite will not do that.

Will the hon. member admit to why he wants to deny his constituents those rebate cheques?

Mr. Clifford Small: Madam Speaker, I am bewildered as to why my colleague across the way is fighting against the independently appointed Parliament Budget Officer, the watchdog for this place. In Newfoundland and Labrador, \$1,874 is what the average household will pay this year. The rebate will be \$1,497, for a net loss to each household of \$377.

Is there a new math? I did not think math changed. We could go all the way back to the Greeks; it has stayed the same.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am hearing feedback on both sides of the House when it is not the appropriate time. I would ask members to please refrain from doing that.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, last week, we had a constituency week. I went to 15 different seniors' residences and spoke to seniors across my riding. They were, very clearly, absolutely delighted with the NDP dental care program, which included seniors.

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I listened to the member speak about how he wanted to make life more affordable for Canadians, yet his party votes against things like the dental care program. His party votes against things like the national food program for children. His party votes against things like taking GST off of home heating. Every time we bring forward a smart idea that will make life more affordable for Canadians, the Conservatives vote against it.

When I spoke to seniors in my riding, they were deeply concerned about the potential of a Conservative government. They asked me what I would do to ensure that those folks never got into power.

• (1340)

Mr. Clifford Small: Madam Speaker, that member should spend a day in my constituency office in Grand Falls-Windsor and listen to the phone calls and read the emails we get from seniors and folks who are absolutely disgusted with that fake dental program. It works for nobody.

Talking about our constituents, let us talk about her constituents. In Alberta, they will pay \$2,943 this year in carbon tax. Their rebate will be \$2,032, for a net loss to the average family in her riding of \$911. She has a lot to be proud of.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There was still some back-and-forth, other people having debates. I want to remind members to please be respectful. If I have not recognized them, they are not the ones who should be speaking at the time.

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, over the past year, I toured Quebec on the housing issue. I travelled all over Quebec. I met with over 70 organizations representing 15,000 members. These are people who work with the most vulnerable, namely, women who are victims of domestic violence and people with intellectual disabilities. We talked about housing and homelessness. No one—not a single person—talked to me about the carbon tax to deal with people who do not have shelter or housing. I was told that we need investments, that we need to invest in social housing and the most vulnerable. No one talked to me about the carbon tax.

When I hear my Conservative colleagues say that they are close to the disadvantaged and the people who care for people, I cannot believe that they would say that.

[English]

Mr. Clifford Small: Madam Speaker, I do not know what my hon. colleague does not understand about the carbon tax, but a lot of the things that are consumed in his riding enter Canada in Vancouver. They come across the country and the carbon tax is applied to the fuel that is used to ship everything from B.C. to La Belle Province. The grain that the great bread of Quebec is made from, the consumers of Quebec pay for all of these things. He knows it. He knows that common-sense Conservatives have a plan to build homes, and we will do it and even help that man in his own riding.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a true privilege and honour to rise in

the House of Commons and represent the wonderful, amazing, hard-working people of Peterborough—Kawartha.

Today, we have a very important opposition day motion, put forward by the member for Carleton, the official leader of the opposition, Canada's next prime minister, to protect and help Canadians.

The reality is that life has never been more expensive after eight years of the Liberal-NDP Prime Minister. He lost his way so long ago that he cannot see the forest for the trees. He has refused to listen to the reality of what is happening outside of this building.

The motion put forward today is, “That, given that 70% of provinces and 70% of Canadians oppose the Prime Minister's 23% carbon tax hike on April 1, the House call on the NDP-Liberal coalition to immediately cancel this hike.”

People watching at home might say that if 70% of Canadians agree with this, how can the Liberal-NDP coalition go along with something that nobody wants. That is Liberal math and Liberal logic. Not only that, but the Liberals will also tell people that they will get more back with their carbon tax rebate, which makes no sense. There would not even be a rebate if they did not take the money to begin with. There is zero common sense. The average Ontario family is going to pay almost \$1,700 in carbon tax, and that is just this year. The numbers in 2030 are \$3,583. This has been a lie from day one.

The Prime Minister promised that initially this tax would never go higher than \$50 a tonne. Now it is set to reach \$170 per tonne. The Prime Minister said that the carbon tax would be revenue-neutral, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirms that Canadians pay more than they get back in rebates. The Prime Minister said that the carbon tax would help lower GHG emissions, but the Liberal government will not meet its own environmental targets by 2030. Why does anybody believe him? They do not, and why should they? He tells them one thing and does another. He doubles down and lets his ego lead, because it is way more important to be right than to listen to Canadians who are truly hurting.

According to the “Food insecurity among Canadian families” report, using data from the 2021 Canada income survey, almost 50% of single mothers living below the poverty line struggle with food insecurity. What is going to happen with this carbon tax increase on April 1 if already 50% of single mothers are struggling with food insecurity?

This past week, I had the chance to visit the beautiful province of New Brunswick, and I will give a shout-out to the east coast and the amazing humans who live out there. I went to many food banks that had a double to triple increase in one year. The demographic of who is using that food bank are students, seniors, working middle class and active serving military families.

I could not believe what I heard Jane from Oromocto Food Bank. She said that it had about 50 active serving military families accessing the food bank. I asked her since when and she told me that was about four or five years. The other part was that they had to pay rent for their housing. How are the houses heated? Natural gas. What is on natural gas? The carbon tax.

It gets even better. Not only does the Liberal-NDP coalition charge the carbon tax, but it taxes the carbon tax. That is disgusting. The PBO has reported that the carbon tax on propane and natural gas used for greenhouse heating and cooling, livestock barns and drying grain will cost the farmers nearly \$1 billion by 2030. Has anybody visited a farm? I do not know if members know this, but farmers do not have a lot of money. Farmers often have a lot of assets but very little cash flow. If we bankrupt farmers, we bankrupt Canadians and prevent them from being able to eat.

• (1345)

This is the most insane thing I have ever seen. We have to ask what the government is doing and why it is doing it. It makes us question what is happening.

According to Canada's Food Price Report, food cost for the typical family of four is expected to rise by \$700 in 2024. According to a Second Harvest report, 36% of charities had to turn people away because they were running out of resources. In addition, 101 first nations communities have taken the Liberal government to court over the carbon tax. They are waking up. It is all virtue signalling.

I have this lovely letter from a woman named Barbara. She said, "I heat my home with propane and a wood stove. Not only are we paying the carbon tax, but we are paying HST on the carbon tax. That is double taxation. I have called and written and spoken, but I can't get any answers." Barb is not alone, because the Liberal-NDP coalition does not want to listen to her.

Yesterday, in question period, there was an exchange between the Leader of the Opposition and the finance minister, who said that the Liberals would take no lessons from the Conservatives, because they would stand for the least vulnerable. Was that a Freudian slip? I am not sure.

I will read comments that are coming to me. A lot of times, the Liberals across the way will say that Conservatives are making things up. They love to gaslight Canadians or find one person to zone in on their confirmation bias and say that they have toxic positivity, that things have never been so great, that things have never been so wonderful. We know that is not true.

One person said, "Hello Michelle. I live in Peterborough. I'm a wife and a mother of 4 (ages 13 years -15 months). The increase caused by the carbon tax and 8 years of [the Prime Minister's] Liberal government is killing my family. My husband has a job that used to be the golden ticket of jobs here in Peterborough and now

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we can barely get by. We used to spend \$400 for groceries and have a month's worth of food. Now we are lucky if that gets us more than a week. I can't afford new glasses. My husband can't afford to go to the dentist. And don't get me started on the price of formula and diapers! All of this lands squarely on the incredibly corrupt shoulders of the [the Prime Minister] Liberals and the NDP coalition. Any help you can provide and advocate for is amazing. Please help us."

Bob Bolton wrote, "There should be no CARBON TAX in the first place Michelle, we have all kinds of trees to look after that is sue, thanks."

Meaghan Ireland Danielis said, "As a mother of three and a small business owner with a partner working full time and a part-time job myself, it's already a struggle to put food on the table and pay bills. This tax increase will raise the prices of everything yet again. I am not sure how people are supposed to survive, let alone thrive. It's a scary state of affairs. I really hope that our next government can find a way to clean up some of the terrible mess that's been made. I know, you know Michelle..., people are suffering and there is no need for it to be this way. Everything has been flipped and the focus is all wrong. I have always been a proud Canadian and a patriot. These last few years for the first time ever, I've considered leaving my beautiful home of Canada. I have lost hope and I know I'm not alone in this."

She is not alone as 70% of Canadians are experiencing what she is experiencing. Working-class families cannot afford to put gas in their cars, food in their fridges or heat their homes. That is the reality. All Conservatives know this. For some reason, that side of the House, the people who are in charge of the country, fail to acknowledge it, fail to recognize it—

• (1350)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member is giving an impassioned speech about her riding and there is so much noise in the chamber, it is impossible to hear her from the front of the floor of the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have already signalled the Sergeant-at-Arms and he is taking care of that.

The hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I have thousands of comments. Members can visit my Facebook page, read them and maybe join people.

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The reality is that we hear them and we are fighting for them. We know that Canadians do not want the Prime Minister to force his tax hike on them. We have common-sense solutions to axe the tax. The Conservatives will stand with Canadians, fight for them and promise to make life more affordable.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on April 15, there are going to be carbon rebate cheques circulated to Canadians. Conservative Party members are going around saying that they are going to axe the tax, but axing the tax also means getting rid of the carbon rebates. Many Canadians now factor those rebates into their budgets. Four times a year, on a regular basis, Canadians are receiving a rebate, and many of them factor it into their expenses and budgets. As well, a vast majority are receiving more money back from the rebate than they put into the tax. That is the truth and the reality.

Would the member make it very clear whether the Conservative Party is prepared to take away those rebates that will be deposited on April 15?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, it is so hard to rationalize the delusion of Liberal logic and Liberal math. It is so challenging. The argument is that they are going to give a rebate. If they did not take the money, there would be no rebate. People do not have that extra money to give. For an average family in Ontario, it is going to cost just under \$1,700 in carbon tax. What they are going to get back is just over \$1,100. That is from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That is math, real math, and that is the reality.

Why are the Liberals trying to gaslight Canadians? Canadians know the truth. They are the ones accessing the food banks, and they are the ones who cannot afford to live because of the Liberals.

• (1355)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, in June I asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer what would happen if we did away with the carbon tax and went toward subsidies and regulations, or what would happen if we did nothing. The U.S. has made it clear there would be a border carbon adjustment, and I asked what the impact would be on those eight in 10 Canadians.

He said that it depends exactly what is done in place of the carbon tax, but if we just speak about a carbon adjustment at the U.S. border, that would probably lead to an economic slowdown in Canada and it would be significant, depending on the adjustment, of course. However, he said it was not unthinkable that this could lead to negative impacts on sectors that are more energy-intensive. He said it would drive up inflation in the U.S., and that in Canada it would probably have the opposite effect and act as a depressor on economic activity and on prices. It would be the opposite effect, which is not much better. This is what he cited. In fact, one could say it is worse because it would depress economic activity.

My colleague ran on a price on pollution. As my colleague knows, I am always trying to work on solutions. What are Conservatives proposing in place of a carbon tax to ensure that Canadians do not get the impact of a carbon adjustment at the border with the U.S., the U.K. and the EU?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, I ask the member opposite, and all the members who ask this question, if they have visited a farm lately. The 2023 food price report estimated that the carbon tax will cost a typical 5,000-acre farm \$150,000 by 2030. Anybody who visits a farm knows that farmers are the stewards of this land. They are the most innovative, the most creative and the most environmentally friendly. They have all the technology. They know what to do with the land because they are the stewards of the land.

My question back to them was what was going to happen when there were no farms because they cannot do this. To answer the question, I would rely on farmers and their technology, innovation and connection to the land to actually help the environment, and not on a tax that punishes Canadians.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Madam Speaker, today we were at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women and the member for Peterborough—Kawartha put forward a motion to stop the carbon tax so single mothers could afford to feed their families. The Bloc, the NDP and the Liberals all voted against it. Is this what the government cares about? It does not care about single moms. It does not care about how they are going to feed their children, because its members did not vote with us.

Could she tell us how we are going to help these poor single mothers?

Ms. Michelle Ferreri: Madam Speaker, yes, it was shocking to adjourn debate on something that is so easy to do to help and to listen. Again, I reiterate that this is 70% of Canadians. We know the carbon tax disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable: single mothers, those with low incomes, seniors and students. All of these people are accessing food banks at historical highs. Never in history has it been this bad. It is simple: Replace that person across the way who likes to call himself the Prime Minister, get rid of this tax and make life affordable for Canadians.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadian farmers and ranchers are responsible stewards of the land and are united in their goal of feeding Canadians and the world. They are also on the front lines of climate change, often dealing with its devastating effects, including droughts, floods and wildfires.

The severe droughts of 2021 resulted in a 27% decline in Canadian grain production. The drought of 2023 is projected to lower the grain harvest by 6.5%, with the Prairies being especially hard hit. This year is shaping up to be a continuation of this trend. An overwhelming majority of Canadians, including farmers, are rightfully concerned about the impacts of climate change and we hear them.

While Conservatives continue to deny the reality of climate change and the role it plays in driving up food prices, we are helping the agri-food industry adapt to climate change through the Canadian agricultural partnership, the AgriRecovery framework and the national adaptation strategy.

We will always be there for farmers.

* * *

● (1400)

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARD

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to honour the guardians of the grasslands, the classical conservationists and the protectors of our pastures. Of course, I am speaking about agriculture producers across the country.

Today, I am proud to recognize constituents Doug and Linda Wray of the Wray Ranch near Irricana, Alberta, for receiving the Canadian Cattle Association's environmental stewardship award for 2023. Their focus on sustainable farming is an example of how Canadian agriculture is leading in efficiency and environmental farming, producing the best-quality food in the world. The Wrays' commitment to soil health is evident through practices like conservation tillage, pasture management, and bale and swath grazing. This results in significant improvements such as increased soil and organic matter and reduced erosion.

I congratulate them for their recognition as stewards of the environment. May their family farm live on through generations of Wrays and serve as an example of the greatness we see every day in Canadian agriculture.

* * *

TAIWAN

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we welcome the honourable Kelly Hsieh, the deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of China, on Parliament Hill today, let us celebrate our friendship between Canada and Taiwan.

I rise today to acknowledge Taiwan as an important stakeholder and a valuable partner for Canada and the international community. The signing of the FIPA between Canada and Taiwan in December 2023 demonstrated Canada's commitment to strengthening economic ties with the Indo-Pacific region.

However, Taiwan's accession to the CPTPP would be an even greater achievement. Taiwan is a significant economic player in the Indo-Pacific region. It promises economic growth, trade diversification and regional stability. By embracing free-trade principles, Taiwan can contribute to a prosperous, rules-based international order. By supporting Taiwan's accession to the CPTPP, Canada would

Statements by Members

demonstrate its commitment to promoting these principles in the region.

Let us embrace the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères.

* * *

[Translation]

JULIEN LÉVESQUE AND LAURENCE BRIÈRE

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec has some great athletes. I am pleased to rise in the House to celebrate the victory of two of our athletes, Julien Lévesque from Boucherville and his partner Laurence Brière, who form one heck of a figure skating duo.

I was delighted to see these two youngsters, beaming and waving the Quebec flag, all with the Canadian championship medal around their necks.

This Quebec duo, competing in the “novice” category in Waterloo, Ontario, came out on top against all the other athletes from the Canadian provinces. It is a resounding testament not only to their talent, but also to the amazing ability Quebecers have to shine among the best in the world.

Julien and Laurence, you have our admiration, and you can be sure we will be following the rest of your journey closely. Bravo, we are proud of you.

* * *

[English]

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 8, I had the immense pleasure of meeting and celebrating women community leaders from my riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

The women spoke of their personal stories, challenges and triumphs. They are successful women, not only in their respective lines of business, occupations or professions, but because each day they inspire and serve as role models for other women.

[Translation]

I am especially grateful for our government's efforts to encourage women, but also to actively support the participation of women in the workforce, including with the very first women entrepreneurship strategy and several other measures that have allowed women to enter the workforce in record numbers.

[English]

Let us continue to celebrate women on International Women's Day and every day, and pursue our efforts to create and offer them opportunities to thrive and succeed.

Statements by Members

● (1405)

*[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE**

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, March 20, is International Day of La Francophonie. The Organisation internationale de la Francophonie's theme this year is "Créer, innover, entreprendre en français" or create, innovate and engage in French.

As president of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie I want to issue an invitation. We are more than 321 million French speakers in the world. We have to make daily efforts to grow the French language. Here at home in Canada and in Quebec, the decline is a sad reality and we have to be vigilant and do what it takes to turn things around.

My party, the Conservative Party of Canada, recognizes the decline of French. We will continue to take meaningful action to slow this decline across the country.

Tomorrow, I invite francophones and francophiles to do something meaningful in their community to promote our language, French.

Let us be proactive ambassadors. Let us celebrate our beautiful language every day. Let us create, innovate and be proud of our language, French.

* * *

*[English]***ILYAS MULLABHAI**

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the community of Don Valley West is deeply saddened by the loss of Ilyas Mullabhai, a dear friend, valued colleague and trusted adviser.

Ilyas's unwavering commitment to advancing community-based initiatives is well recognized. He was instrumental in assisting the Islamic Society of Toronto in establishing a new religious centre and community space that will provide a safe and inclusive environment for Muslims in our community.

I had the pleasure to collaborate closely with Ilyas, particularly on our joint advocacy for youth initiatives. Our work together on the Canada summer jobs program at Masjid Darus Salam has helped a generation of young people acquire valuable skills, earn fair wages and prepare for post-secondary education.

Brother Ilyas was committed to serving others. That commitment was rooted in his belief in humanity and in his faith. I extend my condolences to his son Arshad and his family. He will be missed.

* * *

NOWRUZ

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the evening approaches, marking the arrival of Nowruz at precisely 11:06:26 p.m. tonight, we gather to celebrate a tradition steeped in the renewal of the earth and the rejuvenation of our spirits. This an-

cient festival, rich in symbolism and joy, invites us to embrace the new year with hope and optimism.

In the spirit of this celebration, let us reflect upon the wisdom of the Persian poet, Khayyam, whose words resonate with the essence of Nowruz.

*[Member spoke in Farsi]**[English]*

Khayyam's poetry captures the essence of Nowruz with elegance, urging us to leave the past behind us and embrace the present's fresh promise. As we greet the new year, these words inspire us to meet the future with open hearts, celebrating Nowruz as a symbol of renewal, unity and shared values. This ancient tradition beckons us toward a brighter, more harmonious path in the future.

* * *

COMMUNITIES OF YORK—SIMCOE

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is ridiculous. The rural communities of York—Simcoe are not eligible to receive the rural top-up on the carbon tax because they are classified as being part of Toronto by the government, and now, not a single community in northern York Region has received any housing funding from the Liberals' overhyped housing accelerator fund, but Toronto has received half a billion dollars.

A clear message has been sent to the residents of Georgina, East Gwillimbury, Aurora, Uxbridge, Bradford and the Chippewas of Georgina Island. According to the Liberals, they are not Toronto enough for housing funding, but they are too Toronto to get the rural top-up.

The Liberals are out of touch. They are hiking up the carbon tax by 23%, though it does nothing for the environment. Their housing fund will not build a single home, including in fast-growing places such as York—Simcoe.

Enough is enough. Conservatives will spike the hike, axe the tax and bring in homes Canadians can afford.

* * *

CATTLE INDUSTRY

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to proudly celebrate our Canadian cattle industry, the ranchers and beef producers across the country who help raise quality product for our tables and tables around the world.

This week, representatives are in Ottawa for the annual CCA reception. I think about champions at home in Kings—Hants, folks such as Dean and Catherine Manning, the Oulton Family and Ryan Knowles with the Hants County Meat Company. I appreciate all the work they do in our communities, and locally, to provide great product.

However, as a young parliamentarian, I also want to recognize the work of the Canadian Cattle Youth Council, whose members I had the chance to meet with yesterday: Kimberly Landsdale, Charlene Yungblut, Scott Gerbrandt and Patrick Sullivan. I would like to thank them for the work they do to help support youth farmers across the country and all our representatives who are here in Ottawa today.

Let us, as parliamentarians, get out and celebrate all that is good for the Canadian cattle industry.

* * *

● (1410)

ARRIVECAN APP

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians continue to ask questions about the ArriveCAN app, and Conservatives continue to push for answers.

Last week, we continued to prosecute GC Strategies, an IT firm of two people who performed no actual work, yet it was paid a third of \$60 million in contracts for the ArriveCAN app. After hiding from accountability to the point of being threatened with arrest, the two individuals finally appeared at committee.

Although they were still evasive, MPs were able to learn that the two partners pocketed \$2.5 million, and for what? One partner, Kristian Firth, said that he had averaged two to four hours per day at a rate of \$2,600 per hour. His partner said that he had no clue as to what went on at any point in the ArriveCAN process and only processed the security clearances for their subcontractors, a job he did wrong.

The Liberal government must listen up. It must explain why it wasted millions of dollars. Canadians want their money back, so it should start explaining and pay up.

* * *

[Translation]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Bernard G  n  reux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivi  re-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of this Liberal government, all over Quebec, farmers are protesting because of the carbon tax and the related drop in their net income. The Bloc Qu  b  cois chooses to ignore and even punish them.

Indeed, the Bloc Qu  b  cois wants to drastically increase Liberal taxes on gasoline and food. It wants to do so on April 1. This commitment seems like a joke, an April Fool's joke, but unfortunately it is not.

The Union des producteurs agricoles confirmed to me in person last week the devastating impact this 23% increase is going to have on all Canadians, especially on farmers in my region.

Of what use is the Bloc Qu  b  cois? It punishes Quebecers and worsens farmers' already complicated living conditions.

All Canadians hope that the government as well as the Bloc Qu  b  cois will cancel this absolutely devastating tax.

Statements by Members

[English]

NOWRUZ

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the spring equinox, otherwise called Nowruz, which marks the new year for Iranians, Afghans, Ismailis, Baha'is, Zoroastrians and over 300 million individuals across the world. Many around the world are excited to welcome spring and the promise of a new year.

I am certain every member of the House will join me in wishing all those celebrating Nowruz across Canada a happy new year.

Happy Nowruz.

* * *

SPECIAL OLYMPICS CANADA WINTER GAMES

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, Canadian athletes gathered in Calgary for the Special Olympics Canada Winter Games, and competitors from Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing sure made us proud.

From Manitoulin Island, skip Tyler Madahbee and team members Dylan Danville, Dayne Tipper, Austin Recollet and William Leclair brought home the gold for curling, and Matthew Bedard won three bronze medals in snowshoeing. Elliot Lake's Adam Cormier took home a silver in teams and a bronze in singles in five-pin bowling.

[Translation]

Every year, coaches, volunteers and employees make Special Olympics an event that everyone can be proud of. It is important that we recognize all they do to support and encourage our athletes.

[English]

The oath of the Special Olympics is "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." Our special Olympians who participated in this year's winter games continue to exemplify this oath.

I congratulate Tyler, Dylan, Dayne, Austin, William, Matthew and Adam. They have shown strength, determination and courage during these challenging competitions. We are all so very proud of their accomplishments.

* * *

[Translation]

80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INSTITUT MARITIME DU QU  B  C

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—T  miscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the 80th anniversary of the Institut maritime du Qu  bec in Rimouski.

Oral Questions

This great national institution was founded on May 24, 1944, under the leadership of Jules-A. Brillant. Eighty years later, the Institut maritime du Québec remains the only marine labour force training centre in Quebec, the largest in Canada, and the only francophone institution of its kind in North America. Since its founding, the Institut maritime du Québec has trained generations of sailors and experts, contributing to the marine industry across all oceans.

I would like to thank the artisans of yesterday and today for making this great expertise from Quebec and the Lower St. Lawrence shine throughout the world. Long live our national treasure, the Institut maritime du Québec, and happy 80th anniversary.

Let us be sure to attend the big festive banquet on April 6 to celebrate together.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

CARBON TAX

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April 1 is usually a day of lighthearted fun for Canadians during which we amuse one another with practical jokes.

This is not so for the uncaring NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, who will play a cruel joke on Canadians by increasing his carbon tax once again, this time by 23%, on everything. Seventy per cent of Canadians oppose this tax, and all Atlantic Canadian premiers, including the Liberal premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, have joined common sense Conservatives in demanding that the government axe the tax.

An astonishing two million Canadians need to visit a food bank every month, and now we see charities running out of resources and money to help Canadians. A wise Nova Scotian once commented that no one would believe that one could pay money to the government and it would give more back. This simply is not true. Today, in the Nova Scotia Legislature, all political parties voted unanimously, calling on all Nova Scotia MPs to scrap the carbon tax hike and axe the tax.

* * *

CANADA CARBON REBATE

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is exciting news that tax season is here.

When Canadians file their taxes, they will receive the Canada carbon rebate. In the provinces where it applies, such as my home province of Ontario, the Canada carbon rebate will put even more money back in the pockets of most Canadians than they pay into the carbon pricing system.

Affordability is top of mind in everything our federal government does. With the Canada carbon rebate, we are directly putting money into the bank accounts of Canadian families. Families are counting on these cheques, especially low- and middle-income Canadians, who need it the most.

Unfortunately, Conservative MPs want to cut these rebates, which low- and middle-income Canadians rely on, but we will not let them. Canadian families can count on that.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have a common-sense plan to cut taxes, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Meanwhile, after eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

[English]

The Prime Minister and his carbon tax are not worth the cost after eight long years. The Parliamentary Budget Officer confirms that in every single province, Canadians pay far more in taxes than they get back in rebates on a tax that will go up 23%.

Today, common-sense Conservatives are calling for the Prime Minister to grant his caucus a free vote on our motion to spike the hike.

[Translation]

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, eight out of 10 families across the country, in the regions where we have put a federal price on pollution, are getting more money with the price on pollution.

What the Leader of the Opposition is proposing is not only to take away the cheques that are given to families to help with the cost of groceries, rent and the impact of climate change, but also to do nothing to fight climate change and build a stronger future.

We are here to help Canadians with cheques. We are here to fight climate change.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians understand that after eight years, this NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost, and they are right. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the Prime Minister's carbon tax will cost the average Nova Scotia family \$1,500.

That is why the Nova Scotia legislature, Liberals, Conservatives and NDP, voted unanimously to call on federal MPs representing the province to vote with the common-sense Conservatives to spike the hike.

Will he allow a free vote, so that Nova Scotians can vote for their constituents rather than the party boss?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a family of four in Nova Scotia gets about \$824 back in a year for the price on pollution.

The Canadian carbon rebate delivers more money into the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadians right across the country. The Leader of the Opposition wants to take away those Canada carbon rebate cheques from Canadian families, where eight out of 10 families do better even with the price on pollution.

It is a way of fighting climate change, building a safer and more prosperous future and putting more money back into the pockets of Canadians, which is something he wants to take away.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has finally done something helpful when it comes to math. He says that his rebate for Nova Scotians is \$850. Well, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that the cost is \$1,500 for the average Nova Scotia family. He wants to take away \$1,500 in carbon taxes from the average Nova Scotia family and give back only \$850.

Everybody knows that the carbon tax is just like him, not worth the cost. Will he allow a free vote?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Leader of the Opposition wants to take away the Canada carbon rebate cheques that land in Nova Scotians' mailboxes and in the pockets of families right across the country where the price on pollution is in place, because eight out of 10 of them do better with the price on pollution and the Canada carbon rebate.

He wants to take those cheques away from Canadians, and he wants to do far less to fight against the climate change impacts that Canadians are feeling from coast to coast to coast. He has no plan for the future and no money for Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the tax revolt has spread to Ontario, where the Liberal leader of the provincial party has now flip-flopped and says that she, too, is against the Prime Minister's carbon tax. Maybe that is because she read the Parliamentary Budget Officer report showing that Ontarians will pay \$1,674, which is more than \$600 more than the rebate in that province.

Will the Prime Minister allow his Ontario MPs to have a free vote on our common-sense Conservative motion to spike the hike?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, families in Ontario are facing higher prices for groceries and higher costs for rent, and we are delivering a Canada carbon rebate that leaves them better off. Eight out of 10 Canadian families across the country have more money in their pockets with the Canada carbon rebate than the price on pollution costs them. At the same time, the price on pollution is bringing down carbon emissions, preparing a cleaner economy for the future and putting more money back in Canadians' pockets.

The Conservatives want to take away the Canada carbon rebate cheques. We are going to continue to support families on affordability and fighting climate change.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is right from the Parliamentary Budget Officer's numbers. He says \$1,674 is the cost to the average Ontario family, and the rebate is only \$1,047, so Ontarians are paying more than they get back, just like British Columbians, whose NDP government is administering the federally mandated carbon tax. According to the Vancouver Sun today, the budget presented by the NDP in that province says the carbon tax will raise \$9 billion over three years and pay back only \$3 billion. That is a nearly \$6-billion net carbon tax cost.

Will he allow B.C. MPs a free vote?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for Canadians watching politics and watching question period, for reporters in the gallery, or for anyone who wants to see a concrete example of the fact that the leader of the official opposition does not care about the facts, this is it. He does not care about the evidence, and he does not care about how the federation works. He just wants to make clever arguments and score partisan points.

The fact is that British Columbia's price on pollution has been there since 2008 and will continue to be administered by British Columbia, not the federal government.

* * *

• (1425)

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government and Canada are both living high off the hog thanks to the fiscal imbalance.

The Canadian government collects more in taxes than its responsibilities actually require. Quebec and the provinces collect less in taxes than their responsibilities require. Of course, raising taxes is not an option.

Do the government and the Prime Minister recognize that Quebec's extremely large deficit is in fact being manufactured by the Government of Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this Canadian federation, the federal government is there to work with the provincial governments to provide what Canadians need, from one end of this country to the other.

Oral Questions

We have made record investments in health care, dental care and transfers for the provinces to be able to provide the services they need.

I realize that the leader of the Bloc Québécois wants to turn this into a debate about Quebec sovereignty. The reality is that we work very well together. We are going to continue to make sure that all Canadians, from one end of this country to the other, prosper.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will give him a chance, we will not get into a debate on Quebec sovereignty, but he owes Quebec \$6 billion in health and \$1 billion in immigration for welcoming refugees. That makes \$7 billion out of a total deficit of \$11 billion. People stand unanimously against him and he is literally choking Quebec.

Will he use \$1 billion in immigration and \$6 billion in health to rein in Quebec and turn Quebecers into Canadians like everyone else, and Quebec into a province like all the others?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in the House knows that when I make a commitment to Quebec and Quebecers, I am not making a commitment to the leader of the Bloc Québécois. I am making a commitment to the Premier of Quebec.

I can say that last Friday, we had a very good conversation. We are working together on immigration, on health care, on economic growth. We will never agree on everything, but we will agree on the need to work constructively together and not stir up trouble, which is the Bloc Québécois's *raison d'être*.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after decades of Liberal and Conservative failure, indigenous communities continue to live in overcrowded homes that are in desperate need of repair. The Liberals promised to take a major step toward improving this by 2030, but today's Auditor General report makes it clear that the Liberals will break yet another promise to indigenous people.

Will the Liberal government stop spending millions of dollars on private consultants and make this serious issue a priority in the upcoming budget?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we thank the Auditor General for her report and are, of course, carefully reviewing all of her recommendations to pursue a path forward that effectively addresses those concerns.

In regard to indigenous co-operation or partnerships, whether it is on housing or policing, consultation is at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to working in partnership with first nations to advance these priorities.

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, indigenous communities live in overcrowded housing that is in desperate need of repair. The Auditor General's report released today shows that 80% of housing needs are not being met.

The Prime Minister would never accept this in Toronto. Why does the Prime Minister have a lower standard for indigenous communities?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the leader of the New Democratic Party is saying is simply not true. We have invested historic amounts of money to work with indigenous communities on housing, on health care and services, and to help create economic prosperity. There is still a lot of work to be done, we all recognize that. However, the progress we have made on reconciliation and partnership with indigenous peoples will continue.

We thank the Auditor General for her recommendations. We will continue to work hand in hand with indigenous communities to achieve results.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the April Fool's Day carbon tax hike of 23% will hit Nova Scotians especially hard. The Prime Minister's tax will cost \$1,500 for the average Nova Scotia family, far more than they get back in rebates.

That is why Nova Scotia's assembly passed a unanimous motion, with all three parties supporting it, calling for federal MPs from that province to vote with Conservatives to spike the hike.

One of those is the MP from Kings—Hants, the chair of the agriculture committee, which has been studying the carbon tax pain for farmers.

The question is for the chair of the agriculture committee. Will he vote with us to spike the hike?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

Of course, questions can be asked of the government regarding administrative issues of government and, of course, to committee chairs. It is important for Canadians to understand, though, that when questions are asked of committee chairs, it has to be regarding committee business that is before the committee right now. After consultation, we realize that this is not the issue that is here before us.

I see that the hon. Minister of Housing is rising on his feet.

Oral Questions

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member is actually suggesting is false. We have real-world data to demonstrate that in provinces where the system actually applies, families receive hundreds of dollars more each year than they pay in fuel charges.

The Conservatives pretend to care about affordability, yet they oppose measures to put more money in the pockets of families. They pretend to care about affordability, but they oppose measures that protect seniors' pensions. They pretend to care about affordability, but they vote against measures to remove the interest on Canada student loans.

We will do everything we can to make life more affordable, including putting more money in the pockets of families while we fight climate change at the same time.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that parliamentary censorship proves everything one needs to know about this and everything else in the government.

I asked a question of the member for Kings—Hants, the chair of the agriculture committee, which is now studying the painful impacts of the carbon tax, and the front bench here shut him down. They told him to sit down and shut up, because they had a better mouthpiece for the PMO who would stand and speak in his stead.

The question is for the member for Kings—Hants, the chair of the agriculture committee. His committee is studying how the carbon tax hurts farmers. Will he vote to spike the hike?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has qualms about the member for Kings—Hants, I can reassure him that he is a champion for his community. He launched a petition recently to stand up to the Conservative Government of Nova Scotia for changes to the agricultural sector in his community.

Every time the Conservatives ask a question about the environment, it is to find out ways they can do less.

The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has suggested that flooding in the Ottawa River was a result of regulations that were not in place.

The member for Cariboo—Prince George has suggested that climate change is not a result of industrial pollution but of more body heat from a growing population.

The member for Red Deer—Lacombe visited school kids to say carbon dioxide was plant food.

This—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is absolutely right. It is a joke, an April Fool's Day joke. The joke is on Canadian taxpayers, especially Nova Scotians, who will have to pay \$1,500 in higher carbon taxes after that hike goes ahead. He says that the member for Kings—Hants is a champion. Is he a champion who cannot even speak, who is silenced by his own MPs? Will the member—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1435)

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the censored champion may break his silence and tell us this: Will he vote for his constituents to spike the hike or will he rip them off on April Fool's Day?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want to peddle false information to trick Canadians into voting for them. The reality proven not by projections, but by real-world data, is that people who live in my province receive more money every year from the rebates that they receive than the fuel charge that they pay. Everything the Conservatives do—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, every instance the Conservatives have an opportunity to speak in the House, they advocate one of two things: to do less on the environment or to take money from families in my community. I will support neither.

We will do whatever we can to put more money in the pockets of families and do the right thing for future generations.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was for the silent member for Kings—Hants. He was asked to explain how he is voting for a carbon tax of \$1,500 per family that only pays back \$963 in rebates. I asked him specifically to stand and answer, but he has been shut down and shut up by his masters in the PMO.

Once again, will the chair of the agriculture committee, the member for Kings—Hants, stand today and tell us whether he will vote to spike the hike or raise the tax?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader knows full well the rules of this place and knows that members on this side of the House are pleased and proud to speak to the affordability measures and the things that we are putting in place to make life more affordable for Canadians.

While we are on this theme, I have a question for a member of the defence committee, the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman. Why did he sell out the people of Ukraine in voting against the free trade agreement?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people of Kings—Hants, Nova Scotia, are learning they do not have a voice in Parliament, because the member has been silenced. The Prime Minister is terrified that he might stand up and get off script. He knows that the unanimous will of the Nova Scotia Legislature, Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats, was passed in a motion calling all the province's MPs to vote against the hike.

Will the member for Kings—Hants, who is the chair of the agriculture committee, stand up for farmers in his riding and vote with us to spike the hike, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Kings—Hants stands up for farmers, stands up for his constituents, stands up for the people of Nova Scotia and stands up for the people of Canada every single day.

On this side of the House, we are incredibly proud to have him as our colleague. One thing he knows is that the people of Kings—Hants do not need cuts. That is all the Conservatives have to offer them or any single Canadian.

• (1440)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Kings—Hants is in the witness protection program today.

He cannot possibly stand up when his whip waves for him to sit down. This is exactly what happened a moment ago when I asked him a legitimate question as chair of the agriculture committee, a committee that is studying the devastating impact of the carbon tax on farmers in his riding and across the country.

For a sixth time, will he come out of the witness protection program and announce whether he will vote for our motion to spike the hike?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives love to talk Canada down. They traffic in fear and falsehood.

On this side of the House, we believe in Canada and we believe in Canadians. That is why I am so glad to share some good news with the members of this House. The inflation number for February, which came out this morning, is 2.8%; this is below expectations and within the Bank of Canada's target range. That is the second month in a row; in January, it was 2.9%, within the target.

Our plan is working.

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in 12 days, Ottawa will cut \$1 billion in health care funding, if Quebec does not agree to conditions in an area under its own jurisdiction. Quebec has been given 12 days when we are talking about amounts that Quebec and Ottawa agreed on over a year ago.

If the federal government's priority was patients, then this money would have been transferred a long time ago, but instead, in

12 days, Quebec will either have to deal with cuts or conditions. The federal government is taking sick people hostage with the money they pay in taxes.

Why not simply give priority to patients by transferring the money right now with no strings attached?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is strange. The Bloc Québécois is always trying to pick fights. However, when I speak with Minister Dubé and the Government of Quebec, it is clear that the Government of Quebec wants to work together with our government to improve the health of all Quebecers. That is why an agreement will be signed with Quebec before the end of the month.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the only reason we are not talking about tense intergovernmental relations is that there is no relationship to speak of. Right now, the federal government is in its “no” phase: no to increasing health transfers with no strings attached, no to the right to opt out of dental insurance and pharmacare, and no to helping with asylum seeker intake.

At this point, the only thing the federal government is not saying no to is our tax dollars. Quebecers are entitled to a say in what the federal government does with their money.

Why is it so hard to say yes? Why is it so hard to just respect what Quebecers want?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois's MO is “no”: no to collaboration, no to sharing information, no to sitting down together, no to achieving results, no to working for Quebecers.

The Bloc wants this to fail, but it will not. We can sit down and work together. The Minister of Health is doing an amazing job. He meets with his Government of Quebec counterpart regularly.

Bloc Québécois members are not at the table. They have no idea what goes on there. All they want to do is stir up trouble and say this is not working.

This is working. We are working together for all Quebecers.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we may not be in government, but we simply listed a few budget measures because they also said no to giving Quebec full authority over immigration, no to Bill 21 on state secularism, and no to advance requests for medical assistance in dying.

It is almost a matter of principle for them. Even when no money is involved, the federal government says no to Quebec. What a contrast during this week of tribute to Brian Mulroney, who championed a federalism for Quebecers characterized by honour and enthusiasm.

Does the government not realize that saying no to everything all the time has exactly the opposite effect?

Oral Questions

● (1445)

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is the only one that says no all the time. The Bloc Québécois goes looking for problems. It picks fights.

We, on the other hand, are working with Quebec to find a solution. We want to ensure that information is available in every province and territory. I am deeply proud to see that agreements have been reached with every province and territory to improve the quality of health care across Canada.

Our goal is to work in a spirit of co-operation, not to play partisan games.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year in my riding, Kolk Farms, a local producer, was forced to pay \$62,000 just in carbon tax on its natural gas alone. That is \$62,000. What the Liberal-NDP government does not understand, because it is so out of touch, is that when Canadians go to the grocery store, they pick up that bill when they buy groceries for their families. Canadians are already struggling. Now, on April 1, they are going to face another increase of 23%.

Will the Prime Minister spike the hike and axe the tax?

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member opposite of the rural top-up coming to the carbon rebate. A family of four in Alberta is going to see \$2,160. A family in my riding is going to see \$1,430 when they live in a rural area.

My friends, we know what it is like. That is why we are there to help people with the carbon rebate. That is why we are there to help with the child care benefit. That is why we are there to help with housing. We are there to help Canadians in rural areas as well.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think what is clear is that the Liberals have a dysfunctional relationship with the truth. Canadians pay more than they actually get back, and so for the average Albertan family, they pay \$2,943. Meanwhile, they get back \$2,032, which means that, ultimately, they are a thousand dollars in the hole. That is how much they are having to remit to the government. That is how much the government is pick-pocketing from them.

Why is the government doing that to Canadians when they are already struggling to pay their bills, make ends meet and provide for their families?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what is happening on the Conservatives' side of the House. Maybe it is that they have joined the agriculture chair in the witness protection program. When it comes to defending the interests of Albertans and their pensions, where is the MP for Edmonton Mill Woods? Where is the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

I am going to ask everybody to allow members to speak, so the Speaker can hear the question or the response and so members who do not speak the other official language can hear the translation.

The hon. minister has the floor.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, where are the Conservative MPs in this House when it comes to defending Albertans and making sure they have a dignified retirement? They are silent on CPP. They are silent on defending Albertans.

They have been muzzled by their leader and they are not standing up for Albertans, despite Danielle Smith's disastrous attempt to pull Canadians out of the CPP. The Conservatives are nowhere. We are here for—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, let us try to keep ourselves to time by respecting those who have the floor.

I am certain everybody would like to hear the question from the member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

● (1450)

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will tell you where Albertan MPs are; they are standing up for their constituents and voting non-confidence in the government, which needs to be replaced.

After eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, upwards of 50 active military families are using the food bank I just visited in Oromocto, New Brunswick. Those 50 families are serving at the Gagetown base, Canada's largest military base. This is an absolute disgrace and completely unacceptable. Now the Liberals are adding insult to injury by hiking the punitive, ineffective and useless carbon tax.

When will the Liberals finally listen to Canadians, show some respect to our nation's finest and axe the tax?

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really find that quite rich coming from the member opposite, the member for Tobique—Mactaquac, when Conservatives voted against a raise for our hard-working DND employees. They voted against the increase for ACOA last fall when we had the all-night voting marathon.

I would love to ask the member what he was going to say to constituents about the 106 projects that were funded in his riding that he voted against. Trust me; we will be telling them we have the backs of small businesses in rural New Brunswick and rural Atlantic Canada.

Oral Questions

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to tell them that I was voting non-confidence in the government that needs to be replaced.

The government has caused the inflationary crisis through reckless spending, and now it is hiking the carbon tax by 23% on gas, heat and food on April 1. If Liberals really cared about Canadians, especially those who sacrifice so much in service to our country, they would listen to the well over 70% of Canadians who are demanding they get off their back and axe the tax.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is so much shouting today that I can forgive the member opposite for not hearing earlier today the good news for Canadians, which is that thanks to the hard work of Canadians, and it has been a challenging time, inflation in February is back to the Bank of Canada's target range. That followed the numbers for January. This is good news for Canadians who have been through a hard time.

We support Canada and Canadians. All Conservatives want to do is cut, cut, cut.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Edmontonians are experiencing a double housing crisis. Rent is increasing at the fastest pace in the country while we are seeing the lowest vacancies rates we have had in a decade. The Conservatives' slogans will not build affordable homes, and the Liberals are not fixing the problem they have created.

The NDP's protecting renters fund would help save affordable homes and give renters the hope they need. Will the Liberals commit to including this fund in the budget so Edmontonians do not go homeless?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his advocacy.

I had the opportunity to be in Edmonton recently to meet with the mayor and the provincial minister in Alberta, as well as with my colleague, the member for Edmonton Centre. We are working hard to advance additional funding to support community-based organizations that support Canadians who are living without a roof over their head. We also very recently had the opportunity to share an agreement with \$175 million behind it that will build thousands of homes in Edmonton, including more rentals, which will help reduce the cost of rent and continue to support people who are looking to find a place to live.

There is no silver bullet for the housing crisis, but we will pull every lever at our disposal to help solve it by working together with Edmonton and Alberta.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the European Union states that Netanyahu is using deliberate starvation of children in Gaza as a weapon of war. Human rights

groups have spoken out against the targeting of journalists, civilians, hospitals and aid workers, and the UN has called out Canada for complicity in this because we provide military weapons to Israel. Last night, Parliament called for an end to military aid to Netanyahu's government, and yet numerous military supply deals are still in the works.

Will the minister respect Parliament and tell us whether deals like the guns from Colt in Kitchener and armed vehicles from Roshel in Brampton will be sent to Israel, yes or no?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by saying that yesterday, for me, was a day I was very proud to be a parliamentarian. In the House, four out of five parties came together to find a workable solution, to find a Canadian position that Canadians could be comfortable with. We will continue to advocate for a ceasefire. We will continue to not sell arms, as we have promised, and we will continue to make sure that we bring hostages back to where they belong: in their homes.

I invite the Conservatives to be as engaged in this as we are.

* * *

● (1455)

CHILD CARE

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all recognize the crucial importance of successful, high-quality child care for families in the Northwest Territories. With the increase in the cost of living, accessible day care is vital. Families in my riding and across the north have been eager to see this plan built out.

My question for the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development is what is being done for the Northwest Territories and for northerners more broadly?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was wonderful to be in the Northwest Territories with my colleague. I met with Jude from the Yellowknife Day Care Association, Jennifer at Aurora College and many others who were able to share with me first-hand the impact of our Canada-wide system on making life more affordable.

As of April 1, families in the Northwest Territories will see their child care fees reduced to an average of \$10 a day, saving them up to \$9,000 each year per child. These are meaningful savings each and every month for the moms and dads in the Northwest Territories to put towards the essentials their families need.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***CARBON PRICING**

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the manager of a Montreal food bank gave the following explanation after police had to intervene when food bank clients began shoving one another in line because there was not enough food. She said, “They are starving, so they are acting out.” This is Canada after eight years of this Prime Minister. Food banks are overwhelmed and in dire straits because food is too expensive. The Liberal solution is to increase the carbon tax on April 1, with the support of the Bloc Québécois, which will drive up the price of food even further. It is costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois.

When will the Prime Minister put an end to hunger and cancel the 23% tax hike planned for April 1?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, “the survival of our planet is at stake. I cannot ignore this urgent climate challenge and continue to look my two sons in the eyes.” Those are the words of Premier Legault. He is proud that Quebec has its own carbon pricing system. Quebecers are proud of that. The Conservatives want to eliminate it. We will not let them do that.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more and more Quebec families and workers may no longer be able to make ends meet because food is too expensive. Why is food too expensive? Quebec imports food from the rest of Canada. The farmers who grow that food are paying the carbon tax. Food processors are paying the carbon tax. The truckers hauling that food are paying the carbon tax. Guess who ends up paying the bill? Quebec families do. The carbon tax the “Liberal Bloc” wants to drastically increase is also costing Quebecers dearly.

When will they put an end to this madness?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives are playing with semantics, we have just learned that the UN has just declared that 2024 could be the hottest year in history. What we are hearing from the Conservatives is do nothing. The planet is sounding the alarm. That is why, on this side of the House, we will continue to invest in fighting climate change. We will continue to invest in Canadian families. We will continue to invest in Canadians despite the fact that the Conservatives want to ignore climate change in this country.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the Liberal government, more and more Canadians are using food banks. People are so hungry that tensions are rising in lineups, so much so that the police have to intervene to restore order while food is being distributed. Nevertheless, the Liberal government, supported by the Bloc Québécois, is going to increase the carbon tax again on April 1, and that is no April Fool's joke.

It is very costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois. Apart from increasing the suffering of Quebecers, what is the point of voting for the Bloc Québécois?

● (1500)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think there are a lot of people watching at home who just cannot get over the fact that the disinformation coming from the Conservative side is now limitless. The member who just asked a question voted in favour of carbon pricing in Quebec. She voted to fight climate change. She was part of a government that was a North American leader in the fight against climate change, and now, under pressure from her climate-change-denying leader, she is turning her back on all her principles. That is unacceptable.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the member to read the speech that our leader gave when he was in Quebec City for the Conservative convention.

Inflation has already reached devastating levels, resulting in the highest cost of living in 40 years—

The Speaker: Order. I would ask members to come to order so that the Chair can hear the question.

I would ask the hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis to restart her question.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Speaker, inflation has already reached devastating levels, resulting in the highest cost of living in 40 years.

Can members believe that some Canadians are currently unable to put food on the table? That is shameful, and the Bloc Québécois is proudly supporting a 23% carbon tax increase. It already costs too much to put food on the table, but it is even more costly to vote for the Bloc Québécois.

Will the government show some compassion and cancel the new carbon tax hike planned for April 1?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the member remind me whether the speech she is talking about is the one where the Leader of the Opposition attacked the mayors of Montreal and Quebec City? Is that the speech where he said that climate change does not exist and where the Conservatives voted? Is that the speech where he said that he was going to abandon families, seniors, young people and students and where he said that he was going to make cuts everywhere? I would like her to remind me which speech she is talking about, or perhaps he said all that in the same speech he gave in Quebec City that time.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government's decision to unilaterally increase Quebec's immigration targets represents a historic loss of sovereignty for the Quebec state. When Quebec sets its threshold at 50,000, it means 50,000, not 60,000 or 70,000.

Oral Questions

If the minister wanted to increase family reunification after the thresholds were set, he should have worked with Quebec. For example, he could have suggested finally doing something to help Quebec with asylum seekers, but no, he never co-operated. He tried to force Quebec to increase its targets whether it wanted to or not.

When can we expect a collaboration instead of condescension?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the member to kindly read the Canada-Quebec accord. I should have been more specific. I would simply ask her to read section 13 for more clarification.

Clearly, we collaborate very closely with Quebec, and we all have our responsibilities to carry out. I welcome Minister Fréchette's recent remarks. We will keep working together on our priorities, which are ultimately the same.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, just to clarify, no one is against family reunification. We are simply against Ottawa imposing its irresponsible federal policies on Quebec.

If the minister had wanted to, he could have negotiated compromises. Let us look at his record. He is forcibly increasing Quebec's immigration targets. He is largely responsible for the record increase in temporary immigration. He is also responsible for the disproportionate number of asylum seekers that Quebec is taking in, rather than spreading them out among the provinces.

In all three categories, Ottawa is unilaterally increasing immigration to Quebec, with no regard for our integration capacity and no additional funding.

Is this intentional, or has Ottawa lost all control?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, imagine being a doctor and being asked to accept 10 patients, but instead being sent 20. That is ridiculous, and that is the situation Quebec families find themselves in.

What I am hearing from the Bloc Québécois is contempt for Quebec families. What do they say to Quebecers who want to be reunited with their loved ones from abroad? This is tearing Quebec families apart. It is tearing Canadian families apart.

We will work with Quebec to rectify the situation.

* * *

• (1505)

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, the Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost. When the carbon tax was announced, small businesses were promised a hefty rebate. The government is now sitting on \$2.5 billion in collected revenues while insolvencies skyrocket and businesses suffer under higher taxes and inflation.

As the Prime Minister broke his promise on the carbon tax rebate, why will he not simply spike the hike, axe the tax and give small businesses their money back?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the MP who just spoke is a member of Parliament for B.C., and British Columbia is rightly proud of its place as a leader in Canada and the world in having a price on pollution since 2008. It is a provincial system that the people of B.C. support, so either the Conservative Party is ignorant about that or it disrespects the people of B.C.

With respect to small businesses, the money will be going back to small businesses very soon.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not just small businesses that have been betrayed by the government on the carbon tax. First nations and Métis communities are owed over a billion dollars in promised rebates. In what seems like a sick April Fool's Day joke, remote and rural communities will see the cost of the carbon tax increase by 23% on April 1. This means higher costs to operate schools, band offices and businesses.

I will ask again: When will the government spike the hike, axe the tax and give remote, rural, indigenous and Métis communities their money back?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for that MP from British Columbia, but I am really disappointed that he seems entirely ignorant of how the price on pollution works in B.C. There is no federal backstop in B.C. There is no federal backstop on B.C. small businesses nor on the people of B.C.

B.C. has an exceptional system for pricing pollution, which the province has had in place since 2008. The people of B.C. are proud of it, and they should be.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$100,000 is not chicken feed. Richard, a farmer in the Shuswap, paid that out in carbon tax to run his farm instead of buying feed to raise chickens and put food on Canadians' tables. Now, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister wants to raise the carbon tax by 23% as part of his plan to quadruple it.

After eight years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Will he spike the hike, axe the tax and let farmers grow the food, so that Canadians can afford to put food on the table?

Oral Questions

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that understands climate change is real and understands the impact it is having on farmers from coast to coast to coast. I have seen first-hand as I have travelled the impact of hurricanes and the impact of drought. All that has a cost on our farmers. I am proud to be part of a government that is fighting climate change so my little granddaughter can say, “Nanny, you tried to make a difference”, because climate change is real and it is impacting everyone.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kings—Hants—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. There seems to be great enthusiasm to hear from the hon. member.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Tories stood up. They might not like the question, though.

The member for Carleton talks about farmers in Kings—Hants, but he actually stands in their way. He will not allow Bill C-234 to come to the House to be voted on, so I call on the member for Carleton to do that to support farmers.

However, my question is for the minister from Nova Scotia. Can he tell the House, and indeed Nova Scotians, of the work we have done to adjust the federal backstop to support rural Canadians, including the programs we have put in place on affordability around home heating and heat pumps, contrary to those guys across the way?

• (1510)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past year and a half in our home province of Nova Scotia, we have felt the impacts of climate change more than any other part of the country, with wildfires, hurricane Fiona and floods in the hon. member's riding. He has been a staunch advocate for rural communities and for the agricultural sector every step of the way.

Because of his advocacy, we have doubled the rural rebate that households in Nova Scotia receive. Because of his advocacy, we are offering to cover the cost of heat pumps to save people between \$1,500 and \$4,700 a year, and because of his advocacy, the provincial government is retreating on a policy that would impact the wine growers in his region. I am proud to stand alongside him today and will be for years—

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

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government's soft-on-crime policies, more and more Canadians are becoming victims of violent crime right across the country. The Toronto Star reports that car-

jackings have more than doubled so far in 2024, and break and enters for the purpose of car theft have already exceeded the total number for all of last year. Canadians are not only concerned about their private property, but also the safety of their families.

I met some of these families in Brampton this week, and they want to know when the Prime Minister will drop his soft-on-crime policies and protect Canadians from real violent crime.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is always focused on protecting Canadians from crime. That is why we are working with police forces, municipal authorities and provincial governments to do exactly everything we need to do to crack down on this increasingly violent criminal activity. I have had conversations with the Premier of Ontario and with police chiefs across the country. The RCMP are working in collaboration with their partners in these jurisdictions. The Canada Border Services Agency seized 68 vehicles at the port of Montreal this week alone.

We will continue to do everything we need to do to keep Canadians safe.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Liberals did was bring in Bill C-5 and Bill C-75, which allow these same criminals to quickly get bail and be out on the streets, sometimes on the same day. As a result, small businesses across the country are not only dealing with higher taxes, like the carbon tax that the Liberals brought forward, but are now having to pay for extra security to protect their businesses and their families from property theft, organized crime, extortion, shootings and arson.

This is the new reality for businesses and families in Canada after eight years of the Prime Minister. He is not worth the cost, the corruption or the crime. When will it end?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I respect the member opposite, but what I respect most of all is that he actually was not here when we were voting on Bill C-75. That piece of legislation actually enhanced the penalties on summary conviction for auto theft, something that most of his colleagues voted against. He was not here, so I will excuse him on that one.

On the issue of mandatory minimum penalties, there is a guy named Ben Perrin. He might remember that individual. He used to be the lead adviser to a guy named Stephen Harper. Ben Perrin has been on the record as saying that mandatory minimum penalties were a gross error, a miscarriage of justice, and perpetuate systemic racism. That is why we reversed them. I wish these guys would get on board.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, auto theft in Toronto has nearly doubled over last year, and 2024 has only just begun. Where do the stolen vehicles go? They go to the port of Montreal.

I would like to commend the efforts of Sûreté du Québec police in February. That said, the federal government must do more to help them. That is why our leader has proposed amendments to the Criminal Code to bring back tougher sentences for car thieves and to give the ports the resources they need to stop the crime.

Does the Liberal government realize that its strategy to combat auto theft is not working?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to crime in our communities and auto theft, we have made these issues a priority with our investments in the port of Montreal. A few weeks ago, we announced \$28 million for auto theft. In addition, there was \$121 million to help police officers. There was also about \$15 million to help the Canada Border Services Agency at the border itself.

Our investments are what we need to do to address this extremely important issue and promote safety in our communities.

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● (1515)

*[English]***DENTAL CARE**

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that no one in this country should ever spend their days in pain because they cannot afford to see a dentist. Oral health is health.

I heard from seniors in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour that the new Canadian dental care plan is going to make a real difference in their quality of life, yet the Conservatives just do not care. The Conservatives voted against dental care for Canadians, and we know that Conservatives always choose cuts over care.

Can the Minister of Citizens' Services please let Canadians know how many people have applied for the program, and how many seniors will lose their dental coverage if the Conservatives get their way?

Hon. Terry Beech (Minister of Citizens' Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to advise my colleague that, thanks to his efforts, more than 1.5 million Canadians have successfully enrolled in our dental care program. Today those 70 and older can apply, and children and people with disabilities can apply starting in June. In total, we expect nine million Canadians to benefit.

I do not understand why Conservatives want to take dental care away from more than one in five Canadians. If we all work together, Canadians can make sure that Conservatives never have that opportunity.

The Speaker: Before I pass the floor to the hon. member for Victoria, I am going to ask the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills, who is an experienced member, to not shout out his comments and to allow members who have the floor to respond.

The hon. member for Victoria now has the floor.

* * *

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, "It's like an elephant sitting on my chest."

That is how a child in Edmonton describes the air quality right now. Canada currently has the worst air quality in North America. Our kids are breathing in harmful toxins and it is only going to get worse with this year's wildfire season. However, the Liberals are acting like it is business as usual, breaking climate promises while handing out billions to Canada's biggest polluters. The Conservatives cannot even agree on whether climate change is real.

Will the Liberals stop putting the interests of oil and gas CEOs over the health and safety of our children?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, we are doing exactly that. We are the first country, the only country, in the G20 to have phased out fossil fuel subsidies, two years ahead of everyone else. We are the only country that has committed to eliminating public financing for fossil fuel subsidies. We have the best performance of all G7 countries in terms of greenhouse gas reduction between 2019 and 2021. We are working to fight climate change. We are working to improve air quality all across the country.

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AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, Flair cancelled one of its flights back to Canada and left over 100 passengers stranded in another country: no communication with them, no food provided and no re-booking on other airlines. They had to find their own way back to this country.

If this sounds like déjà vu, it is because the exact same thing happened two years ago and the Liberals promised to stand up to the big airline CEOs.

To the minister, will he tell these passengers why his supposedly new and improved air passenger rights let them down so badly?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will always stand up for Canadians and always stand up for passengers' rights. There was nothing before we came in. We are in touch with Flair and with other airline companies to see what we can do.

We will always side with our air passengers.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1520)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—CARBON TAX

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the very hon. member for Kings—Hants.

It is my absolute pleasure, as always, to be speaking on behalf of the residents in my riding of Davenport. I will be speaking to today's opposition day motion that was put forward by the Conservatives on affordability and pollution pricing. I will start with a few of my own comments and then I will go into a bit of prepared text.

As members know, climate change is real. Carbon emissions are impacting our climate and causing the climate to change. If Canada does not continue to rapidly move toward reducing emissions now, the cost of waiting will be more expensive for Canadians later. As a result, it will be a world that will be more difficult and more unpredictable to live in.

Last week, I happened to have been blessed to have the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources in my riding, and the question of the carbon tax came up by a Davenport resident, who said that given the fact that Canadians were suffering an affordability crisis and as of April 1 the price on pollution would go up, should people believe the Leader of the Opposition who was trying to convince a lot of Canadians that the price on pollution was a tax that would hurt Canadians?

The minister responded by saying that there were the facts and then there was perception, that putting a price on pollution would be the most economically efficient way to reduce carbon emissions and that if people asked 100 economists, 99 and a half of them would tell them that it was true. He went on to say that the way in which we had structured it was to do it in a way that would make it affordable for Canadians. Therefore, eight out of 10 Canadian families would get more money back than they paid, and it worked directly disproportionate to income. Those who lived on the most modest means would get much more money back than they actually paid. The people who received less money back than they paid were people who lived in 6,000-square-foot houses and had a Hummer in their driveway and a boat in the backyard. At the end of the day, the fact that they paid more was because they were polluting more.

It was also noted that the Premier of Saskatchewan had decided that he would stop remitting the price on pollution for home heating. As a direct result of that, the rebate would go down for people in Saskatchewan, and the people who would suffer most would be those people who were living on modest incomes. The premier was making poor people poorer because of the choices that he was making.

Business of Supply

The motion before us is also proposing to do that for Canadians.

In 2023, we saw a record fire season in Canada in which the area burned was more than double that of the historic record, with hundreds of thousands of Canadians evacuated from their homes as a result. The total area burned exceeded 18 million hectares, which is two and a half times the previous record set in 1995 and more than six times the average over the past 10 years.

In its 2020 report on climate risks and their implications for the insurance industry in Canada, the Insurance Bureau of Canada also concluded that “The average annual severe weather claims paid by insurers in Canada could more than double over the next 10 years, increasing from \$2.1-billion a year to \$5-billion a year, and must be accompanied by an increase in premium income.” It is clear that there are very real costs associated with having one's house burn down or having to flee one's home and job due to an evacuation order.

We also know from experts and research that the most effective and efficient way to address climate change is to put a price on carbon pollution emissions, which are the chief cause of man-made climate change. Putting a price on carbon pollution reduces emissions and encourages reductions across the economy, while giving households and businesses the flexibility to decide when and how to make changes. It creates incentives for Canadian business to develop and adopt new low-carbon products, processes and services, and when it is done right, and we are doing that in Canada, it is both effective and affordable for Canadians.

On the Canada carbon rebate, the bulk of the proceeds from the federal pollution pricing system goes straight back into the pockets of Canadians in provinces where the fuel charge applies, with eight out of 10 households in these provinces continuing to get more money back through their quarterly Canada carbon rebate payments than they pay as a result of the federal pollution pricing system.

● (1525)

The federal government understands that we need to maintain the price signal that, over the long term, is necessary for carbon pricing to work and bring emissions down, but at the same time we have also shown that we are willing to be flexible and innovative in supporting options that will go even further to cut down on climate pollution in the long run.

We took temporary and targeted action to pause the fuel charge on heating oil with the goal of getting consumers off home heating oil and onto a cleaner and far more affordable alternative solution that will save them thousands of dollars and lower carbon emissions over the long run.

Measures such as this will make life more affordable in the right way, while supporting the goal of achieving a prosperous, low-carbon future for all Canadians.

Business of Supply

We know that there are better ways to make life more affordable for Canadians, ways that do not involve destroying the environment and incurring more devastating costs further down the road. We are delivering this support where it is most effective, including with the oil to heat pump affordability program, which will increase the amount of federal funding that eligible homeowners can receive for installing a heat pump from \$10,000 to \$15,000. It includes proposing, under Bill C-59, a doubling of the Canada carbon rebate rural top-up rate, increasing it from 10% to 20% of the base rebate amount starting in April 2024. People who live in rural communities face unique realities, and this measure will help put even more money back in the pockets of families that are dealing with higher energy costs because they live outside a large city. We have been very clear that we will continue to implement our pollution pricing system while ensuring that we continue to put more money into the pockets of Canadian households and families.

More recently, through Bill C-59, the fall economic statement implementation act of 2023, we introduced measures to advance the government's fiscally responsible plan to build a cleaner, stronger economy. It introduces measures to create well-paying jobs, generate growth and build a cleaner economy that works for everyone by advancing Canada's competitiveness through the implementation of investment tax credits. Investment tax credits are a key part of the government's broader plan to work with industry towards the goal of decarbonization. This includes the carbon capture, utilization and storage investment tax credit, which is also known as CCUS.

CCUS is a suite of technologies that capture carbon dioxide emissions, whether from fuel combustion, from industrial processes or directly from the air, either to store CO₂, typically deep underground, or to use it in other industrial processes, such as mineralization in concrete. These technologies are an important tool for reducing emissions in high-emitting sectors, where other pathways to reduce emissions may be limited or unavailable. In fact, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the International Energy Agency each include CCUS deployment as an important element of scenarios in which the world achieves net-zero emissions. For its part, the CCUS investment tax credit will not only help Canadian companies adopt clean technologies but will also create jobs, ensure Canadian businesses remain globally competitive and reduce Canada's emissions at the same time.

In conclusion, making life more affordable for Canadians while protecting the environment has always been a priority for the federal Liberal government, and it remains a priority today. I have outlined over the last 10 minutes just a few examples of how we are making targeted and responsible investments to help Canadians find an affordable place to call home. We want to ensure that Canada remains the best place in the world to live, work, go to school and raise a family. Making life more affordable is a key part of that.

It is a pleasure to speak on behalf of the residents of my riding of Davenport on this opposition day motion about affordability and pollution pricing.

I am now very happy to take any questions.

• (1530)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two years ago this week, the member for Davenport stated that the carbon tax was 100% revenue-neutral for the government, yet Finance Canada in the public accounts stated that \$670 million from last year alone was kept by the government and not redistributed. In fact, the public accounts actually said a couple of years ago that \$100 million was kept for government programming.

I wonder if the member would like to correct her statement from two years ago and come forward with the real facts on what the carbon tax is, which is not revenue-neutral.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, climate change is real. We have to take as many steps as possible to move to a low-carbon future and a low-carbon economy. The most efficient and affordable way for us to do is to put a price on pollution, which is also known as a carbon tax. We, as a government, are not keeping any of the money. We are directly giving it back to Canadians, to small businesses and to farmers. That is what we are doing.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is on my mind is persons with disabilities. What is on my mind right now is the fact that persons with disabilities are not receiving the Canada disability benefit yet and that persons with disabilities are experiencing very high levels of housing need, rent and food pricing.

I wonder if the member from the Liberals could share why the government is holding back on the Canada disability benefit and why it refuses to tax outsized profits from those large organizations that are making money hand over fist while persons with disabilities suffer.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Davenport, we are huge supporters of the Canada disability benefit. We know that federal budget 2024 will be announced in the House on April 16, and I am hoping for good news for a Canada disability benefit.

In the meantime, starting fiscal year April 1, under the Canada carbon rebate, a family of four will receive \$1,800 in Alberta; \$1,200 in Manitoba; \$1,120 in Ontario; \$1,500 in Saskatchewan; \$760 in New Brunswick; \$824 in Nova Scotia; \$880 in Prince Edward Island; and \$1,192 in Newfoundland and Labrador. Eight out of 10 Canadians get more money back than they pay on the price on pollution. We need to continue to help support Canadians as we move to a low-carbon future.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by that response from the member for Davenport. I hope she will continue to advocate for the government to fund the Canada disability benefit in budget 2024.

With respect to this motion and the speech we heard, I am encouraged that she knows the impacts of the climate crisis, but I am discouraged to hear about carbon capture being called a “responsible” investment. She and others need to know that it is completely irresponsible. It is a new way of subsidizing the oil and gas industry to the tune of billions of dollars, and more often than not, it actually emits more carbon than it extracts.

Will she commit to doing more research on carbon capture and having good conversations, which I know she has on many other topics in the House, to investigate the real solutions to the climate crisis, recognizing that carbon capture is not one of them?

• (1535)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his passion. We both care a lot about climate change. We both care about moving aggressively toward a net-zero future in Canada.

I will always consider all new research and information. For me, what is most important is our objective of getting to net zero and doing it in an affordable, sustainable way for Canadians.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to be in the House. I am glad to see that my colleagues are starting to appreciate my work and that my name and my title in Nova Scotia are becoming known.

I am living rent free in the member for Carleton's head right now. He has been calling me out a lot, and I hope he will come back into the chamber to ask me questions in a format that I am able to respond to today. I would invite my Conservative colleagues to see if he is in the lobby. I had better be careful, I do not want to say who is present in the House, but I hope the hon. member for Carleton can join the debate and ask me questions in proper form.

This is the first time I have been able to rise in a debate format since the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney passed away. We had the opportunity to visit with his family today and to pay tribute to a great man, a great individual whose contributions to the country all Canadians will recognize. I would be remiss if I did not start my remarks today by recognizing Mr. Mulroney and his contributions to Canada. He served as a member of Parliament in Nova Scotia. In my riding, there is a great reverence for the work he did as a prime minister, as a Progressive Conservative. I have talked about this in the House. He and Kim Campbell were the last of that generation of true Progressive Conservative leadership in the prime minister's office. He did a great service.

I have a quick story. I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Mulroney at the Atlantic Economic Forum in Antigonish. He was so generous with my wife Kimberly. He thanked her for the work she does to allow me to be a member of Parliament. He said that Mila did the same when he was in office. There were obviously two vastly different standards, but I wanted to share that story.

Carbon pricing has consistently been something that the Conservative Party has raised every single opposition day. That is good because this is an important conversation about why the policy is in place and about how we can structure programs that make a difference to the environment but are also important for affordability. I would invite many of my opposition colleagues to reflect on what their own environmental plans are and to reflect on the fact that all

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of them who sit in this House ran on a platform in the last election, which included carbon pricing. I take note that is no longer the position of the Conservative Party, but I have no vision for what it stands for in relation to this really important fight that I think Canadians want parliamentarians and governments to take action on.

To provide context for Canadians, after listening to the leader of the official opposition, one would suggest that no other country or jurisdiction has any form of carbon pricing and that somehow this is some draconian measure the government has put in place that makes no sense. What would Conservatives say to the 77 other jurisdictions around the world that have a form of carbon pricing as part of their true environmental initiatives? In fact, carbon pricing is inherently a Conservative idea, the idea that we put into the market the ability for consumers and for innovation in the private sector to lead, not necessarily government. I really look forward to what the Conservative Party will present, if it does. I will be surprised if it does come, but it should come because Canadians deserve to have political parties in this place that take that issue seriously.

Today's opposition day motion talks about cutting the carbon tax altogether or pausing it, suggesting that it is a terrible scourge on the country. I do not take that view. I take the view that carbon pricing is a credible plan and a part of the discussion between affordability and environment. I think I bring some credibility to this debate because I have been critical of the government about the way in which the federal backstop worked.

As I listened to the member for Carleton ask his questions today, and the government took them because of the way the procedure works, I could not help but believe that I have done more than the member for Carleton has done in 20 years to move carbon pricing policy in this country. He talks a lot about it, but I was the one who helped lead the charge to make an adjustment for rural Canada, to have an exemption in place for home heating oil and to put in place a program that matters for affordability and for home heating.

I want to highlight, from where I sit in the chamber, that I see the Conservatives get up on heating oil, for example, and say that they want to axe the tax, which, of course, means axing the rebates that go back to Canadians. They want to axe the 17¢ a litre on home heating oil, and we know that home heating oil is the most expensive way in the country to heat homes. It has gone up by 70% over the last two years. In fact, people in the Maritimes who use heating oil to heat their homes are paying anywhere from four to five times that of those who have been able to make the transition to natural gas, including in places like Saskatchewan.

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● (1540)

I see the member for Regina—Lewvan ready to jump in with a question, and I cannot wait for it. He needs to understand that the reason we exempted home heating oil was that we had already identified a million Canadian households that were extremely vulnerable all across this country, not just Atlantic Canada, but, of course, we were disproportionately impacted.

I am proud of the work we did to make adjustments, not just to give slogans but also to give solutions. The good people of Nova Scotia, and the member for South Shore—St. Margarets, the member for Cumberland—Colchester and the member for West Nova, who is a good guy, would have had 17¢ a litre off their home heating bill, no doubt. Now, they are getting 17¢ a litre off their home heating bill for the next three years, and they are getting a long-term solution to save thousands of dollars a year in home heating. This is exactly an action that deals with affordability and the environment at the same time. I invite Conservatives to understand that those two things have to go together in today's context. They suggest they are mutually exclusive. I do not think that is the case. I think there is a way we can construct programs that make a difference across the way.

Again, we have driven up rural rebates. It makes a difference. That is something I fought for as a member of a rural caucus on this side of the House. We provided actual solutions and initiatives that would adjust the policy without ruining a price mechanism that matters on the environmental fight. Of course, the money does go back to households. We have highlighted that.

If Conservatives do not like the federal backstop, do they like any form of carbon pricing? I invite one of my colleagues to get up and say that today. I understand they do not like the federal backstop, but do they like cap and trade in Quebec? Do they like the B.C. plan? That is where this conversation should go. Do Conservatives believe in any form of carbon pricing?

I hope one of the members on the other side will get up and ask a question about the legislature in Nova Scotia today. I would invite the 55 members of the Nova Scotia assembly to encourage the premier of the province, Tim Houston, to work in concert with Atlantic premiers, perhaps Doug Ford, the first minister in Saskatchewan Scott Moe and in Alberta, Danielle Smith. We could have a cap-and-trade system in this country. Imagine that. It could meet the federal standard. It does not have to be the federal backstop. Let us remember why it is here; some provincial premiers decided they did not want any form of price signal that makes a difference. However, I will be inviting the premiers from Atlantic Canada and the MLAs. I am happy to engage on the topic. It matters. All this government ever wanted was a credible price to be able to fight climate change and to help reduce emissions.

I would invite the member for Regina—Lewvan to go into the offices of Federated Co-operatives in Saskatchewan and to talk to its executive team about how the carbon price is helping to drive hundreds of millions of dollars of investments in his province. The executives would tell him that is what is helping to make a difference and what is driving innovation: the carbon price. It actually helps to justify it. If not the carbon price, is the member for Regina—Lewvan just going to pour taxpayer's dollars into helping to

drive that? Is that going to be the only play, or is he going to use other types of free market principles to drive the innovation that needs to happen?

When we talk about technology, not taxes, how do Conservatives intend to incentivize the technology? I have yet to hear exactly how they are going to do that. Are they going to rely on the benevolent corporate sector? Conservatives and the leader of the official opposition suggest that corporate lobbyists are useless and that the corporate sector is terrible in this country. How are they going to incentivize them to drive the change we need on climate change? I invite them to start answering those types of questions.

I take notice that Conservatives do not like the federal backstop. I take notice that this opposition day motion does not mention at all the fact that money is going back to households in Nova Scotia and indeed across the country. Let us have an informed debate.

Again, I invite the member, who will be recognized in about 30 seconds, to start his answer by saying that he either believes or does not believe in carbon pricing. If Conservatives do not believe in the federal backstop, which is very clear, that is fine, but do they believe in any form of carbon pricing? Canadians need to know that answer because, at the end of the day, there is a way to be able to do this without the federal backstop, but we need provincial premiers to play a part in the solution as well. That is what I think is important. That is what is missing from today's opposition day motion.

I look forward to the questions, and I see the members lining up.

With 10 seconds left, just quickly on Bill C-234, will the Tories bring it to a vote? My farmers need help. They are sitting on it. They put up six speakers. We need to be able to bring that to a vote.

● (1545)

The Deputy Speaker: I am really glad the hon. member for Kings—Hants brought up the good work of the hon. member for West Nova. I appreciate that.

[Translation]

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Beauport—Limoulu.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us imagine that we are living in a parallel world and that the carbon tax, which Quebec and British Columbia do not pay, has been cancelled. What would the impact be on Canada's international relations and on the markets? Also, who would suffer the consequences? Would it be the poorest or the richest, such as the oil companies, who would benefit the most from abolishing the carbon tax? [English]

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I will respond in English. I would try in French, but that was a nuanced question.

The hon. member hits it right on the head. If we were to cut the price signal altogether, it actually would hurt industry in Quebec. I guess the position of the Conservative Party is to hurt innovation in Quebec and to hurt lower-income families if the federal backstop was in place, but it is not because the Quebec government actually believes in moving on climate change. They are trying to suggest that this price signal is not good for innovation in this country, and it is not good to be able to meet our targets internationally.

I do not know what the position is. I cannot speak for the Conservatives, but the way they villainize the carbon pricing policy and suggest that it is all that ails people in society is short-term thinking. It is not nuanced, and if they do not like the federal backstop, they should be proposing and pitching other types of credible environmental plans, which I have yet to see.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take to my feet. First of all, I am happy that the member for Kings—Hants found his voice. Obviously, it is nice for him to speak when the front row is not here, so he is allowed to. I am glad they freed him so he got to speak.

Secondly, on a more serious note, Saskatchewan did submit a carbon plan similar to New Brunswick's plan, and his government turned it down, so what he said was untrue. There were many untrue statements the member made. He said the provinces should have a plan. The Province of Saskatchewan submitted a plan; the government turned it down based on ideology.

I would ask the same question that our leader asked the member for Kings—Hants during question period. On this motion, 70% of his constituents want to spike the tax and to make sure it does not increase on April 1.

Will he vote with his constituents, or will he vote with the front benches who do not want him to speak?

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, there was a lot in that question, and I hope you will give me the proper time to respond.

I am going to ask something of the hon. member. He mentioned the leader of the official opposition in question period today asking questions of the Chair of the committee. This is the proper form to be able to answer those questions.

Let me say this: He talked about farmers in Kings—Hants. I need the member for Regina—Lewvan to walk into his caucus tomorrow and to ask the leader of the official opposition to let Bill C-234 come to a vote. We have an opportunity to help support farmers today. The Conservatives put up six speakers, and they are delaying the passage of a bill that could make a difference for farmers in my

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riding and indeed across the country. Why is it that they stand in the way of Canadian agriculture and put their partisan interests ahead of farmers in this country?

To answer his question, and to the members of the Nova Scotia assembly who have talked about the fact that they would like to see a pause, I will happily engage with every one of those members to talk about how we could work with Premier Tim Houston and with premiers across the country to be able to put forward not just a plan, but also a plan that meets the federal standard.

That is what the member missed in his question. Yes, Saskatchewan put forward a plan. In fact, it actually adopted a form of carbon pricing at the industrial level. Let us work together with the seven premiers to be able to establish a national cap and trade so that this terrible federal backstop that the Conservatives hate no longer has to be in place.

• (1550)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is lots of talk about carbon pricing, but the reality is that many other parts of the government's so-called climate plan are not measuring up to the commitment we need in order to meet Canada's targets.

One of those areas is the greener homes program, which the current government has essentially run out of money for, leaving a whole bunch of homeowners, and professionals who have taken special training to do home energy assessments, high and dry. It still has not announced what its new program is going to look like, and a lot of folks are wondering when that news is going to come.

Perhaps my colleague can tell us on what date energy auditors and assessors, and homeowners who want to apply for this financial support, are going to know what the new program looks like.

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, it has been wonderful to see the number of people who assume I am in the Privy Council here today. I sit on the backbench of the Liberal Party. I take notice of the good programs that the government has introduced to make a difference on home energy efficiency, with \$2 billion under the greening homes initiative.

There is still a plethora of different federal programs out there. I do not have a specific timeline. The hon. member will have to ask the minister responsible for the portfolio when that may come, but we will continue to work with stakeholders across the country to drive home energy efficiency. It makes sense for affordability and for the environment.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real honour and privilege to rise on behalf of the people that I represent in Barrie—Innisfil.

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There is a full-blown carbon tax revolt going on in this country right now. Today's motion represents voices across the country. They are saying that, on April 1, when the 23% increase in the carbon tax occurs, it needs to stop.

I know the Speaker is from Nova Scotia and that he heard the news today out of Nova Scotia that the Nova Scotia Legislature unanimously passed a motion to stop the carbon tax increase on April 1. In fact, 70% of premiers in this country are asking for the same, and 70% of Canadians are asking to axe the tax increase on April 1. Yesterday, the Liberal leader of Ontario stood in front of microphones in the Ontario legislature and called on the federal government to axe the 23% tax increase on April 1.

That is why we are here today. One thing I get to do as the member of Parliament for Barrie—Innisfil is communicate regularly with my residents. I know many of the MPs utilize the tools that are available to communicate; in every circumstance that we deal with mailers, we ask a question.

We ask the question so we can get a sense of how our constituents feel about certain issues that we are debating in this country. Recently, I sent out a constituency mailer. What this represents is just a small portion of the responses that I got back.

The responses were telling. They were telling of the circumstances that my constituents are feeling right now, not only as a result of the carbon tax but also as a result of the affordability and inflation crisis and the interest rate increase crisis. These things have dramatically impacted my residents and people right across this country, and not just people, but businesses as well.

In some of those responses, 81% of the respondents that got back to me with the mailer said that they wanted to scrap the carbon tax. It was not a trick question that I asked. It was a very simple and succinct question: "Do you support the carbon tax?" Eighty-one per cent of the residents came back and said that they do not. There were some, I acknowledge, that did support the carbon tax, and that is fine. However, what I saw is consistent with what I am seeing right across this country; this is that 70% of Canadians want the carbon tax scrapped.

Here is what some of the residents are saying. I am their voice. I stand up here in the House of Commons as the voice of the people of Barrie—Innisfil, who have elected me since 2015.

"We are 80 and 81 years old. We cannot afford the taxes we have", said Lyle and Phyllis from Barrie.

"Every month on average my carbon [tax] cost just for the gas bill is \$59. At the end of the year that is \$708 just for the gas bill, not to mention the cost of the groceries that have gone up. We can't save anything. Even with that little bit of my paid taxes (yes our money) I'm getting back 4 times a year, the PM acts like he is doing me a favour. It doesn't put a dent in the cost of everything going up," said Lulu in Innisfil.

"Just a quick note to let you know that I am OPPOSED to the upcoming April 1st carbon tax increase on gasoline. As a pensioner, I am finding it difficult to keep up with all the increases in taxes, cost of food, utilities, etc. My pension only increases...2% a year", said Mark in Barrie. The carbon tax is going up 23% on April 1.

"The general public cannot handle any more taxes at this time", said Jennifer in Innisfil.

"It's a significant contributor to inflation, which we urgently need to control", said Alexander in Innisfil.

"Don't believe it effectively encourages less fuel consumption", said Todd in Lefroy.

"They should cancel it; life is very expensive already", said Nora in Barrie.

That is the crux of what we are discussing here today.

● (1555)

As I mentioned earlier, the affordability and inflation crisis gripping our nation right now is having a real impact on people. We can add to that interest rate increases and mortgages that are coming due for renewal. Is it any wonder that there is a carbon tax revolt happening not only at the grassroots level but also among provincial premiers in this country? This is because they are on the ground. It is easy for us to sit here in the Ottawa bubble and not recognize the impact this is having on people in our country.

I am sure Liberal, NDP, Bloc and other members are hearing from their constituents, as I am, about the affordability factor. All we are asking is to give people a break and not increase the carbon tax by 23% on April 1. This is not the end of it. The tax will be going up four times more by 2035. It is going to increase to four times more than what it is right now. People cannot afford it now; how are they going to afford it then?

Of course, the argument from the government is that it is revenue-neutral. If one does not take it from people in the first place, then one never has to give it back. The fact is, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, people are not getting back what they are paying into the carbon tax.

Liberals can argue all they want as they stand up here. As the former environment minister famously said one time, as she was sitting in a bar in Newfoundland, if they say things loud enough and long enough, people will totally believe what they say. It is effectively propaganda.

However, the facts are in front of us, through the Parliamentary Budget Officer. In the province where I am from, Ontario, in 2023-24, the cost of the tax will be \$1,363. The rebate will be \$885, which means that people are spending more on the carbon tax than what they are getting in the rebate, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. In other provinces, such as Newfoundland and Labrador, it is \$1,281. People are getting back \$934. In Alberta, people will pay \$2,466 in carbon tax, in terms of the fiscal and economic gross cost; the rebate they are getting back is \$1,756.

If we cannot believe the Parliamentary Budget Officer and the data he provides to parliamentarians, then why do we even have him? I would suggest that the Parliamentary Budget Officer's data, and the anecdotal data I am hearing from residents in my riding, say exactly this: They cannot afford this carbon tax. They cannot afford the increase.

One thing I want to focus on for a minute is the cost of business. We have said many times in this place that, when one taxes the wholesalers, producers and transporters, the tax ends up at the consumer through grocery stores. The stores, by the way, are paying to heat and cool their buildings. It is ultimately the end consumer who ends up paying for it. On the supply side, business ends up paying for it.

Yesterday, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business produced a document that it posted on its website. It reaffirmed to its members that the "carbon tax is increasing by a staggering 23% on April 1st! That means the cost of a litre of gasoline will include 17.6 cents of carbon tax!" One thing it discussed is the fact that the federal government had promised to return the carbon tax to business. Across this country, there is currently \$2.5 billion owed in rebates. In the province of Ontario, \$2,637 is owed to each business as a result of this rebate, yet the government continues to hold on to that money. These businesses are still being impacted on the supply side with the increase in the costs I mentioned earlier.

I am here today on behalf of the people I represent in Barrie—Innisfil, who I know are going through a massive affordability issue. These are seniors, single moms and people trying to keep a roof over their heads, not just because of the carbon tax but because of all factors. All we are asking for today on behalf of not just the people I represent in Barrie—Innisfil but all Canadians, in this carbon tax revolt that is currently ongoing, is to axe the tax and try to help make life more affordable for Canadians.

• (1600)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see the member. I appreciated his speech.

He mentioned the PBO and asked why the PBO exists if it gets it wrong. Perhaps he could speak to the difference between fiscal and economic impacts. When I read the fiscal impacts, and that means cash transfers in and cash transfers out, they are in fact positive for 80% of Canadian households.

Then when I read the economic impacts, those people who are lining up at food banks are still made better off, even on the PBO's analysis. I would disagree with the PBO here, and I am not the only one; the IMF and others disagree as well. Could the member speak to that?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I have a tough time justifying in my own mind how anybody lining up at a food bank is better off than they are providing for their own family.

In Barrie, in the month of December, there was a 150% increase in food bank usage. We are seeing two million people a year utilizing food banks in this country. The expectation this year is that there is going to be another million, on top of the two million, who are going to be utilizing food banks.

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Is that the kind of country we want? Do we want people lining up at food banks, or do we want them producing and trying to provide a secure future for their families?

I deal with the PBO. I deal with statistics as well, just as the hon. member does. However, I also deal with those residents and businesses in my riding, which are telling me that the cost of living is way too much because of a combination of a lot of factors. Not the least of these is the increase in the carbon tax on April 1, as well as future increases that are planned, which the government said would not happen. The Liberals said they would not raise it to a certain level, and in fact they are.

The cost of everything is going up, including the cost of necessities of life. Given the affordability crisis that exists today, I happen to think it is unfair.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my Conservative colleague, and he made no mention of what the Parliamentary Budget Officer clearly said. According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the price on pollution puts money back in the pockets of middle-class families and the least fortunate. What is more, 80% of the people who pay the tax receive more in compensation than they pay in carbon tax. The tax does not apply in all provinces.

Obviously, the Conservative Party is not saying that. If my colleague is so concerned about the cost of living for people, why did he and his party vote against removing the GST from heating costs? Why did he vote against dental care for seniors? Why did he vote against a school nutrition program for children?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, the cost of living is currently on the rise across the country because the NDP has supported so many of the Liberal government's policies.

[English]

I do not think he heard what I was saying before, which is that there are families in this country who are paying more in the carbon tax than what they are getting back. According to the data from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, in Ontario, the province that I live in, the fiscal and economic net impact on a family is \$1,820. I have no reason to not believe the Parliamentary Budget Officer; he is an independent officer of Parliament whose job is to assess this data and give us the information according to the data he assesses. This means the family is paying more than it is getting back in the carbon tax.

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The fact is that there are premiers in this country who are now calling on the government to stop the carbon tax, to axe the tax on April 1. They are listening to their constituents, as I am doing, and 81% of my constituents have told me that they do not want this carbon tax to occur. They certainly do not want to pay for future increases that are going to happen under the Liberal government's plan.

• (1605)

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to rise in this place, and in particular for such an important conversation, because we are in a cost of living crisis and the Liberal-NDP government could not care less. I can guarantee that the most common thing every MP in the chamber hears when they are back in their riding is that the cost of living is out of control. From groceries to gas and home heating, and everything in between, it has all become unaffordable for everyone.

What is the solution in the minds of the costly coalition? It is to ram through a 23% carbon tax hike on April 1. How out of touch can someone be? Nobody I have talked to has said, "You know what might help? What if we sent more money to Ottawa?" Nobody believes they are better off under the carbon tax, and this is why we are witnessing a carbon tax revolt. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has been crystal clear: Canadians are losing hundreds of dollars each year, which will turn into thousands of dollars if we do not stop the planned quadrupling of the carbon tax.

Across this country, thousands of ordinary people are going to rallies to axe the tax. Young families, seniors, veterans, small business owners and new Canadians are all showing up en masse to add their voices to the growing chorus of discontent. They cannot afford to live with a decent quality of life anymore, never mind actually get ahead, and their Liberal and NDP MPs have turned their back on them. People will no longer sit in silence. They are tired of being told to shut up and just take it. They refuse to be lectured to by the Prime Minister because they dare to oppose his carbon tax.

The good news is that they are not alone. Two-thirds of Canadians oppose the 23% carbon tax hike, and it is no wonder people are mad. The Prime Minister and his NDP coalition partners sneer at people who drive long distances to go to work or to pick up their groceries. They ignore the legitimate concerns of seniors who can no longer afford to heat their home on the coldest of nights, and from their ivory tower they disparage anyone who points out the obvious: the carbon tax plan is a tax plan, not an environment plan.

My Liberal colleagues who do not believe me can look at the Order Paper question where their Minister of Environment admitted they do not even measure the annual amount of emissions directly reduced by their carbon tax. Even he admits they do not know whether the carbon tax is reducing emissions, so why are we paying for it?

The ridiculousness does not end there. The same minister went to a conference of municipal leaders and proclaimed Canada does not need any more new roads or highways, and while it took a couple days to clean up the environment minister's mess, the damage was done. The people living in communities like Carman, Sanford, Brunkild and Sperling heard the message loud and clear that the

Liberal government does not think that Highway 3 should be twinned, for example.

Municipal leaders immediately started calling me, furious with the new Liberal plan to stop building roads in this country. What should really worry the Liberals is that, given their track record, nobody was actually surprised by such an out-of-touch and ridiculous announcement. Let us never forget that the Prime Minister scoffs at farmers who use propane or natural gas to dry their grain or heat their livestock barns. In fact, he pulled out all the stops to gut Bill C-234, making the bill about \$900 million worse in the eyes of farms.

What is sad is that I do not think the Prime Minister even loses a wink of sleep over how his carbon tax is punishing farm families like those that live in places like Altona, Rathwell, Roland, Elm Creek and Oakville. These farmers are paying thousands of dollars in carbon taxes to stop their grain from sprouting or spoiling in the bin. When grocery prices are at record highs, who thinks it is a bright idea to make it that much more expensive to grow and produce the food we all eat?

My constituents will also never forget when the Prime Minister gave a carbon tax carve-out to 3% of Canadian households and left the other 97% out in the cold. People living in places like Winkler, Morden, Portage and Plum Coulee did not get the carve-out on their home heating. They too were ignored.

• (1610)

It was not until the Atlantic Liberal caucus was on the brink of a full-out revolt that the Prime Minister thought he could placate it by giving a temporary reprieve on the carbon tax to those who use home heating oil. While he may have stopped the insurgency within his own Liberal caucus, he reminded Canadians how politically calculating and motivated he can be when pushed into a corner. Atlantic Canadians are not the fools he took them for. They saw right through his hope of buying their vote before hiking their taxes again after the next election.

We only have to look at the words of the Liberal Minister of Rural Economic Development to see why some people got a carve-out and others did not. It was because the good people living in communities like Morris, Rosenfeld, Starbuck and Mariapolis do not vote Liberal. The sad reality is that the Prime Minister cares only about the people who vote for him rather than about doing what is right for all Canadians.

Business of Supply

Now, on the verge of April 1, seven out of 10 premiers have publicly called upon the Prime Minister to cancel his 23% carbon tax hike. I do not recall the last time that seven premiers were openly opposed to a federal government policy. In my province of Manitoba, the NDP premier is not really saying much about the carbon tax hike. He said he has had private conversations with the Prime Minister on the matter, but it is telling that an NDP premier will not publicly defend the carbon tax hike. Who knows? Maybe he will see the writing on the wall and talk to our constituents, and he might even join the coalition of the common sense.

Among the seven premiers who oppose the 23% carbon tax hike, one just happens to be the Liberal premier of Newfoundland and Labrador. That Liberal premier did something rather brave, which was to stand up to the Prime Minister. It was not easy for the premier to go against the grain of his own party, and for doing so, the Prime Minister accused him of being a short-sighted thinker, but unlike most of the Liberal MPs from Newfoundland and Labrador, this Liberal stood up for the people he represents.

Before the Liberal MP for Avalon was placed in the witness protection program, he agreed with our Conservative caucus on the carbon tax and went so far as to call for a leadership review of the Prime Minister. In response to his comments, I called for every Canadian to have a review of the Prime Minister's leadership. It is called an election. It is time. Obviously the Prime Minister wants the carbon tax election, so let us have it. It would seem wrong not to mention what the Liberal member for Avalon summed up when he said, "People are thinking maybe it's time for a change. I tell everybody—every leader, every party has a best-before date. Our best-before date is here." Conservatives could not agree more.

The reason people are opposing the carbon tax hike is that they have no more nickels and dimes to give. Close to 50% of families are \$200 away from declaring insolvency. Look at the skyrocketing number of people visiting food banks to get a clear picture of what is going on in our country right now. Every day, I and, I assume, all of my colleagues get emails from constituents who are struggling to get by. Just last week I received a letter from a senior who cannot afford to put gas in her car just to get to her doctor's appointments. She cannot afford to buy fruits and vegetables, and due to high food prices, she now does the bulk of her grocery shopping at Dollarama.

In closing, I urge Liberal MPs to stand up for their constituents who cannot afford to pay their bills and put food on their family's table, to vote in favour of our Conservative motion to spike the hike, and to be honest with themselves and acknowledge the last thing people can afford right now is another tax hike. There is no shame in acknowledging that the carbon tax has been a failure, in terms of both of our cost of living and reducing emissions. In fact, I think people would prefer that politicians admit when they are wrong, pivot and do what is right for the people we are sent here to serve rather than continuing down the path of ideology, and that they try to be a bit more pragmatic.

I hope that the common sense of the common people might just break through to the NDP-Liberal government. I fear it will not, which is why we need the carbon tax election, because it is time to axe the tax on everything for everyone, and for good.

• (1615)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the member's mentioning those people in desperate need and the need to help them. I co-chair the all-party anti-poverty caucus, and that has been a major focus of mine since 2015. We know by the numbers that the price on pollution has a very small impact on the cost of living, especially food inflation. Food inflation has been 20% over the last two years, which is a real problem, but the price on pollution amounts to well under 1% of that.

Using common sense, what common-sense measure, specifically on helping those in need, would the member like to see that would have an actual measurable impact on those people he ostensibly cares about?

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague across the way for his work. We do share that same vision of working to help those people who are most vulnerable.

The carbon tax is not the entirety of the problem that the Liberal government has created. The cost of living crisis has had a number of factors that have led to it. The best thing we could do is provide people with hope, opportunity and prosperity. The Liberals could do that by being job creators in this country, giving an opportunity to people to work hard, know their worth, step up and create a good quality of life for themselves and their family. That is what the next Conservative government will do.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to circle back to an issue that my colleague touched on in his speech, which is the vulnerable situation seniors are in. I would like to come back to it because, this morning, in the House, I had the honour of tabling the report from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. At that committee, my colleague's party and all the parties in the room unanimously recognized that we need to increase old age security for seniors. This could actually put money back into seniors' wallets and pockets.

Does he support his colleagues on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities who voted for Bill C-319?

Will he continue to pressure the Liberals, not just on the carbon tax, but to think about other solutions to help people in vulnerable situations, including seniors, by increasing old age security for all seniors and address this inequity between seniors aged 65 to 74 and those aged 75 and over?

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, a number of seniors have reached out to my office with this exact complaint, that they cannot afford to live anymore.

I do not blame them. Many are on a fixed income, and they are seeing the dollar value continually deteriorate from the Liberal tax-and-spend inflationary policy that is driving down the value of our goods and driving up the cost of our goods. The best thing we could do is make sure that the dollars they are getting from their pension, whether public or private, are going to go farther. The actions that the federal government takes have a major impact, and that is what we are going to need to step forward to do, to make sure that we reduce the costs for those seniors so those dollars go just as far as they need to.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals cannot measure how much carbon is being emitted, then they cannot measure how much it is being reduced. Why are they charging a carbon tax?

What is the matter with Dollarama? Giant Tiger does have fresh fruit at a pretty good deal.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing wrong with Dollarama. The unfortunate reality is that most folks where I live would rather go to Co-op to get the quality they expect. Giant Tiger is, of course, another great option for those people who have it locally available to them.

Why are we charging a carbon tax without knowing the results? That is a very good question. The fact of the matter is that people would not be in a carbon tax revolt if they saw any outcome, in terms of our environmental indicators, from the carbon tax. What they see right now is no value for money, and themselves getting poorer and unable to afford the quality of life we all deserve.

• (1620)

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all day long today we have heard that people get more back in the carbon tax than they pay, which is categorically false, as proven by the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

Conservatives know common sense. If one does not take the tax in the first place, one will not have to give back anything to Canadians.

With respect to Bill C-234, and I am wondering whether my colleague could comment on this, we hear from the Liberals all day long that it is Conservatives who refuse to bring the bill back up for debate. We have brought the bill up six times, and I have had the opportunity to speak to this very important piece of legislation that would give farmers a reprieve from the carbon tax. Taxing farmers and making their inputs more expensive would pass costs along to consumers.

I am just wondering whether my colleague could comment on Bill C-234 and why we need to get the bill passed in its original form.

Mr. Branden Leslie: Mr. Speaker, what a good, common-sense question. If one does not tax something, one does not need to give it back. What a way to look at the world.

The fact is that the rebate does not take into account that, just as those farmers have the costs passed on to them, every consumer has the costs passed on to them. Not only is the rebate falling short of what is spent directly in carbon taxes, but the indirect costs are also far higher.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise in the House and an honour.

I am splitting my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Beaches—East York, who, I think, asked a question a little bit ago.

As today is actually Father's Day in the heritage country that my family is from, I want to say *buona Festa del Papà* to my dad back in Vancouver. I actually just spent a few days with my family and parents in Vancouver last week for March break. It was great to see them doing well.

Before I give my formal remarks, today we had the consumer inflation report produced for the month of February in Canada. We had some really good news. As an economist, I saw the consumer price index was below 3%, at 2.8%. Looking at the details, the first headline in that report indicates that “Canadians pay less for cellular services and Internet access services”.

This debate is about affordability and carbon pricing, so we will talk about that. However, to start off, I just want to read two things:

Consumers who signed on to a cell phone bill plan in February paid 26.5% less year over year, following a 16.4% decline in January. The year-over-year decline was driven by lower prices for new plans and increases in data allowances for some cellular [services].

Similarly, prices for Internet access services fell 13.2% on a year-over-year basis in February, stemming from a monthly decline of 9.4%....

Grocery inflation continues to ease.

Prices for food purchased from stores continued to ease on a year-over-year basis in February (+2.4%) compared with January [which was at 3.4%]. Slower price growth was broad-based with prices for fresh fruit (-2.6%), processed meat (-0.6%) and fish (-1.3%) declining....

This is progress and we are seeing it across the board. The core inflation rate was also very well contained. I anticipate and do hope, as an economist and in my role as a member of Parliament sitting on a couple of committees, to see the Bank of Canada take some action to reduce rates later this year, which I think is timely and well needed. Inflation is well under control in Canada, and we have definitely had some good monthly prints.

I will now turn to the debate at hand.

[Translation]

I am very pleased to take part in this debate today.

Climate change is a very serious issue for our country, and I have to say that what we are seeing right now is worrisome. We had a very atypical winter. There is hardly any snow, and temperatures are much milder than we are used to.

Obviously, the impact of climate change is being felt across Canada. We have seen it over the past year with, for example, the storm that ravaged Nova Scotia and the historic wildfires that burned up hectares and hectares across the country. I am sure my colleagues will recall that the air was filled with smoke even right here in the capital. It was hard to breathe, even here in the House of Commons. Obviously, many people with respiratory problems suffered as a result. That is just one of the adverse health effects of climate change.

It is also important for us to realize that climate change is having a major impact on infrastructure in communities across the country. It has an enormous economic cost. I think we need to say it loud and clear: The reality is quite simply that Canada cannot afford to stand idly by and do nothing to combat climate change.

I am pleased to be part of a government that is taking this issue seriously and taking action. Obviously, this is a complex issue and there are no simple solutions. However, experts agree that our pollution pricing system is the best tool for reducing emissions while putting money back in the pockets of Canadians.

In fact, when carbon pollution pricing is applied correctly, as it is here in Canada, it effectively reduces greenhouse gas emissions and makes life more affordable for Canadians by ensuring that they get back more money than they pay in.

• (1625)

Every three months, and on April 15, we give hundreds of dollars back to families through the Canada carbon rebate. It gives eight out of 10 families more money than they pay in, while ensuring that the big polluters pay their fair share. In provinces where the federal fuel charge applies, a family of four will receive up to \$1,800 in 2024-25 under the base Canada carbon rebate. I am pleased to say that the first payment for 2024-25 will go out next month. The other quarterly payments will follow in July, October and January.

In addition to paying these base amounts, the federal government is proposing legislative changes with Bill C-59 in order to double the rural top-up starting this year, increasing it to 20% of the base Canada carbon rebate. It is important to us to recognize that rural residents have higher energy needs and more limited access to cleaner transportation options.

The Canada carbon rebate is just one way our government is helping Canadians pay their energy bills. The Prime Minister announced several new measures last fall to support Canadians. Since November 9, the federal fuel charge on deliveries of heating oil has been temporarily paused. This means that households using heating oil are getting more time and financial support to switch to a heat pump. We estimate that this measure will save a household using 1,500 litres of home heating oil \$261 in 2023-24.

We are also moving forward with making the average heat pump free. With this measure, we are helping people with low to median incomes move away from oil heating in provinces and territories that have agreed to support the delivery of the federal government's enhanced oil to heat pump affordability grants. The grant for switching to a heat pump has now been increased to \$15,000, on top of provincial or territorial grants of up to \$5,000. Our govern-

ment is also offering an upfront payment of \$250 to people with low to median incomes who use heating oil and who sign up to switch to a heat pump through a joint federal-provincial government program.

As members can clearly see, our government is really helping Canadians in the green transition. Of course, that support builds on everything that we are already doing to support families that are struggling to make ends meet. For example, the Canada-wide early learning and child care system that we are in the process of implementing across the country will help many families to save a lot of money. Thanks to this new national system, families across Canada will be able to save up to approximately \$2,610 to \$14,300 per year for every child who attends a regulated child care facility. There is no doubt that this will make a big difference in families' budgets.

• (1630)

[English]

Our government continues to have the backs of Canadians, as it has from day one in 2015 to today. We will always put in place measures that aid Canadians on affordability, help grow our economy and provide a bright future for all families from coast to coast to coast, all those hard-working families that get up in the morning and do the right thing for their families and for this beautiful, blessed country we live in.

I look forward to questions and comments.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a little confused. My colleague canvassed and campaigned for the leader of the provincial Liberal Party. She announced today that, if the Liberals get elected, which I highly doubt, she will cut the carbon tax.

Which leader does he support?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for King—Vaughan ran on a platform in the last election on pricing carbon. She ran with the former leader of the Conservative Party on a platform on pricing carbon. It was in their platform, so she is either misleading the House or misleading her constituents, or both. This is what she is doing.

I am the member for Parliament for Vaughan—Woodbridge. I represent my constituents. I have always been straight up with them, and I always will be. Others need to do the same.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his carbon tax cost analysis, the Parliamentary Budget Officer talked about the quintiles that benefited most from the carbon tax. He said that the most disadvantaged in terms of the fuel charge were in the top income quintiles, that is, the people who earn the most money and, ultimately, consume the most.

Of course, oil companies have to pay the carbon tax, too. They generate a lot of greenhouse gases, so they pay more. If we eliminate the carbon tax, will oil companies end up getting even more money? Will the less fortunate be penalized and get even less money?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, the price on pollution helps the most vulnerable people in this country. If we got rid of the carbon tax, it would only help the wealthiest people in Canada.

[English]

The highest-income earners will benefit and the lowest earners and middle-class Canadians, who are the majority of hard-working Canadians in this country, will lose out.

[Translation]

I appreciate my colleague's question. I want to say that we are helping Canadians and that we always want to help the middle class.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier today my colleague, the member for Victoria, asked similar questions and did not receive a good response, so I will ask this member. In terms of output-based pricing, New Democrats do not believe it is fair. We do believe in carbon pricing. However, Suncor pays 14 times less than an average Canadian in carbon pricing.

Why will the government not make big oil companies pay what they owe and pay their fair share?

• (1635)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, I work with the hon. member for London—Fanshawe on the parliamentary association for the Ahmadiyya community. She is one of the co-chairs.

I would like to say that all Canadians and all Canadian companies need to pay their fair share in this transition to a green and greening economy, as I like to refer to it. With regard to our carbon pricing system, for individuals we know that out of eight out of 10 Canadians, and eight in 10 Canadian families even more so, are made better off with this system. We know that better is always possible, of course.

With regard to industries and so forth, there are about 800,000 Canadians who work in the energy sector from coast to coast to coast. They are hard-working and we will support them in this transition, but we know we will need to utilize those resources in this transition as we move forward. I look forward to having these continuing conversations with the hon. member and with all colleagues on how we continue to grow a strong economy and continue to

have a healthy environment and a bright future for all Canadians, particularly our children.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will get to the conversation around pricing pollution, but I want to start with a threshold question that we all have to answer: Do members care to take action to save our planet? Do they care to reduce emissions for our kids? Do they care? If the answer is yes, then we get to a different question, which is how we are going to reduce emissions in the most efficient way. If we want to respect taxpayer dollars, then we reduce emissions in the most efficient way.

We hear a lot about common sense from across the aisle. Common sense presumably should be that polluters pay, and pollution, members should know, is a classic market failure. I have heard some people bandying about different economic opinions on what a market failure is. In this case, the cost of polluting is costless to the polluter and is borne collectively by all of us. What is the answer to that? The answer is a price signal. The common-sense answer, very simply, is to make polluters pay. That is what this price on pollution does. We do not want to penalize people or make them worse off. We just want to change the behaviour, so matched with that price, internalizing that negative externality, we make sure there is a rebate and recycle the revenue.

I have heard people go back and forth on this. The fact is that, of the 100% of the revenue that goes back to the provinces of origin, 90% goes back to households directly. If there were a motion today that said that 100% should go back to households, I would vote for it for sure. We could improve it, but the fact is that 90% goes back. It is largely revenue-neutral.

I heard a question asking if it works. Of course it works. This is not me saying this. If we look at the emissions progress report for 2030, we see more than a steady decline. We see a decline from business as usual. If we had taken no action from 2015 on, or the kind of action we saw under the Harper government, we would have seen emissions rise to 815 megatonnes by 2030. If we look at that progress report, does anyone in the House know what it stands to be with all of the action we have put into place? It stands to be 467 megatonnes, which is not nearly enough and not where we need it to be, but that is a 43% reduction from business as usual and 36% toward our 40% target. We are very close to being where we say we want to be.

By the way, a good amount of that is because of the price on pollution. The progress report says that 30% of that reduction in emissions comes from the price on pollution. When we look at that delta of 815 megatonnes down to 467 megatonnes, 23% of that total reduction from business as usual comes from the price on pollution, so, yes, it works as part of a very serious overall comprehensive climate plan.

It is easy to care about climate change when we are well fed. I have heard a lot of talk in the House that the price on pollution is making people poorer, the worst among us, and it is hurting those who are already hurting. It is deeply cynical to trade on a real affordability crisis, to trade on the real stress and real struggles of so many people in need, to undermine an effective and efficient climate action that makes most households whole. It does not increase the cost of everything to send people to food banks. I said this when asking a question of a colleague and did not receive a good answer. We have seen 20% food inflation these last two years, and the price on pollution, economists tell us, accounts for under 1% of any inflationary impact. That is not the cause of the affordability crisis.

We could have a very interesting debate about interest rates. Maybe the member for Carleton would tell us that he wants to fire the Governor of the Bank of Canada. We have had very interesting debates about interest rates and what is truly driving the cost of living crisis. It is absolutely not, economists will tell us, the price on pollution.

We could also have an interesting debate about social welfare in this country. We have increased the Canada child benefit significantly. We have brought hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty. We have increased the Canada workers benefit. We have increased the GIC for seniors. Do members know what provincial governments have done, largely Conservative provincial governments? They have not increased welfare and disability supports in line with the rise in inflation. I am standing here in Ontario, and the member could tell me what the Ford government has done to make sure disability payments keep pace with the cost of inflation, but Conservatives have done next to nothing.

• (1640)

Do we want to talk about the real cost of living crisis and what drives that cost of living crisis? We could talk about food inflation. We could talk about interest rates, and we could talk about the lack of provincial action in their areas of responsibility. What we should not talk about, if we care about facts in the House, is the price on pollution.

Much has been made of the PBO report. I wonder sometimes, listening to the debate in the House, whether anyone has actually read this report, so let me quote from it. On a fiscal basis, “most households will see a net gain [versus] the...fuel charge...and related GST”. As well, “The fiscal-only impact...is broadly progressive.”

Hang on. What is this about? The PBO says it is going to cost us more. I am going to be absolutely fair in this, and there is a real debate we should have because what the PBO actually says is that, on a fiscal basis, for the cash-in, cash-out money that households pay and get back, 80% of households are, in fact, better off.

What the PBO goes on to say is that, when one takes into account GDP impacts from the price on pollution, we see modest GDP reductions, though they are significant on a household basis, so most households are worse off if one includes fiscal and economic factors. They do not say that about low-income households so, again, trading on food banks and offering no real suggestions for helping people out of poverty is completely incorrect, even in the PBO's analysis.

Business of Supply

Let us focus a little more on whether the PBO is right. Fiscal analysis is easy. It is money in and money out. On an economic basis, I would say they are wrong. It is not gospel.

We have this from the American Economic Journal, for example, on the macro impact of carbon pricing: “We find no evidence for a negative impact on employment or GDP growth but rather find a zero to modest positive impact.”

There is also this, from the IMF, from June: “Countries that do not recycle revenues experience a substantial economic downturn while countries that recycle revenues only display a muted impact on economic activity.” For those keeping track at home, Canada recycles revenues.

Worse, and this is fatal, let me quote the PBO as well. I wonder how this is not part of the conversation: “The scope of the report is limited to estimating the distributional impact of the federal fuel charge and does not attempt to account for the economic and environmental costs of climate change.”

Maybe Conservatives could explain to me why we would consider the negative economic impacts of one side of the ledger of the price on pollution, and the fiscal impacts are better for households, but we would not consider alternative scenarios.

We hear about “technology, not taxes”, but that is going to cost households more. It is going to be paid for by taxes or, worse, if we do not take into account the real economic costs of unchecked climate change. Let us be absolutely clear. If one does not have a serious climate plan in this country, and the federal Conservatives are not interested in a serious climate plan, we are going to see unchecked climate change.

Let us return to costs. We have Conservatives who have no plan. Since I have been in Parliament, they have had no plan, except for Erin O'Toole, who was promptly ousted. Why was he ousted? For having a plan, and “technology, not taxes” is not a plan.

What does the price on pollution do? The price on pollution says to consumers that it will be more expensive to pollute. Consumers will seek out cleaner alternatives and businesses will respond by innovating to meet consumer demand. If one does not have that price, which is internalizing that negative externality, businesses are not going to innovate. We are not going to see serious climate action from the private sector.

Business of Supply

If one wants technology, not taxes, it is going to be left to government subsidies alone, and where do government subsidies come from, Conservative friends? They come from taxes.

If one wants one's taxes to go up, then axe the tax.

● (1645)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague across the way was so adamant for the need to make the carbon tax revenue-neutral because it goes against a comment made by someone else who stated, twice in the House, that the government made a decision to make it revenue-neutral.

This member then stood up another time and said that it is revenue-neutral at the federal level. Guess who that other member was? It was the exact same member.

Finance Canada told public accounts that, last year, \$670 million was not given back in rebates. It was kept by the government. Going back as far as 2019, it started at \$100 million, which was kept, per the public accounts, for government programming, not returned in rebates.

What is it? Is it revenue-neutral, as the member has stated twice, or is it not revenue-neutral, as public accounts has stated, and as he stated earlier today?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my remarks, 90% of the dollars go directly back to households. On the revenue neutrality, 100% of revenues go back to provinces of origin: 90% goes to households directly and the other 10% goes into businesses, municipalities and—

An hon. member: It does not.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, there is that other 10%, and there is a credible debate to be had as to whether that 10% should be allocated the way it has been allocated. I would argue that, if there were a vote in the House, and members are free to bring forward the motion, I would vote for 100% revenue neutrality, but when they want to axe it entirely, it is a joke of a motion. I will vote that down every time.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the fact that the polluters should pay. The NDP, of course, agrees. The PBO report stated that Canada could generate \$4 billion in revenues from a windfall profits tax. When the NDP called for big oil to pay what it owes to help families, the Liberals sided with the Conservatives, voted it down and would not support it.

Why are the Liberals more interested in protecting corporate profits than helping working people?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, in my last two budget submissions, I spoke to excess profit taxes. We have seen them on banks and insurance companies. We have seen them from U.K. Conservatives on oil and gas. It is absolutely a conversation we should have in the House. U.K. Conservatives were, I think at one point, models for Conservatives here until they lost their way, but if U.K. Conservatives have put this in place, then there is no reason we cannot have that debate and put it in place here as well.

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everybody knows perfectly well that the Liberal government is currently making money by collecting the carbon tax. What I mean by that is that none of this money is being set aside for the environment. However, the oil companies are still alive and well in Canada. Is the government doing one thing and saying another?

I would like the member to explain exactly what his government is doing.

[English]

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, there is a comprehensive climate plan. It touches on many different areas. The price on pollution is responsible for a huge number of emission reductions when we look at the plan up to 2030, and it is responsible for between 23% and 30% of the overall plan.

If we were to axe the tax, it would cost a lot to replace those significant emission reductions. That is if, on a threshold question, someone cared. If they do not care, then they should be honest about it and say they do not care.

As to what we are doing otherwise, there are many different things. There are investments in public transit. There are investments in clean tech. There are rules on methane emissions. Yes, there are rules forthcoming, regulations that are being debated right now, around an emissions cap on oil and gas.

● (1650)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his speech, which had the added bonus of agitating the Conservatives.

The simple question I have is on the PBO's economic analysis. Does he include the ever-increasing cost of insurance for floods and fire?

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Mr. Speaker, that is a great question because the answer is no. In fact, the Financial Times had an article the other day that said that insurance premiums are a hidden carbon price and that we are going to pay for climate action one way or the other.

What I would put to my Conservative friends is, if we are going to pay one way or the other, surely we want to harness the power of the free market and pay as little as we possibly can.

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a recent report shows that the NDP-Liberals are going to hike their carbon tax by 23% on April 1, even though it does not work.

Canada's environment commissioner says the NDP-Liberals are nowhere near on track to hit their emissions reduction targets and are relying on "overly optimistic assumptions, limited analysis of uncertainties and a lack of peer review." In fact the NDP-Liberals do not even bother to measure if the carbon tax is working.

That is because the NDP-Liberals are increasing their ineffective tax, instead of doing things like fixing Canada's broken and over-taxed electric grid or getting more public transit built. Gas prices are rising and Canadians cannot afford to drive or heat their homes. It is all because of a tax that does not work. This NDP-Liberal tax is not worth the cost. It is time to spike the hike and axe the tax.

It is going to be a cruel summer for Canadians because the NDP-Liberals are hiking the carbon tax on food, heat and groceries by a whopping 23% on April 1. Any summer road trips that struggling Canadians might be dreaming about will probably become completely unaffordable because gas prices are about to spike, thanks to the NDP-Liberal tax hikes. Experts say a recent increase in the cost of gas in the GTA might be only the beginning of price hikes at the pumps this summer, with some estimating that the Liberal-NDP tax hike will be part of the reason for a forecasted 20¢ a litre increase by July 1.

Canadians deserve to be able to afford to live. They deserve that road trip. They do not deserve more NDP-Liberal taxes. It is time to axe the tax.

If someone took \$2,000 from someone else and gave them \$1,500 back, they would not say thank you. They would say, "Call the cops." However, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Canada's top budget watchdog, shows that is exactly what is happening to Canadians. The NDP-Liberals' sneaky carbon tax scam takes thousands of dollars from Canadians and only gives them a few hundred dollars back, all while increasing the cost of everything, food, fuel and more, and the NDP-Liberal government expects to be thanked for this.

It gets worse. On April 1, the NDP-Liberals want to hike their tax by 23%. Canadians will not say thank you to the NDP-Liberals for taking their cash. They are going to give them the boot. It is time to spike the hike and axe the tax.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Canada's top budget watchdog, the average Alberta family will pay \$2,466 for the Liberal-NDP carbon tax and only get \$1,750 back. That means that the NDP-Liberal carbon tax will cost them \$710 today, rising to a whopping \$3,000 by 2030. Where does the Liberal-NDP Prime Minister expect struggling Albertans to find an extra \$3,000 to pay for a tax that does not even work?

Life has never been more expensive and people are struggling. Canadians are looking for relief, not more tax. This NDP-Liberal tax is not worth the cost. It is time to spike the hike and axe the tax.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the average Ontario family will pay \$1,363 for the NDP-Liberal carbon tax and only get \$885 back. This means that the NDP-Liberal carbon tax will take nearly \$500 from Ontarians this year, rising to a whopping \$1,800 by 2030. Where does the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister expect that struggling Ontarians will find an extra \$1,800 for a tax that does not even work?

Business of Supply

Under the NDP-Liberals, life has never been more expensive and people are struggling. The dream of owning a home has disappeared. Canadians are looking for relief, not more tax. This NDP-Liberal tax is not worth the cost. It is time to spike the hike and axe the tax.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the average Nova Scotian family will pay \$1,039 for the NDP-Liberal carbon tax and only get about \$600 back. That means the NDP-Liberals take about \$430 out of the pockets of people in that province today, rising to a whopping \$1,500 by 2030. Where does the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister expect struggling Nova Scotians to find an extra \$1,500 for a tax that does not even work?

Under the NDP-Liberals, life has never been more expensive and people are struggling. Canadians are looking for relief, not more tax. This NDP-Liberal tax is not worth the cost. It is time to spike the hike and axe the tax.

● (1655)

A new report shows that the average family's grocery bills will go up another \$700 this year alone. Canada's food price report estimates that the annual grocery bill for a family of four in Canada will hit a whopping \$16,297 this year, an increase of over \$700, but it gets worse. On April 1, the NDP-Liberals are going to raise their carbon tax, a tax on everything including food, by 23%. No one can afford that. That is why food bank usage is at record levels across Canada. This NDP-Liberal tax is not worth the cost. It is time to spike the hike and axe the tax.

A new report shows that a 600% increase in food bank usage has occurred within Canada's university students, but there is even more bad news for struggling students. At a time when Canadian students cannot even afford ramen noodles, NDP-Liberals are going to raise their carbon tax, the tax on everything including food, by a whopping 23%. The NDP-Liberals have made it completely unaffordable for today's Canadian university students to ever hope to afford a home of their own, and now they have the audacity to raise the carbon tax on everything by 23%.

Business of Supply

This insanity has to end. Canadian students deserve better than food bank ramen noodles and a carbon tax. This NDP-Liberal tax is not worth the cost. It is time to spike the hike and axe the tax.

Would members spend four minutes alone with Canada's Liberal Prime Minister? Probably not, but recently he said that if Canadians would spend four minutes alone with him, then they would understand how awesome his carbon tax on everything is. Canadians do not need quality time with the Liberal Prime Minister to understand how much the NDP-Liberal carbon tax costs them. That is because they cannot afford food, fuel or rent. They are using food banks. They are losing their homes.

Now the NDP-Liberals are going to hike their carbon tax by 23% on April 1. No time alone with the Liberal Prime Minister will change the fact that the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that the NDP-Liberal carbon tax will cost some Canadians almost \$3,000 a year. Canadians do not need time alone with the Prime Minister. They need tax relief. This NDP-Liberal tax is not worth the cost. It is time to spike the hike and axe the tax.

People say that we cannot make a silk purse out of a pig's ear, but the Liberals sure think we can. The NDP-Liberals have announced that they are going to do an expensive rebrand of their unpopular carbon tax and make Canadians pay for it, instead of axing it. Can members believe that?

The NDP-Liberals know it is a terrible policy that is costing Canadians more. They know it does not work, and they know Canadians hate it. However, unlike the NDP-Liberals, Canadians cannot simply rebrand their rising bills away. The carbon tax is increasing the cost of the food they buy, the gas they put in their cars and the necessities they purchase at the store, and on April 1, the NDP-Liberals are going to hike that tax by 23%.

Life has never been more expensive and people are struggling. They are looking for relief. The NDP-Liberal tax is not worth the cost. It is time to spike the hike and axe the tax.

After eight years of the Prime Minister, people are worse off than they were eight years ago. They are looking for hope, but the Prime Minister is looking to take more money from them while people are struggling to pay their bills. Instead of giving them that hope, the NDP-Liberals are giving them a tax hike. Their carbon tax hike is going to make everything cost more. That trip to the grocery store this spring will cost more. Filling up their car with gas on their way home from work will cost more. Keeping their house warm and the lights on will cost more. That is what the NDP-Liberals are asking Canadians for all the time: more. All the while, Canadians are getting less and less.

I have news for the NDP-Liberals. Canadians do not have more to give. They do not have a little more. They do not have a bit more. They do not have any more. Canadians have had enough. They cannot afford the Prime Minister and they know he is not worth the cost, just like his costly tax, which it is time to axe.

If members had to choose between paying for a Disney+ subscription or an NDP-Liberal carbon tax increase, what would they pick? Canada's Liberal finance minister had a big old fail on that front when she told Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet that they should cut that Disney+ subscription, even though

she is increasing the NDP-Liberal carbon tax by a whopping 23% on April 1.

Time and time again, the government has shown it has no clue how hard it is for regular people to pay for basic necessities like food, rent and fuel. Life is unaffordable and Canadians are tired of being told they have to give more and more to the NDP-Liberals and get less and less out of their lives. It is time to spike the hike and axe the tax.

● (1700)

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can certainly comprehend this argument that the cost of the carbon tax is going to be passed on to consumers and this is inflationary. It is a good story that the opposition is trying to sell. The problem is that it does not seem to be true or, at least, a lot of experts seem to think that the carbon tax—

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Mr. Speaker, I just want to check. I do not think the member is wearing a tie.

The Deputy Speaker: Actually, I checked before he got up. He is wearing a tie.

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

Mr. Marcus Powlowski: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the experts seem to think the carbon tax only minimally contributes to inflation. Let me quote a few of those experts.

The Governor of the Bank of Canada in September came to the conclusion that the carbon tax only contributes 0.15% to the inflation rate. In a recent review in Policy Options, a couple of Alberta economists calculated that the carbon tax increased consumer prices by only 0.6% in the last eight years. Stats Canada, in a B.C. study, estimated that the carbon tax only contributed or increased the cost of food by 0.33%.

Where are their statistics from? I quoted some. I would like to hear from the opposition. Where are they getting their stats from?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, as to experts, the Parliamentary Budget Officer says the average Ontario family, where the member's riding is, will pay \$1,363 for their carbon tax and only get \$885 back. That means that, by 2030, a family in his riding will pay a whopping \$1,800 for their carbon tax. Eighteen hundred dollars contributes a lot to a family of four. It is not a minimal amount.

It is time to axe the tax and spike the hike.

Business of Supply

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Calgary Nose Hill knows that I certainly agree with the need to address affordability issues for folks across the country, in her community and in mine. I believe that she is sincere in her interest in doing so. I know she would not feel that the rebates are sufficient when it comes to the price on pollution.

I would like to hear from her, though, about this. When it comes to addressing affordability, she knows, as do I, that the profits of the oil and gas industry have gone up astronomically over the last year. In fact, it was 18¢ a litre, an increase in profits from 24¢ to some 40-odd cents last year. There are no rebates attached to that gouging at the pump.

Would she not agree that more needs to be done to address affordability by looking at those excess profits and redirecting those to help Canadians afford day-to-day life?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, Canada is a cold, natural resource-based country that does not have major public transit options for many Canadians across the country. In fact, we do not even have an electric grid that works to plug electric cars in, so it is insane to increase a carbon tax that does not work, that does not meet Canada's emissions targets and that makes Canadians broke.

It is time to axe the tax and spike the hike.

• (1705)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a number of years ago, a former climate change minister said that, if someone repeats a lie often enough, people will believe that it is true. All through this discussion we have been hearing that Canadians get more from the carbon tax rebate than they pay in taxes. I keep on hearing that over and over again.

Can the member tell us how it is that Canadians can get more back, especially considering the bureaucrats have to crunch through and get their 15% off the top?

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for spiking the hike and axing the tax on that question. She knows that Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. They are going to food banks to get food. They cannot put fuel in their cars, never mind trying to save for an unaffordable home. That is why it is absolutely crazy to take the government's word. The government wants to be thanked for increasing a carbon tax that does not work.

Over two-thirds of Canadians know that it is time to spike the hike and axe the tax.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I simply had to rise.

I just heard my colleague talk about lying. I would like to hear them. Right now, it is the Conservatives who are spreading disinformation.

Once again, they tried to say that the carbon tax applies in Quebec, but it does not. We have a system that acts as an economic

lever with markets as big as California, the state of Washington and many others. In Quebec, it is an economic lever.

The Conservatives can say it until they are blue in the face, but it does not apply in Quebec.

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Mr. Speaker, many people across Quebec are struggling with rising rents, rising costs of food and lower standards of living. Part of that is also higher prices to fill their cars. A carbon tax does not make life more affordable. Conservatives will axe the tax and spike the hike.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for so eloquently reminding Canadians that common-sense Conservatives would spike the hike and axe the tax every step of the way.

Ronald Reagan once said, "When a business or an individual spends more than it makes, it goes bankrupt. When government does it, it sends you the bill. And...the bill comes in two ways: higher taxes and inflation. Make no mistake about it, inflation is a tax and not by accident."

After eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, Canadians are left with that bill, when they got 40-year highs in inflation due to the current government's doubling of the debt, which was supported by the NDP, that led to the most rapid interest rate hikes seen in Canadian history, and it is only getting worse. That also led to the doubling of rents and the doubling of mortgages. Now, it takes 25 years just to save up for a down payment on a house, when just before the current Prime Minister, one could pay off a mortgage in 25 years. That is what happens when we have a fiscally irresponsible Liberal-NDP government.

After eight years, more is going toward shelter costs off the hard-working Canadians' paycheques than ever before. In some cases now, because of the government's uncontrolled spending, it can be 60% to 80% off Canadians' paycheques every single month going into just housing costs. That is why today we are seeing students living under bridges and people with good-paying jobs having to live in their cars.

Business of Supply

Now, more than ever, people are going into food banks. In some cases, double-income-earning families are going into food banks because they cannot afford the cost of gas, groceries and home heating going up day by day because of this carbon tax scam. Groceries will be up another \$700 this year because the Liberal-NDP government is going to tax the farmers, the transporters and the retailers. What they do not understand is that at the end of the day, all those costs get passed down to the Canadians who are buying the food. Now, at food banks, we see empty shelves and long lineups. In fact, the lineups have now become so bad that the police have had to intervene, helping to hand out food and to control some of those lineups.

This is after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government. Many newcomers came to this country with the promise of the Canadian dream that they could afford a home, could afford to buy groceries and could have a safe future, but after eight years of the Liberal-NDP government, life has never cost so much. There is crime, chaos and disorder all over the streets, and the dream of home ownership is dead, especially for nine out of 10 young people, who will never be able to afford a home because of the current government's out-of-control spending.

In fact, this carbon tax scam does not give more back than what Canadians have to pay into it. That was proven by the Parliamentary Budget Officer in his reports, and yesterday, when he came to committee, he proved again that Canadians are poorer because of the carbon tax scam. In fact, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, on multiple occasions, proved that axing the tax would put a massive dent in the inflationary crisis we see today.

Of the current inflation number, 0.6 would be taken off overnight. For hard-working, struggling Canadians today, that means the Governor of the Bank of Canada could start lowering those interest rates sooner, which means interest rates for mortgages could go down and rents could go down. However, with the continuous spending and the ideological obsession with making sure they cause economic pain with no environmental gain by the Liberal-NDP government, Canadians do not see a hope for gas, groceries and fuel prices to come down. That is unfortunate.

There are two million Canadians going into food banks in a single month, and this year alone, a million more will go because of the cost of food. The Liberal-NDP government will do nothing to help that and will cause more pain to hard-working Canadians.

Of the newcomers, 84% say that they do not even know why they came here. That Canadian dream is a nightmare to them now. The hope of owning a home and the hope of having a safe future for their kids are gone, and on top of that, they cannot afford groceries. There are moms we hear about who are rationing their food and who are making sure their kids are fed but are having to starve themselves. I have been to those food banks where I have seen this happen.

• (1710)

In fact, when we talk about no environmental gain and all the economic pain, we do not have to look further than Alberta. The Liberal government says that people get more back in these phony rebates. On average, an Albertan family will pay \$2,900 into the

carbon tax scam. The rebate is \$2,000. There is a Liberal math joke in there somewhere because the numbers do not add up.

I remember the first time I ran for federal office. It was in 2019, and I went to the door of a single mom in a corner house with a for sale sign on it. I will never forget that conversation. I went to the door. I told her who I was and what our plan was. She told me to hang on and ran to get her Direct Energy bill. With tears in her eyes, she said that she had a for sale sign on her house because she used to work in oil and gas. She was a single mom and was laid off from her job, so she had to sell her house in order to feed her kids and to just survive. It was because of the anti-energy, anti-Alberta agenda of the Liberal-NDP government that she was laid off from her job.

She then showed me her Direct Energy bill and asked me what the carbon tax was. She had always heated her home, and she questioned why she was being punished for doing something she had always done. She could barely feed her kids, and they were just taking more and more money from her. That is exactly what the carbon tax scam is. It is more pain for everyday Canadians, with no environmental gains. The Liberal-NDP government's own environment department says it does not even track how many emissions go down because they cannot. It is a scam. It has been a scam all along.

Common-sense Conservatives will address the cost-of-living crisis by axing the tax, building the homes, fixing the budget and stopping the crime. In the meantime, we are going to continue to call on the ideologically obsessed, carbon tax-obsessed Liberal-NDP government to axe the tax, scrap the scam and spike the hike.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion.

[English]

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

• (1715)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I ask for a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 20, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

PRIVILEGE

PREMATURE DISCLOSURE OF BILL C-63

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to respond to a question of privilege raised by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle on February 26 regarding the alleged premature disclosure of the content of Bill C-63, the online harms act.

I would like to begin by stating that the member is incorrect in asserting that there has been a leak of the legislation, and I will outline a comprehensive process of consultation and information being in the public domain on this issue long before the bill was placed on notice.

Online harms legislation is something that the government has been talking about for years. In 2015, the government promised to make ministerial mandate letters public, a significant departure from the secrecy around those key policy commitment documents from previous governments. As a result of the publication of the mandate letters, reporters are able to use the language from these letters to try to telegraph what the government bill on notice may contain.

In the 2021 Liberal election platform, entitled “Forward. For Everyone”, the party committed to the following:

Introduce legislation within its first 100 days to combat serious forms of harmful online content, specifically hate speech, terrorist content, content that incites violence, child sexual abuse material and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. This would make sure that social media platforms and other online services are held accountable for the content that they host. Our legislation will recognize the importance of freedom of expression for all Canadians and will take a balanced and targeted approach to tackle extreme and harmful speech.

Strengthen the Canada Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code to more effectively combat online hate.

The December 16, 2021, mandate letter from the Prime Minister to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada asked the minister to achieve results for Canadians by delivering on the following commitment:

Continue efforts with the Minister of Canadian Heritage to develop and introduce legislation as soon as possible to combat serious forms of harmful online content to protect Canadians and hold social media platforms and other online services accountable for the content they host, including by strengthening the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code to more effectively combat online hate and reintroduce measures to strengthen hate speech provisions, including the re-enactment of the former Section 13 provision. This legislation should be reflective of the feedback received during the recent consultations.

Furthermore, the December 16, 2021, mandate letter from the Prime Minister to the Minister of Canadian Heritage also asked the minister to achieve results for Canadians by delivering on the following commitment:

Continue efforts with the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to develop and introduce legislation as soon as possible to combat serious forms of harmful online content to protect Canadians and hold social media platforms and other online services accountable for the content they host. This legislation should be reflective of the feedback received during the recent consultations.

As we can see, the government publicly stated its intention to move ahead with online harms legislation, provided information on its plan and consulted widely on the proposal long before any bill was placed on the Notice Paper.

Privilege

I will now draw to the attention of the House just how broadly the government has consulted on proposed online harms legislation.

Firstly, with regard to online consultations, from July 29 to September 25, 2021, the government published a proposed approach to address harmful content online for consultation and feedback. Two documents were presented for consultation: a discussion guide that summarized and outlined an overall approach, and a technical paper that summarized drafting instructions that could inform legislation.

● (1720)

I think it is worth repeating here that the government published a technical paper with the proposed framework for this legislation back in July 2021. This technical paper outlined the categories of proposed regulated harmful content; it addressed the establishment of a digital safety commissioner, a digital safety commission, regulatory powers and enforcement, etc.

Second is the round table on online safety. From July to November 2022, the Minister of Canadian Heritage conducted 19 virtual and in-person round tables across the country on the key elements of a legislative and regulatory framework on online safety. Virtual sessions were also held on the following topics: anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, women and gender-based violence, and the tech industry.

Participants received an information document in advance of each session to prepare for the discussion. This document sought comments on the advice from the expert advisory group on online safety, which concluded its meetings on June 10. The feedback gathered from participants touched upon several key areas related to online safety.

Third is the citizens' assembly on democratic expression. The Department of Canadian Heritage, through the digital citizen initiative, is providing financial support to the Public Policy Forum's digital democracy project, which brings together academics, civil society and policy professionals to support research and policy development on disinformation and online harms. One component of this multi-year project is an annual citizens' assembly on democratic expression, which considers the impacts of digital technologies on Canadian society.

The assembly took place between June 15 and 19, 2023, in Ottawa, and focused on online safety. Participants heard views from a representative group of citizens on the core elements of a successful legislative and regulatory framework for online safety.

Privilege

Furthermore, in March 2022, the government established an expert advisory group on online safety, mandated to provide advice to the Minister of Canadian Heritage on how to design the legislative and regulatory framework to address harmful content online and how to best incorporate the feedback received during the national consultation held from July to September 2021.

The expert advisory group, composed of 12 individuals, participated in 10 weekly workshops on the components of a legislative and regulatory framework for online safety. These included an introductory workshop and a summary concluding workshop.

The government undertook its work with the expert advisory group in an open and transparent manner. A Government of Canada web page, entitled “The Government’s commitment to address online safety”, has been online for more than a year. It outlines all of this in great detail.

I now want to address the specific areas that the opposition House leader raised in his intervention. The member pointed to a quote from a CBC report referencing the intention to create a new regulator that would hold online platforms accountable for harmful content they host. The same website that I just referenced states the following: “The Government of Canada is committed to putting in place a transparent and accountable regulatory framework for online safety in Canada. Now, more than ever, online services must be held responsible for addressing harmful content on their platforms and creating a safe online space that protects all Canadians.”

● (1725)

Again, this website has been online for more than a year, long before the bill was actually placed on notice. The creation of a regulator to hold online services to account is something the government has been talking about, consulting on and committing to for a long period of time.

The member further cites a CBC article that talks about a new regulatory body to oversee a digital safety office. I would draw to the attention of the House the “Summary of Session Four: Regulatory Powers” of the expert advisory group on online safety, which states:

There was consensus on the need for a regulatory body, which could be in the form of a Digital Safety Commissioner. Experts agreed that the Commissioner should have audit powers, powers to inspect, have the powers to administer financial penalties and the powers to launch investigations to seek compliance if a systems-based approach is taken—but views differed on the extent of these powers. A few mentioned that it would be important to think about what would be practical and achievable for the role of the Commissioner. Some indicated they were reluctant to give too much power to the Commissioner, but others noted that the regulator would need to have “teeth” to force compliance.

This web page has been online for months.

I also reject the premise of what the member for Regina—Qu’Appelle stated when quoting the CBC story in question as it relates to the claim that the bill will be modelled on the European Union’s Digital Services Act. This legislation is a made-in-Canada approach. The European Union model regulates more than social media and targets the marketplace and sellers. It also covers election disinformation and certain targeted ads, which our online harms legislation does not.

The member also referenced a CTV story regarding the types of online harms that the legislation would target. I would refer to the 2021 Liberal election platform, which contained the following areas as targets for the proposed legislation: “hate speech, terrorist content, content that incites violence, child sexual abuse material and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images.” These five items were the subject of the broad-based and extensive consultations I referenced earlier in my intervention.

Based on these consultations, a further two were added to the list to be considered. I would draw the attention of the House to an excerpt from the consultation entitled, “What We Heard: The Government’s proposed approach to address harmful content online”, which states, “Participants also suggested the inclusion of deep fake technology in online safety legislation”. It continues, “Many noted how child pornography and cyber blackmailing can originate from outside of Canada. Participants expressed frustration over the lack of recourse and tools available to victims to handle such instances and mentioned the need for a collaborative international effort to address online safety.”

It goes on to state:

Some respondents appreciated the proposal going beyond the Criminal Code definitions for certain types of content. They supported the decision to include material relating to child sexual exploitation in the definition that might not constitute a criminal offence, but which would nevertheless significantly harm children. A few stakeholders said that the proposal did not go far enough and that legislation could be broader by capturing content such as images of labour exploitation and domestic servitude of children. Support was also voiced for a concept of non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

● (1730)

It also notes:

A few respondents stated that additional types of content, such as doxing (i.e., the non-consensual disclosure of an individual’s private information), disinformation, bullying, harassment, defamation, conspiracy theories and illicit online opioid sales should also be captured by the legislative and regulatory framework.

This document has been online for more than a year.

I would also point to the expert advisory group’s “Concluding Workshop Summary” web page, which states:

They emphasized the importance of preventing the same copies of some videos, like live-streamed atrocities, and child sexual abuse, from being shared again. Experts stressed that many file sharing services allow content to spread very quickly.

It goes on to say:

Experts emphasized that particularly egregious content like child sexual exploitation content would require its own solution. They explained that the equities associated with the removal of child pornography are different than other kinds of content, in that context simply does not matter with such material. In comparison, other types of content like hate speech may enjoy Charter protection in certain contexts. Some experts explained that a takedown obligation with a specific timeframe would make the most sense for child sexual exploitation content.

It also notes:

Experts disagreed on the usefulness of the five categories of harmful content previously identified in the Government's 2021 proposal. These five categories include hate speech, terrorist content, incitement to violence, child sexual exploitation, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

Another point is as follows:

A few participants pointed out how the anonymous nature of social media gives users more freedom to spread online harm such as bullying, death threats and online hate. A few participants noted that this can cause greater strain on the mental health of youth and could contribute to a feeling of loneliness, which, if unchecked, could lead to self-harm.

Again, this web page has been online for more than a year.

The member further cites the CTV article's reference to a new digital safety ombudsperson. I would point to the web page of the expert advisory group for the "Summary of Session Four: Regulatory Powers", which states:

The Expert Group discussed the idea of an Ombudsperson and how it could relate to a Digital Safety Commissioner. Experts proposed that an Ombudsperson could be more focused on individual complaints *ex post*, should users not be satisfied with how a given service was responding to their concerns, flags and/or complaints. In this scheme, the Commissioner would assume the role of the regulator *ex ante*, with a mandate devoted to oversight and enforcement powers. Many argued that an Ombudsperson role should be embedded in the Commissioner's office, and that information sharing between these functions would be useful. A few experts noted that the term "Ombudsperson" would be recognizable across the country as it is a common term and [has] meaning across other regimes in Canada.

It was mentioned that the Ombudsperson could play more of an adjudicative role, as distinguished from...the Commissioner's oversight role, and would have some authority to have certain content removed off of platforms. Some experts noted that this would provide a level of comfort to victims. A few experts raised questions about where the line would be drawn between a private complaint and resolution versus the need for public authorities to be involved.

● (1735)

That web page has been online for months.

Additionally, during the round table on online safety and anti-Black racism, as the following summary states:

Participants were supportive of establishing a digital safety ombudsperson to hold social media platforms accountable and to be a venue for victims to report online harms. It was suggested the ombudsperson could act as a body that takes in victim complaints and works with the corresponding platform or governmental body to resolve the complaint. Some participants expressed concern over the ombudsperson's ability to process and respond to user complaints in a timely manner. To ensure the effectiveness of the ombudsperson, participants believe the body needs to have enough resources to keep pace with the complaints it receives. A few participants also noted the importance for the ombudsperson to be trained in cultural nuances to understand the cultural contexts behind content that is reported to them.

That web page has been online for more than a year.

Finally, I would draw the attention of the House to a Canadian Press article of February 21, 2024, which states, "The upcoming legislation is now expected to pave the way for a new ombudsperson to field public concerns about online content, as well as a new regulatory role that would oversee the conduct of internet platforms." This appeared online before the bill was placed on notice.

Mr. Speaker, as your predecessor reiterated in his ruling on March 9, 2021, "it is a recognized principle that the House must be the first to learn the details of new legislative measures." He went on to say, "...when the Chair is called on to determine whether there is a *prima facie* case of privilege, it must take into consideration the extent to which a member was hampered in performing their parlia-

Privilege

mentary functions and whether the alleged facts are an offence against the dignity of Parliament." The Chair also indicated:

When it is determined that there is a *prima facie* case of privilege, the usual work of the House is immediately set aside in order to debate the question of privilege and decide on the response. Given the serious consequences for proceedings, it is not enough to say that the breach of privilege or contempt may have occurred, nor to cite precedence in the matter while implying that the government is presumably in the habit of acting in this way. The allegations must be clear and convincing for the Chair.

The government understands and respects the well-established practice that members have a right of first access to the legislation. It is clear that the government has been talking about and consulting widely on its plan to introduce online harms legislation for the past two years. As I have demonstrated, the public consultations have been wide-ranging and in-depth with documents and technical papers provided. All of this occurred prior to the bill's being placed on notice.

Some of the information provided by the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is not even in the bill, most notably the reference to its being modelled on the European Union's Digital Services Act, which is simply false, as I have clearly demonstrated. The member also hangs his arguments on the usage of the vernacular "not authorized to speak publicly" in the media reports he cites. It is certainly not proof of a leak, especially when the government consulted widely and publicly released details on the content of the legislative proposal for years before any bill was actually placed on notice.

The development of the legislation has been characterized by open, public and wide-ranging consultations with specific proposals consulted on. This is how the Leader of the Opposition was able to proclaim, on February 21, before the bill was even placed on notice, that he and his party were vehemently opposed to the bill. He was able to make this statement because of the public consultation and the information that the government has shared about its plan over the last two years. I want to be clear that the government did not share the bill before it was introduced in the House, and the evidence demonstrates that there was no premature disclosure of the bill.

● (1740)

I would submit to the House that consulting Canadians this widely is a healthy way to produce legislation and that the evidence I have presented clearly demonstrates that there is no *prima facie* question of privilege. It is our view that this does not give way for the Chair to conclude that there was a breach of privilege of the House nor to give the matter precedence over all other business of the House.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RECONCILIATION ACT

BILL C-29—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Madam Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the consideration of the Senate amendments to Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is noted.

It being 5:42 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**PANDEMIC PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-293, An Act respecting pandemic prevention and preparedness, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is one motion in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-293. Motion No. 1 will be debated and voted upon.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved:

That Bill C-293 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

He said: Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to my report stage amendment to Bill C-293, the pandemic prevention and preparedness act. My amendment would delete clause 3 of the legislation for the simple reason that this section, if it were allowed to stay in the bill, would prevent the establishment of a transparent and independent review of Canada's COVID-19 response.

Instead, as currently written, it would establish an "advisory committee" that would report directly to the Minister of Health. In other words, the coach would be acting as referee, as the minister would be appointing those very people. Moreover, the legislation contains no requirement that the results of that advisory committee's review be tabled in Parliament or be made available to the public. This is simply unacceptable.

In the NDP's view, Canadians deserve a root-to-branch, dispassionate, independent and fully public assessment of the lessons learned throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada's New Democrats will not support any legislation that would prevent this. To be clear, our party strongly supports the other provisions out-

lined in the legislation. We believe that the Minister of Health should be required to establish a pandemic prevention and preparedness plan and appoint a national pandemic prevention and preparedness coordinator. If my amendment is adopted, New Democrats will support the legislation at third reading because it would preserve those valuable parts of the bill. However, if my amendment is blocked, we will not hesitate to vote against the bill.

It is important to note that the amendment at report stage would not have been necessary if the Conservatives and the Liberals had not joined forces at the Standing Committee on Health to block my motion to amend the bill to create an independent public inquiry to Canada's COVID-19 response. On October 23, 2023, I moved an amendment at the health committee to legally mandate that a COVID-19 inquiry, under the Inquiries Act, be launched within 90 days of Bill C-293's adoption.

Under the Inquiries Act, commissions of inquiry are established to impartially investigate issues of national importance and provide findings and recommendations. This is Canada's national legislation to get real answers to important public policy questions. Unlike the advisory committee proposed by clause 3 of the bill before us, however, commissions of inquiry have the power to subpoena witnesses, take evidence under oath, order production of documents and retain the services of technical advisers and experts. Hearings are held in public, and the commission's findings and recommendations are reported to the public.

Shockingly, however, the Conservatives sat on their hands and abstained on my amendment, allowing the Liberals, who voted against it, to effectively block such an inquiry. Interestingly, under the leadership of Erin O'Toole, the Conservative Party during the pandemic repeatedly called for an independent, expert-led public inquiry into Canada's COVID-19 response, and even currently they often criticize the way the federal government handled the COVID-19 inquiry, with many criticisms that the NDP shares. The Conservative Party pledged during the last election to call such an inquiry.

I can see why the Liberals would be reluctant to call an inquiry into their own government's COVID-19 response, but I find it rather difficult to understand why Conservatives colluded with them to block an independent inquiry into our country's response to the most severe pandemic in a century. Conservatives and Liberals joining a COVID collusion coalition, indeed. The Conservatives are fond of tossing around the word "coalition". Perhaps they can explain to Canadians why they joined in a COVID collusion coalition with the Liberals to block an independent COVID-19 inquiry.

Perhaps they decided to flip-flop on the need for an independent inquiry last fall because, at that time, former Reform Party leader Preston Manning was urging the federal Conservatives to weaponize the dubious findings of his highly politicized COVID review. While the Liberals want to provide the illusion of oversight and accountability with inadequate internal reviews as contained in this legislation, the Conservatives seem to want to play political games with partisan reports. New Democrats, for our part, want a full, fair, fearless and public COVID-19 inquiry led by independent experts. That is because the NDP believes Canadians deserve answers, and we will settle for no less.

● (1745)

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck Canada, all levels of government had to respond to keep Canadians safe. People have the right to know why decisions were taken, what mistakes were made and if their government acted appropriately. Throughout the pandemic, New Democrats identified the eventual need for a fully independent, comprehensive and penetrating review of Canada's COVID-19 preparedness response. To date, the Prime Minister has deferred questions about a COVID-19 inquiry, only saying that there will be a time for a “lessons learned” exercise someday in the future.

In September 2022, the former Liberal health minister noted that a government decision could come “soon” on what kind of review should be held. However, when asked if it should be independent, he would only say that a strong review is necessary.

With the emergency pandemic conditions behind us, the NDP believes it is unacceptable that the Liberals still have not called an independent review of Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Frankly, we are shocked that the Conservatives blocked one. Instead of papering over the federal government's inadequacies and failures, we must leave no stone unturned to learn from past mistakes and to prepare for future threats.

Many prominent public health and security experts have called for the federal government to launch an expert-led independent inquiry into Canada's COVID-19 response. For example, the British Medical Journal recently published a series that examined Canada's COVID-19 response, and it called for an independent national inquiry. The series' authors are experts across a diverse range of clinical and research areas. The picture that emerged from their review was an ill-prepared country with outdated data systems, poor coordination and cohesion, and blindness about its citizens' diverse needs.

The authors found that what ultimately saved Canada was a largely willing populace that withstood stringent public health measures and achieved among the world's highest levels of vaccination coverage voluntarily. In other words, Canadians stepped up during the COVID-19 pandemic while their governments faltered.

Major questions remain, including whether vaccine mandates were warranted, why infection-acquired immunity was ignored and why federal emergency preparedness was so inadequate. There are many more important questions that Canadians want answers to.

The British Medical Journal series outlined many reasons why an independent inquiry is needed in Canada. Here is the first:

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...failing to look to the past will ensure an unchanged future. Undoubtedly, lessons can be drawn to inform new health investments and preparedness, and much learning comes from decisions and actions that failed or faltered.

Positive lessons can also pave the way to a better future, when we can review what went right.

Second, lacking an independent federal inquiry allows others to step into the frame. For example, the so-called National Citizens Inquiry, launched by Preston Manning, has been fuelled by misinformation, ideology and conspiracy theories.

Third, an inquiry would help deliver on Canada's ambition to be a leader on the world stage, since domestic and global health security are linked.

Fourth, an inquiry would provide an actionable framework for reforming Canada's health care and public health systems, which were struggling prepandemic and are currently on life support.

Finally and most importantly, an inquiry would provide accountability for the nearly 60,000 direct deaths and five million cases of COVID in Canada that devastated families and left a legacy of long COVID for many in their wake.

New Democrats agree with the British Medical Journal. We are calling on the federal government to call an independent public inquiry into Canada's COVID-19 response without delay. For that reason, we are moving this amendment today and can only support this legislation if it is adopted.

We cannot accept an inadequate whitewash. Only a root-to-branch, fearless, comprehensive, thorough, public and independent COVID-19 inquiry will do in these circumstances. Canadians deserve no less. Only the NDP is standing in this House to demand that. That is what is fuelling this amendment today.

● (1750)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's remarks and the amendment. It follows from the debate we had at second reading. I was clear at second reading when I said that the core of this bill is the plan. We need legislation passed in this House to ensure that all future governments take every step possible to prepare for the next pandemic and, ideally, take steps to reduce pandemic risks to prevent the next pandemic.

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The review body, the advisory body, was not intended to have some searching, backward-looking accountability function. It was intended to ensure that experts come together to learn lessons and inform the plan.

In conversations with colleagues subsequently and even at second reading debate, I was clear that this was not a hill I was going to die on. The core of this is accountability to Parliament for every future government to ensure that every three to five years, which I said I was open to as an amendment too, the government comes back and tables the plan and improves the plan. This would ensure we are doing everything we can, knowing that the costs of prevention and preparedness pale in comparison to the human and economic costs, the costs we just lived through and the costs that our kids are likely to live through in relation to the next pandemic.

To be clear, I do not subscribe to all that my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway has said. I do not suggest that this is a whitewash. The idea was for experts to come together to inform a plan. However, I am nothing if not pragmatic, and I would like this bill to pass. I think it is incredibly important that the core of it passes and that we see serious thought go into a whole-of-government approach. We talked about that.

This bill sets out specific ministerial responsibilities to inform the plan. The bill is informed by and worked on by the intergovernmental platform on biodiversity and ecosystems and its report on preventing the next pandemic. It is informed by UNEP's report on preventing the next pandemic. It is informed by the Independent Panel's report on pandemic preparedness.

The core of this, the most important part of it, is that there is a plan in place, tabled in Parliament, to prepare for and prevent the next pandemic, that future governments ensure that plans are tabled to improve upon those efforts and that there be accountability to this House. It is not that PHAC and the government would do this work separately. There would be accountability to the Canadian public on an ongoing basis.

We know, having seen what took place post-SARS, that there was a lot of good work to make recommendations and some good work to implement those recommendations, although not fully and by no means completely, and then the public lost interest. We moved on to other things and were not as prepared as we could and should have been. This bill would remedy that. It would ensure that every future government takes these serious obligations as seriously as they should.

I certainly accept the amendment. I do not accept the characterization of the advisory body, but if removing the advisory body and that particular review is what it takes to get the core of the bill passed, that accountability to Parliament on a pandemic preparedness and prevention plan, then so be it. Let us get the amendment passed and let us get this bill to the Senate.

• (1755)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the common-sense Canadians in the reasonable riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to reveal what this private member's bill is really about. I oppose Bill C-293 because it seeks to cover up the repeated

failures by the government during the pandemic. I do not believe it is the intention of the member for Beaches—East York to cover up his party's gross incompetence, but if passed, that would be the effect of this bill.

As more Canadians are forced to attend political re-education camps, they are only learning that intention does not matter, only effect. Similarly, I do not think it was the intention of the member to perpetuate harmful racist stereotypes about people who live in China, but this bill does have that effect. Thankfully, I have not been forced to attend a Marxist re-education program yet. That is why I still believe the intention does matter a great deal.

It is clear the intention of the member for Beaches—East York was to have the federal government undergo a critical examination of how it managed the pandemic, then use that knowledge to inform the next pandemic plan. We have all heard the calls for an independent public inquiry or a royal commission into the handling of the pandemic, but this does not do that.

Instead, this bill would have the Minister of Health appoint a committee of gender-balanced advisors. These hand-picked Liberal advisors would review not just the federal government's actions, but also the actions of provincial and municipal governments. Bargaining into provincial jurisdiction seems to be a favourite pastime of the NDP-Liberal coalition. It also has the added bonus effect of diluting any possible criticisms that could come from a report prepared by people selected by the health minister.

That the member for Beaches—East York felt the need to bring forward this bill is a scathing rebuke of the NDP-Liberal government. Despite repeated assurances during the pandemic that the government would conduct an independent review, the Liberal member had so little confidence in his own government that he had to try to pass a law to get them to act responsibly.

At the same time, the Liberal cabinet had so little confidence in its caucus that even while this bill was before committee last October, the health minister was conducting a secret review. When journalist Paul Wells asked the government in November if there was a secret pandemic review, the government stonewalled him. If not for the Order Paper question put forth by the member for Yorkton—Melville, it is likely this secret pandemic review would never have come to light.

Fortunately, Canadians do not have to wait for the Liberals to release results of their secret pandemic review. The United States National Institutes of Health conducted a review of Canada's pandemic response. Here is what it wrote:

In comparison with its southern neighbors in the Americas, namely the United States and Mexico, the Canadian experience appears to have been a relative success. However, comparisons with exemplars during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as Australia, New Zealand and South Korea, highlight shortcomings in Canada's pandemic preparedness and responses.

The British Medical Journal conducted a review in 2023. Here is what it found:

Experts found that lessons from the 2003's SARS-CoV-1 outbreak had not been heeded and Canada's governments and health authorities were ill-prepared for Covid-19, with fragmented health leadership hindering a coordinated response.

That quote from the journal of medicine really underscores a major problem with this bill. The 2003 SARS outbreak was supposed to be the wake-up call. It was the catalyst for creating the Public Health Agency of Canada. There was a pandemic plan in place, just as this bill calls for. There was an international pandemic surveillance unit, just as this bill calls for, except the Liberals gutted the surveillance unit to focus on flavoured vaping.

They ignored the existing pandemic plan and decades of emergency management practices, which brings us to this legislation. If all this bill was proposing was to have the health minister appoint some advisors and draw up a plan, it would already be moot. The minister already has the authority to appoint advisors and has already done so in secret. The government already has the authority to draw up a pandemic preparedness plan. If the government already has all the powers it needs, what is this bill really about?

Earlier I mentioned that this bill reinforces harmful racist stereotypes. With its focus on regulating agriculture and putting limits on land use to prevent urbanization, it reinforces the racist "wet market" theory. Despite the fact that the Wuhan Institute of Virology was conducting research on coronavirus carried by bats, which scientists had collected and brought back to Wuhan, many still believe the virus crossed multiple species at a live animal market.

• (1800)

For too many, it was easier to believe that people who reside in China live, work and shop for food in unsanitary conditions. These outdated stereotypes risk blinding us to the growing threat of bioterror and biowarfare.

For all of human history, the viruses which sought to kill us have been the kind which cross species, but we do not live in that world anymore. We live in a world of low-cost gene editing. The rapid development of mRNA shots illustrates just how powerful biotechnology has become, yet the bill is entirely silent on the most likely source of the next deadly pandemic. Instead, the bill seeks to use pandemic preparation as a pretext to advance the progressive ideological agenda, a communist manifesto.

The bill calls for new regulations on farming. It would grant the minister the power to shut down any type of animal farming deemed high risk. Say good-bye to the chicken and pork industries in Canada.

Before my Liberal colleagues begin screaming disinformation, I would encourage them to compare what subparagraph 4(2)(i)(ii) says versus subparagraph 4(2)(i)(iv). Subparagraph (ii) calls for the regulation of commercial activities, including industrial animal farming. Subparagraph (iv) says that any farming involving "high-risk species" is to be phased out. Nowhere does the bill define what

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a high-risk species is, but a reasonable person could assume that any species that has previously been the source of a deadly virus would be a high risk. There is a big difference between regulating risk and phasing out risk.

If the member were truly concerned about the pandemic risk of productive farming practices, he could have brought together farmers and scientists to come up with legislation to reduce risk. However, that is not the goal of the Liberal vegan base. They want to phase out livestock farming altogether. Using people's fears of another pandemic to push that agenda is diabolical. However, that is the difference between a Conservative vegan and a Liberal one. The Conservative vegans just want affordable fruits and vegetables for themselves, while the Liberal ones seek to impose their vegetables on everybody else.

For the record, not all far-left radical socialists are vegan. That is why the bill also calls for measures to promote "alternative proteins".

Alternative protein is just a far-left dog whistle that means crickets. What is it with the far-left and their desire to have us all eat bugs? First they claimed we would have to eat bugs because of overpopulation. When that did not pan out, they seized on climate change and claimed that crickets produce fewer greenhouse gases per pound of protein, all the while portraying cows as climate criminals. Now, they are using the threat of future pandemics to phase out pork and poultry, while pushing their favourite alternative protein. Canadians are not biting; they see through this pretense.

What Canadians do not see is any real accountability from this government for the decisions taken during the pandemic.

With the member for Beaches—East York's reputation for independence within one of the most servile Liberal caucuses I have ever seen, it is easy to imagine the bill may have started out seeking real accountability. Unfortunately, the only contribution to pandemic preparedness the publication of the bill achieves is to increase the nation's supply of tissue paper. It would give powers to the health minister that the health minister already has. It seeks an advisory committee the minister has already appointed in secret. It reinforces the racist stereotypes of people living in China. It is a power grab for opponents of modern farming. It remains completely silent on the increasing risk that the next pandemic could originate in a laboratory.

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At best, the bill is ineffectual. At worst, it opens an avenue for more regulation of land use and seeks to phase out modern farming. It may have been the intention of the member to use the bill to prepare Canada for the next pandemic, but the effect of the bill is to advance a far-left agenda while blinding us to the growing threat of bioterror. The bill is not worth the cost to Canadians.

● (1805)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think the amendment of my—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order.

[English]

The hon. member has the floor, and I would ask members to please be respectful and allow him to do his speech without interruption.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Montcalm.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, after these speeches, it seems to me that the amendment of my colleague from Vancouver Kingsway is even more necessary. After 6.5 million deaths worldwide and 45,000 deaths across Canada, we must avoid partisan perspectives at all costs.

Throughout the work that was done by the Standing Committee on Health during the management of the pandemic, my colleagues—some of whom are here in the House—were able to see that the Bloc Québécois was always trying to find solutions, to elevate the debate, to set partisanship aside, not just to find out who was at fault. The Bloc Québécois tried to find solutions, to ensure that we are all responsible for what happens and to make sure that it never happens like that again.

In that sense, I do not understand why the members opposite are resistant to an independent public inquiry. First, I would like to remind them that there was a bit of a ruckus on Wellington Street at one point. There was a bit of a crisis of confidence. Public health is mass medicine, and the patient must be willing to participate if it is to work. As soon as the patient loses confidence in the measures being taken to remedy the situation, we are not in the right place and we are in trouble. If, in order to restore confidence, there had to be an objective, independent review, totally free of the interests of the executive, it seems to me that this would go a long way to reaching all those who are experiencing a crisis of confidence in our institutions.

In that sense, I totally agree with what my NDP colleague from Vancouver Kingsway said. The Bloc Québécois worked in committee to replace clause 3, as my colleague's amendment proposes. At the outset, when we received the bill, we did not really understand why people disliked it so much. I felt it bothered everyone, both the members opposite and those on this side of the House. Obviously, setting up an advisory committee made no sense to us. There are so many advisory committees. However, a crisis of this magnitude deserves an independent public inquiry so that the commissioners can get to the bottom of this.

Now, we thought the Conservatives were on our side. It would have been interesting if the Conservative Party had joined forces with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP given that there is a minority government in place. We could have replaced this first part of the bill. However, that did not happen. I should note that when we received the bill, our Conservative friends were not as high in the polls. I do not want to say anything else about partisanship, because my comments could be described as partisan. It seems that once people realize they are likely to end up on the other side, they are reluctant to let go and leave it to others, who are impervious to their influence, to set the record straight. In all honesty, our Conservative friends do not care much about facts.

● (1810)

That said, the Bloc Québécois will certainly be voting against the bill as it stands. We had a number of concerns about the prevention plan. It seems to me that it goes without saying that we need a prevention plan. In fact, tools exist for that. All we need is competent people, resources that will not be squandered and cuts that are not made in the wrong place.

What happened? We have some answers. We have the Auditor General's report and the results of a few small investigations. We have some answers. However, one question begs an answer above all others. Keep in mind what the government did a month before Parliament shut down. It sent 19 tonnes of personal protective equipment to China even though it was sorely lacking here, and even though the national stockpile was exhausted. If that is not a mistake, I do not know what is. However, what interests me is not who made the mistake. What interests me is why it was made. I do not care about the "who" of the matter, but the "how". At some point, an independent public inquiry is what we need to identify why and how it happened, and make sure these kinds of things never happen again.

What happened with the internationally touted Global Public Health Intelligence Network? These are the people we expect to raise the red flag when various pandemics and epidemics break out around the world. In an interdependent world like ours, where borders are becoming increasingly porous, it makes perfect sense to have a state service like that identify dangers based on scientific observation.

I remember the first meetings we had with public health officials, where we were told that there was little chance of it leaving mainland China and coming here. There was little chance, they said, and we had no reason to contradict them. I remember in the early days we had debates about whether it was an epidemic or a pandemic. It did not take long before it became a pandemic, it became global and it became a nightmare. When I say that it became a nightmare, my heart aches for all those who experienced it first-hand, who lost loved ones, who were forced into lockdown, who had their lives restricted with repeated lockdowns in order to protect health care systems that were not robust enough to continue functioning. It affected every aspect of our society.

Another thing that comes to mind is the chaotic management of the borders. Quarantines and borders are a federal responsibility. Why did the mayor of Montreal have to go to Pierre Elliott Trudeau airport to try and pass on information so that people would have what they needed to deal with this pandemic? It was ridiculous.

In short, we will never accept this bill without this amendment. We also think that the federal government needs to stay in its lane. I think it has a lot of work to do in its own areas of jurisdiction to be able to better manage any future pandemics.

* * *

• (1815)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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: Bill C-57, an act to implement the 2023 free trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine.

* * *

[English]

PANDEMIC PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-293, An Act respecting pandemic prevention and preparedness, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of Motion No. 1.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to my support for Bill C-293, an act respecting pandemic prevention and preparedness.

Allow me to begin by recognizing and thanking the exceptional efforts of various health centres, health care workers, and compassionate individuals and organizations in my riding of Richmond Hill to safeguard the health and safety of Canadians throughout COVID-19.

First, I would like to recognize the efforts of long-term care health centres, notably Mariann Home in Richmond Hill, for their unwavering protection of our seniors and vulnerable community members during the pandemic. It is truly commendable that not a single long-term care facility in Richmond Hill lost a resident to the pandemic, which is a testament to their vigilance.

Second, I would like to recognize the immense contributions of our health care heroes, the doctors, nurses and workers, at the Mackenzie Health hospital in Richmond Hill and the dedicated

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team of health care professionals at Richmond Green facility, which was pivotal in administering vaccines across the community during the pandemic.

Third, I would like to thank the great compassion and generosity demonstrated by Richmond Hill residents and organizations, such as the New Canadian Community Centre and Canada China Trade Innovation Alliance, which donated personal protective equipment, masks and other supplies to hospitals and care centres across Canada.

Last but not least, I would like to recognize and thank all of our frontline workers who confronted high risks of COVID-19 exposure to continue providing critical, everyday services for our communities. These are our grocery store workers, police and firefighters, public transportation workers, small business owners, and social service workers.

I am so proud to speak of all the commendable efforts and hard work within the Richmond Hill community in safeguarding the health and safety of Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their contributions have inspired and guided our government's response over the last four years to the largest public health emergency we have experienced over the last 100 years.

I am also pleased to note that, as a member of the Standing Committee on Health, I had the opportunity to study the clauses of this bill in depth to ensure it would provide the best outcomes in protecting the health and safety of Canadians in preparation for future public health emergencies.

With all that being said, I am speaking to this bill today because it intends to achieve what has become particularly important to our government and to Canadians since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is how we can deliver a system, in collaboration with provinces, territories, and health care partners, that would work to effectively prevent and prepare Canada for future pandemics.

Allow me to begin now to outline the three requirements that Bill C-293 would establish for the Minister of Health to create a strong federal response and preparedness plan. First, it would establish an expert review of Canada's COVID-19 response. Second, it would develop and regularly update a pandemic prevention and preparedness plan. Third, it would appoint a national pandemic prevention and preparedness coordinator to oversee and implement the plan.

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The first requirement would be to establish an advisory committee to review Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic within 90 days of the act coming into force. The government has benefited from and taken actions in response to various reviews and assessments on Canada's pandemic response, including a number of COVID-19-related reports from the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. For example, based on lessons learned, the Public Health Agency of Canada has made progress on strengthening public health assessments and early warnings of public health threats, managing Canada's national emergency strategic stockpile of medical assets, and improving the collection, access, sharing and use of public health data in collaboration with provinces and territories.

These are just a few examples of where advancements have been made in addressing recommendations for improvement that would equip Canada to deal with future public health events more effectively and achieve better health outcomes for all Canadians.

● (1820)

I will now touch on the second and third requirements. The second requirement that the Bill sets out is for the Minister of Health to establish a pandemic prevention and preparedness plan within two years of coming into force. The development of a pandemic prevention and preparedness plan must leverage existing plans, recognize and address jurisdictional implications, and allow for a flexible, adaptable approach to emergency response and preparedness efforts, as every pandemic is different.

Lastly, the third requirement would be the appointment of a national pandemic prevention and preparedness coordinator. Their role would be to coordinate the previously mentioned activities under this proposed act. The Public Health Agency of Canada is currently working with key partners to incorporate lessons and practical application from the COVID-19 experience in Canada and internationally to support a robust approach to managing future health emergencies, including testing and updating preparedness plans.

It is also important to keep in mind that we must continue to work closely with provinces and territories, which are at the forefront of the health system in Canada and are responsible for implementing public health interventions within their jurisdictions.

Before concluding, allow me to touch on a key component of this bill, which is the adoption of a One Health approach. One Health recognizes that integrating science and expertise on human, animal, and environmental health is essential to understanding, preventing and responding to pandemics. To protect our own health, we must recognize how intertwined it is with the health of animals and the environment. This has been a very important concern of my constituents in Richmond Hill.

We fully support this approach, as it is one that is based on science and evidence. This has been integrated by the Public Health Agency of Canada into all its activities, thus helping to preserve the well-being of humans, animals and the ecosystem we all share.

In closing, protecting the health and safety of Canadians remains a top priority for our government in both the short and long term. This includes ensuring preparedness for future pandemics and glob-

al health events. That is why we are supportive in principle of several key elements underpinning this proposed legislation.

Once again, I thank the House for the opportunity to discuss Bill C-293 and highlight what the government is doing regarding pandemic prevention and preparedness.

● (1825)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise to speak to Bill C-293 from my friend across the way. I think the last time I spoke to this bill, I was suggesting some slogans for his leadership campaign, but I continue to wish him very well in all of his personal endeavours. He did very well, although he did not take my advice to go with the slogan I suggested at the time.

I do, more seriously, want to recall and build on some comments I made in my last intervention on this bill regarding the impact the pandemic has had on our communities and the need to seriously reckon with some of the challenges that have resulted from that.

The last time I spoke in the House on this bill, I said that I wanted to conclude by saying that I am very concerned about some of the social and cultural impacts of this pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, we were already seeing trends where there was a breakdown of traditional community and greater political polarization. People were less likely to be involved in neighbourhood and community organizations, community leagues, faith organizations and those kinds of things, which were becoming more polarized along political lines. Those existing trends were dramatically accelerated through the pandemic, when the restrictions made it difficult for people to gather together in the kind of traditional community structures that had existed previously, and we have seen a heightened political polarization with people being divided on the basis of their views on masks and their vaccination status.

As we evaluate what happened during the pandemic, and this is more of a cultural work than a political work, we need to think about how we can bring our communities back together, reconcile people across these kinds of divides and try to rebuild the kinds of communities we had previously where people would put aside politics and were willing to get together and focus on what united them.

Over the last two weeks, with the exception of some arrive scam hearings that brought us to Ottawa, most of us were in our constituencies connecting with our constituents. I had a number of round tables and discussions with my constituents. It has really come to the fore again and again, as I have talked to people since the pandemic, how the failures of government during the pandemic impacted trust in government decision-making and, indeed, trust in our institutions. It would be desirable for people to be able to trust our institutions, but that trust has to be earned. Government policy-makers and public institutions cannot demand trust simply by virtue of the positions they hold. They have to earn that trust by demonstrating themselves to be trustworthy.

For many Canadians, the pandemic was a demonstration that institutions they had trusted were not as effective as they had thought they would be and were not defending their concerns or their interests. People were affected by the pandemic in various ways. They were, of course, forced apart from each other. They were also impacted by draconian policies that demonized people and punished people for personal health choices.

This has not just affected that moment in time. It is not just something that happened in the past during the pandemic and is now over. There have been profound consequences in social trust as a result of those events, and it was a result of the fact that the government was not prepared for this.

In the years before the pandemic started, in the years leading up to it, the government was not attending to the appropriate stockpiles of materials. Then the government madly thrashed around, giving different advice, such as saying one should not mask and then that one should mask. Initially, the public health authority said that masking was counterproductive and then reversed that recommendation. Initially, we were told to take any available vaccine, and then we were told to actually take these ones as opposed to those ones.

● (1830)

There was inconsistency, and I think a lack of humility, in the kinds of pronouncements that were made by governing authorities. This has affected social trust in significant ways, and understandably so.

We had an exchange on this specific point recently, during the break, at the public accounts committee, where, in the process of Conservatives criticizing aspects of government decisions, a Liberal member said we should not do that because that is impacting social trust. Our view is that government institutions have to earn trust, and it is our job as the opposition to hold them accountable for their failures.

Therefore, it is through accountability, through honest reckoning with the failures of government and other public institutions, that we are able to come to the kind of reconciliation that is required. I do think there is a stock-taking required. Although Conservatives do not support this bill because there are some significant problems in the way the proposed reviews are structured, as my colleagues have pointed out, there is a need for a fulsome and independent reckoning. The government failed in so many different ways in the course of its management of the pandemic and the kinds of decisions it made throughout.

In my own constituency, from conversations I have, people now struggle to believe anything they hear from the government or any other kind of official institution because of how badly betrayed they felt by the inconsistencies and the demonization that happened during the pandemic. We need to have a government that does its job, that plans for crises effectively and that understands its responsibility to earn the trust of Canadians rather than demand the trust of Canadians. Governments ought to try to earn people's trust through the work they do.

At the same time I think about the kinds of processes that should happen for investigations of this nature, and they require authentic

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independence. We see over and over again with the government that, when it wants us to be looking at or investigating some kind of issue, it always wants that investigation to be something where it can control the outcome. We are dealing with this issue, for instance, in the government's approach to the arrive scam scandal.

Every independent investigation has been extremely critical of government procurement. The government has now said it is going to have an internal investigation within CBSA by an investigator who is within and reports to the chain of command within CBSA. Inevitably, that is a process that can be controlled by the government, and the people who should be held accountable through that process actually cannot be held accountable effectively because the investigator is part of that internal structure. Again, we see a process proposed in this private member's bill that has similar obvious kinds of flaws.

To review the key points, the government failed profoundly during the pandemic. It contradicted itself and spent a great deal of money on matters that were not pandemic related. We saw it, in the early days of the pandemic, pursue this horrifying power grab, trying to seize on the worry that existed at the beginning of the pandemic, saying it wanted to have the power to effectively make law without Parliament. Conservatives pushed back and put a stop to that. Then we saw how it tried to use the circumstances of the pandemic to create division and conflict within this country at the expense of certain Canadians who were making certain choices.

There is a need for a reckoning, but it has to be an honest reckoning. We need a government that is prepared to do the work to rebuild trust, not a government, like the Liberals, that continually fails Canadians yet demands their faith and trust in spite of all these failures. We need a government that is honest with Canadians and works to get things done for their good.

● (1835)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to join this debate on this private member's bill, Bill C-293.

There are a lot of conversations going around now about how a different approach to the pandemic would have looked. I want to go back a little and talk about how the pandemic did evolve, what the decisions by government were and how we should have a review of that. However, that review cannot be done by one of the Prime Minister's ski buddies. As my colleague, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, said, it needs to be a transparent review.

It was not too long ago that Canadians were not able to come together to celebrate Christmas or Easter. I remember Canadians were not able to celebrate birthdays or funerals with one another or with family. That happened so quickly. It drove a wedge between Canadians. That is what the Prime Minister is so very good at, wedging and dividing Canadians. That is what we saw with the government's approach during the pandemic.

We saw the government stigmatize people who made different health choices. We saw people who were literally not able to travel. We saw people who wanted to work but due to a personal health choice were unable to go to work. Therefore, they were fired and were unable to support their families.

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I think we learned a lot through the process of the pandemic. Coming out of it on the other end, where we are now, I believe Canadians would never go back and agree to the decisions that were made over that period of time. We did have a review of the approach the government took, and it was found that the use of the Emergencies Act was unconstitutional. The constitutional rights of Canadians were broken by the government.

How can we then have the same government put people in charge of doing yet another review? Trust has been broken. That is something that takes a long time to build back. There are so many things that happened during the months of the pandemic. We are now seeing that money was flying out the door, whether it be through CERB or CEBA, and how that money was allocated inappropriately.

The flagship of inappropriate spending that we see right now is the arrive scam app. Literally, a two-person company was given \$20 million of taxpayers' money, and it did not have any IT expertise. It is unbelievable, as we are looking at some of this.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: It was millions from Harper too.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, my colleague, the current member for Winnipeg North, who is in trouble in his riding, is trying to get in as many words as possible. It is interesting that every time he thinks something is inappropriate, he says "Stephen Harper". I actually feel quite bad for the member for Winnipeg North, because former prime minister Stephen Harper has been living rent-free in this guy's head for years, and we know how expensive rent is right now. It must be nice for Mr. Harper to have that ability. There is a fair bit of room there, so I think he would be quite comfortable.

It does come down to what the Liberals say time and time again. If something goes wrong, they say, "Stephen Harper did it differently." I guarantee that Stephen Harper would have done the pandemic differently. There would not have been billions of dollars spent on things that did not need to be done. The allocation of funds to Liberal friends would not have happened—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that he does not have the floor. Therefore, he should not be making any comments. If he wishes to speak, he can look to be added to the list at some point. At this point, he should just be listening.

The hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

● (1840)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, it is true that things would have been done very differently if there had been a Conservative government that had the opportunity to govern during the pandemic. Perhaps people would have been able to go to funerals. I know other countries did take a different approach. We can see that people had the ability to do some of those things in different countries, like Sweden, while we did not have the opportunity to be with our loved ones—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Those were provincial.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Madam Speaker, the member said that was provincial and I hear that, but I remember we lost my uncle. At

my uncle's funeral, when we listened to the eulogies, I listened to them in the truck, because there were only a few people allowed in the church. I believe Canadians never want to get back to a point like that.

We do agree that there have to be more reviews done. They have to be done fairly, and we have to know who is going to be doing them. Like I said earlier, we did talk about how the constitutionality of the Emergencies Act was challenged. It was done by an independent body, and that review came back and said the Emergencies Act was invoked and it broke the constitutional rights of Canadians. Those are the things we need to really come together on and say they should never happen again.

People's bank accounts were frozen in this country because they donated \$25 or bought a T-shirt to support a movement. That is not the Canada I want my three kids to grow up in. I think we are better than that, and we should always be vigilant and stand on guard to make sure things like that never happen again.

We talked about what happened with the spending, and my Liberal colleague from Winnipeg North was talking about spending the millions and billions of dollars. How many people made a lot of money during the pandemic who did not have the ability to follow through on contracts? I can think of several. They talk about being there for Canadians and having Canadians' backs. A big chunk of the spending, billions of dollars of COVID spending, was never spent on COVID programs. It was not spent at all on COVID programs, so there should be an audit of finance during COVID as well, because I think we have only hit the tip of the iceberg when it comes to programs like the arrive scam app.

We should not forget that it is not just about the money when it comes to the arrive scam app. Tens of thousands of people were forced by the government to quarantine who never should have had to. The failure of that app was not just the millions of dollars of taxpayers' money that was wasted. It was that it actually took away some more rights and freedoms of Canadians. They had to quarantine, miss work and not be with their kids for no reason at all.

There are a lot more of these funds and this spending that happened during COVID-19 that we really should take a look at, and I cannot wait to see what happens when we are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. I do have to interrupt. The hon. member will have two minutes and 50 seconds the next time this matter is before the House, because 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.

[Translation]

Pursuant to order made on Monday, March 18, the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Government Business No. 37.

[English]

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

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[English]

RIGHT HON. BRIAN MULRONEY

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 37, Mrs. Carol Hughes in the chair)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith: Madam Chair, I rise on a point of order.

In accordance with Standing Order 43(2)(a), I would ask that all periods of debate for Liberal members be divided in two.

The Deputy Chair: Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how the proceedings will unfold.

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes. Speeches are not subject to a question and comment period.

Pursuant to order made on Monday, March 18, members may divide their time with another member, and the Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent.

[Translation]

We will now begin tonight's take-note debate.

[English]

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That this committee pay tribute to the late Right Honourable Brian Mulroney.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is hard to know where to begin to properly honour the extraordinary legacy of the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney. He was the member of Parliament for Central Nova, the community that I now represent, when I was born, having filled in during a by-election after he became leader, before ascending to the Prime Minister's Office. We both attended StFX University, something that he remained very proud of up until the very end.

There is no shortage of accomplishments during Mr. Mulroney's tenure as Prime Minister of Canada, and they have been well canvassed over the past number of days. He was never one to shy away from celebrating them himself, having said, "You cannot name a Canadian prime minister who has done as many significant things as I did, because there are none."

When one canvasses the many accomplishments, it is hard to argue with the extraordinary record. Of course, his leadership on the environment is well known and simply of another time, when great things never seemed to escape his ability to get them done.

I think about the work that he did to literally save the ozone layer, the negotiations to finalize the acid rain treaty and, of course, taking a principled stand against the racism and discrimination

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against the majority population of South Africa, having helped advance the end of the apartheid regime and free Nelson Mandela from Robben Island.

Of course, he is well known to have helped secure a growing economy, with the free trade agreement—

• (1845)

The Deputy Chair: I am sorry. I want to just ask the hon. member to remove the paper that is on the microphone, because it is a bit of a problem. I appreciate that.

I would ask all members to be very mindful of the microphones and, as well, of their phones, to make sure that they are on silent mode and that they are not vibrating, because it does interfere with the interpreters.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Madam Chair, of course, as an Atlantic Canadian and a Nova Scotian, his contributions to our region cannot be understated. He helped found the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the regional development agency for Atlantic Canada. I happened to be present during the Atlantic Economic Forum, which we helped co-found at our shared alma mater of StFX, where the current Prime Minister actually presented the constating documents for the organization to Mr. Mulroney, who immediately agreed they should be stored in the desk that he had in his office, which is now safely secured at the replica of the Prime Minister's Office in Centre Block, on campus at St. Francis Xavier University.

My experience with him over the last number of years created an opportunity to watch the man work, and the advice he provided to me is something that will last a lifetime. We initially met over our shared work to advance the creation of the Institute of Government in his name at StFX University, but over the years we became closer as we worked to develop the Atlantic Economic Forum. I never came to understand why he showed an interest in a Liberal MP from Nova Scotia, but he seemed to take some interest in the shared priority of advancing the well-being of Atlantic Canada. We were able to pull off this extraordinary event, and he continues to leave a lasting mark through the work that they have done on campus in the institute that bears his name.

What is fascinating to me is not just his lack of reticence but his open embrace of working with people from different partisan persuasions to serve the interest of Canadians, whether it was his help to negotiate the more recent version of NAFTA, whether it was the work we were able to do in our community, or whether it is the countless stories we have heard from members on different sides of the aisle of taking those phone calls and providing that friendly advice.

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However, in addition to the professional accomplishments and attitude he took towards his work, the personal experience when one got to know the man was simply a privilege to experience. The many phone calls I would make, he would answer, and the many phone calls he would make to me just to check in were most appreciated. He seemed to take an interest not just in my career trajectory or the policies but in my well-being, having gotten to know my family, my sisters, my parents and my children.

Every time we would speak, he would ask how the kids were doing, making sure they were healthy. He kept an interest to see how my family and my wife were dealing with the challenges of being in political life, because he knew the impact all too well. After the Atlantic Economic Forum, he actually took the time to visit my family at my parents' house in Merigomish, Nova Scotia, just to say "thank you" for the opportunities they created to have a family of young people who want to give back. This is the kind of person he was. The personal touch is something I will remember forever.

However, when I think about the impact he has had, as extraordinary as it has been, the impact he is going to continue to have through his inspiration of future generations is nothing to sneeze at. The generations of young people who are gaining an education at StFX University through the Institute of Government are going to continue to have an impact for years to come. They are going to fill senior roles in leadership, in government, in politics, as he did.

He famously quipped, during a debate in this chamber, that a questioner from the opposing side was at a severe disadvantage, because at the time he was the only one of the foremost senior officers in Parliament, in both the House of Commons and the Senate, who was not educated at StFX. This attitude and affinity he had for our shared alma mater is something that is going to help inspire a generation of young people to fill those senior leadership roles in the days and years ahead.

If there is one lesson that I take from the gracious generosity he showed me and my family, it is that we have to take a long view when we are understanding what to spend our time on. Time is the only currency that we have in politics, and we have to use it for public good and not to become popular. As he said, "If your only objective is to become popular, you're going to be popular, but you will be known at the Prime Minister who achieved nothing." Instead, he reminded us, including at a speech as recently as last year in Nova Scotia, when he said, "History is only concerned with the big ticket items that have shaped the future of Canada." This is a lesson that I hope to take to my work every day. We should all be inspired by his example to focus on those big-ticket items, that we are going to do service to our constituents, to our communities and to our country.

To the Mulroney family, I want to say "thank you". My community is better for his service and contribution to public life, and Canada will forever be in his debt.

May he rest in peace.

• (1850)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Chair, it is a real honour to rise in the House to honour Brian Mulroney, who in ev-

ery interaction I ever had with him, was a compassionate, intelligent and caring human being.

I first met Mr. Mulroney when I had just graduated from law school and I went to Florida with my friend Jonathan Cohen. We were in Palm Beach, and Brian Mulroney was taking a walk down the path. The two of us saw the former prime minister, went up to him and told him that we were from Montreal. He looked at me and said, "Anthony Housefather, how are things going at Alliance Québec?" I was the president of this volunteer organization, and he knew who I was from having read about me once in the newspaper. That was how incredible this man's mind was and how sharp he was. He stopped and took 20 minutes to talk to me and my friend on the path in Palm Beach. That was so meaningful to me as a young lawyer. He offered advice and mentorship.

Throughout his later career, when he went back to the practice of law at Ogilvy Renault, now Norton Rose, there were various times when we would get to speak to him. Each and every time, he offered such insight and compassion, and he was so interested in everything we were all doing. He would remember the things we would tell him about our lives, our families, what we were interested in and what our hopes were, and he would repeat them back to us the next time we saw him.

He so loved to talk about his family members. He was so proud of them, whether it was his wife Mila, who he loved so dearly; Mark, who I know better than the other Mulroneys and who I think is a great and incredible guy; Ben; Caroline; or Nicolas. He was so proud of his family, and he had the right to be because they all emerged to be exemplary citizens of Canada.

Brian Mulroney was such a good person. The reason I wanted to get up today is because so many Canadians are just in awe of a prime minister. Whether they love or hate him, he is different than an ordinary person. Of all of the things he accomplished in his life, including creating free trade with the United States, which he really was responsible for, as Ambassador David Cohen told us today at the observance to pay homage to Mr. Mulroney, the great relationship between Canada and the United States started with Brian Mulroney when he and Ronald Reagan held the Irish summit. Whether one did or did not agree with him, he always stood up for his principles. He always made a difference. He always cared.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

I am an anglophone from Quebec too, and I have to say that Brian Mulroney was an exemplary anglophone from Quebec because he spoke both languages fluently. Not only was he proficient in French, but he was also well-versed in Quebec culture. At a time when the two cultures did not mix, he was seen as someone who could switch between the two effortlessly.

[English]

I want to finish by saying that, even in my last interaction with former Prime Minister Mulroney, he was such a compassionate human being. Last December, he saw me on television, and he could tell that I was upset about the government's vote at the UN on Israel. He took the time to call me on my cellphone to tell me how proud he was of me. That made all the difference. Right before Christmas, when I was feeling down, he brought me up.

Rest in peace, Prime Minister Mulroney. You did so much for Canada. The whole country is in your debt.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Madam Chair, those were wonderful speeches by the last two Liberal members. I want to thank them.

I would like to start by saying that the Irish have a saying: Family is where love begins and never ends. For Martin Brian Mulroney, the love of family never ended. While the country mourns a transformational prime minister and the world mourns a great statesman, his family is mourning the loss of a devoted father of four and grandfather to 16. He was also a true life partner to Mila, and what a life partnership. He often said that without having Mila by his side, without her love, support and guidance, he would never have overcome the challenges he faced in life. She brought him not only immense love but focus and discipline, and had an ability to work a room even better than he could.

Ben once wrote that while his dad was not always present, he was always a presence in their life. He was also present to many others and in their lives. Many of us in the House were blessed to share him with his family. Many of us were lucky enough to receive those famous calls from him to congratulate, console, catch up, reminisce or, sometimes, gossip. In a tough personal time from him, former prime minister Brian Mulroney concluded his eulogy to his friend Ronald Reagan with a quote from the Irish poet Yeats:

Think where man's glory most begins and ends,
And say my glory was I had such friends.

In his terms, he would often say, "You dance with the one that brung ya."

Friendship, loyalty and family were the guiding tenets of Mulroney's life. Upon winning the leadership, the night of it, he stood up in front of all the delegates in the nation and said to MP Erik Nielsen that he was not Erik's first choice for leader, but Erik was his first choice for deputy leader, instantly uniting the party after a divisive leadership race.

I had the great honour of serving every single day in his government, from the start until the end, when I was in my twenties. His focus on loyalty and friendship shaped the lives of all of us young political staffers who were lucky enough to serve in his government.

In much of the reminiscing of Brian Mulroney's life, people have rightly referred to his many transformational accomplishments. Many have highlighted what he did, but I would like to take a moment to speak about how he did it.

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A staple of his speeches as prime minister was to quote the inscription in the memorial chamber of the Peace Tower, which says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." It started with this, a vision that for Canada to prosper, we needed the world to buy what we made. To achieve that consequential transformation, he had to govern not for a political term, but for future decades.

What Brian Mulroney possessed was a unique instinct and caring for people. Former premier Bob Rae said that for Mulroney "all politics is not just local, it's personal". He was truly exceptional when it came to the fine art of making friends, winning allies and creating loyalty. He was exceptional at bringing people with disparate opinions and perspectives together in pursuit of a common cause. He knew how to identify and marshal talent, and he was a master negotiator.

Public life is first and foremost a people business. We must like people and want to help them if we are to succeed in politics. Brian Mulroney liked people and wanted to help. He wrapped that desire up with a heaping helping of vision, stoked it with a burning desire to do big, important things that made a positive difference for his country and our people, and then cajoled, charmed, persuaded and dared whomever he needed to by the sheer force of his personality and the overwhelming muscle of his unique powers of persuasion and oratory.

Most importantly, he knew instinctively that to achieve success, we must support allies and friends when they are in need, even at a political cost to ourselves. Their priorities were his and he helped them get them done. He needed to understand why each person, each voter, each worker, each MP, every president and every prime minister believed what they did and what motivated them. He knew that to achieve a great Canada, if we wanted other nations to support us in our needs, we had to support them in theirs. As the only Canadian prime minister to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress, he expressed that approach when he quoted Emerson in saying, "The way to have a friend is to be one." This was his secret sauce.

● (1900)

For a prime minister to achieve great things also requires a great team and getting the most out of them. He attracted talent like few others, and they believed in his vision for Canada. He created the cabinet of Clark, Wilson, Crosbie, Mazankowski, Carney, McDougall, Flora, Charest, Mayer, McKnight, Andre, Wise, Masse, Bouchard, Blais and many more. He knew what area of government fit them best and then he let them get to work. He got the most out of them by letting his ministers lead their departments and drive change forward. He trusted them and they trusted him.

He often said that political capital was to be spent, not hoarded, and he spent much of that political capital in Atlantic Canada. He spent his formative educational years, the first years away from home, in high school in New Brunswick and then at StFX university in my home province of Nova Scotia, where he joined the Tory club.

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He was first elected to the House of Commons in Nova Scotia. This gave him a special connection and understanding of my part of the country. Late Prime Minister Mulroney once said, “I consider myself a Maritimer by the baptism of desire”, and so do we.

He wanted to return Atlantic Canada to its rightful place in Confederation. The Atlantic Accord gave provinces the right, for the first time, to receive royalties for offshore resources. His government bought equity in Hibernia. Hibernia would not have happened otherwise. These two things are the direct reason that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians were able to get off equalization.

Late Prime Minister Mulroney thought that regional economic development should actually be done in the regions and not by Ottawa's industry department. The creation of ACOA, based in New Brunswick, accelerated growth as a result of billions of dollars of investments in our small and medium-sized businesses.

The frigate shipbuilding contract for Saint John, New Brunswick, transformed the economy of southern New Brunswick. He gave the financial support to rebuild the entire Trans Canada Highway that runs through that province, understanding that to get New Brunswick, P.E.I. and Nova Scotia's goods to market in Canada and the U.S. with free trade, a modern transportation system was required.

He pushed for the P.E.I. fixed link, the Confederation Bridge, over a lot of resistance, because a province that produced perishables needed quicker, more reliable access to export markets. The creation of Slemmon Park Corporation in Summerside was a vision that converted 200 civilian jobs at a military base to five times that today in an aerospace centre for business.

For Nova Scotia, the acid rain accord with the U.S. stopped the destruction of Nova Scotia's rivers, streams and critical forest products. The free trade agreement spurred Nova Scotia's exports to the U.S. and rapid growth in our beef, seafood and dairy products. The result is that today more than 70% of our seafood is exported, with 50% going to the United States.

This is why former premier Frank McKenna said that late Prime Minister Mulroney did more for Atlantic Canada than any other prime minister in history. When the former premier was asked by the former prime minister to comment on how his preparations for an introduction for an upcoming speech were going, Premier McKenna said that it was a little too laudatory and that he might have to scale it back. To that, Mr. Mulroney replied, “Frank, you can not be too lavish in your praise. I can handle a lot.”

My fellow traveller Mark McQueen, as a Mulroney political staffer, observed late Prime Minister Mulroney's approach to life recently when he wrote:

Love and honour your family. Be a loyal and steadfast friend. Seek out new friends and experiences. Own up to your mistakes. Comfort others when they're down. Find a soulmate and always “dance with the one that brung ya.” Play to your strengths. Let others shine. Live a life of consequence.

I will conclude with late Prime Minister Mulroney's own words. If anyone has read Mulroney's *Memoirs*, they will know they are filled with extracts from his diary as prime minister. The final entry, on June 27, 1993, two days after he left office, reads as follows:

● (1905)

I actually did govern not for good headlines in ten days but for a better Canada in ten years. I paid the price in media hostility and public disapproval. But I did so knowingly and willingly. Leadership is about courage, strength, and resolve, often in the face of overwhelming criticism and adversity; it is about taking positions you believe to be in Canada's long-term interest and sticking to them.

He went on:

...I'll miss the job—caucus, the House, the problems, the achievements, the excitement. But I've achieved a degree of serenity.... I leave with a happy heart and a sense of fulfillment at having done much and at all times having done my best for Canada.

History is remembering him fondly today, as are we. Until we meet again, Prime Minister.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Chair, today is a day for timeless, non-partisan recognition that calls for tenderness and gratitude. My gratitude for Mr. Mulroney, his wife and their children is immense.

I am extremely honoured to take a few minutes in the House to pay tribute to this larger-than-life human that was Mr. Mulroney. In these halls and in every mode of communication, there have been countless tributes filled with praise and accomplishments. I will humbly add a few chapters of life shared with the Mulroney family to paint a deeply human picture of this exceptional statesman who was as endearing as he was dedicated.

It was fall 1984. I was a young singer-songwriter and the brand new Prime Minister of Canada and his family were expected to visit Isle-aux-Coudres as part of the famous passage of the tall ships that were sailing from Saint Malo to Quebec City. For the occasion, the islanders came together, as only islanders can, and organized a beautiful event in honour of the Mulroney family's trip to our small island. Naturally I was asked to contribute to the cultural portion of the event by singing a few songs for the famous family.

At that moment, I really felt that my songs played a role, that they had some kind of impact on people's lives. Until then, I thought that people only applauded because it was just me up there singing in front of them and it was the custom to applaud. I loved singing and capturing my Quebec in song. Having people to listen was a privilege.

But on that September day, the very same day that a certain Jacques Cartier named this land hundreds of years earlier, I was singing for the country's Prime Minister. I had no idea that Mr. Mulroney loved song and music, or that he liked to sing. Only seconds into my performance, I felt his deep interest in my songs, and the same from his wife and children, to the point that by the last chorus of my performance, Mr. Mulroney was already singing along with me. An understanding grew between us and music was at its core. The Prime Minister was also our member of Parliament. Other events in the riding followed, and from then on I became a fixture in the cultural component of his activities.

A few years later, I was contacted by the federal government protocol office, informing me that the Prime Minister and his family wanted me to come and perform my ode to the St. Lawrence on Parliament Hill. I was received by the Prime Minister. I performed my song as we floated down the St. Lawrence, accompanied by nothing less than the RCMP symphony orchestra. It was part of the celebrations for the appointment of Ray Hnatyshyn as governor general. This was in 1990, a few days before the failure of the Meech Lake accord.

As we left the island for Ottawa, my father, who followed politics closely, said to me: My daughter, go sing for your river, sing with all your heart, and hopefully one day it will be yours. Obviously, history has shown that this was not enough, for our river is slipping even further away from us, just ask Quebec fishermen.

For Mr. Mulroney, culture was the soul of a people. One day, in his rich, deep voice, he said to me, "Dear Caroline, a people that is guided by its culture and that nurtures its creations is immortal." He cared about his roots and about everything that talked about or defined Quebec and the North Shore, where he was from. Many of his legacies demonstrate his love for culture. He helped to set up a number of important cultural sites across Quebec and Canada. Unfortunately, the Harper government later turned its back on many of them.

In the words our venerable colleague and the dean of the House, the member for Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, the party of Mr. Mulroney's time no longer exists. Regardless, in Charlevoix, we will remember that the Musée de Charlevoix, the Musée d'art contemporain de Baie-Saint-Paul, the Domaine Forget, and the Moulins de l'Isle-aux-Coudres, just to name a few, as well as all of our memorial sites, owe him a lot.

I owe him all the confidence I have felt since. Thanks to his recognition and enthusiasm, the Mulroneys gave a boost to my modest career. They helped me to believe in my talent as a writer and singer. They countered my insecurity with hopes and dreams. Mr. Mulroney gave me permission to believe in myself, just like he gave Quebec permission to believe in its ability to be part of Canada as a co-founding people, deeply distinct and French and firmly independent in its vision for society. A people is like an artist, an artisan that imagines, creates, invests in himself and creates what he wants and sees as best for his progress and equilibrium. Mr. Mulroney knew that. Mr. Mulroney was an artist.

• (1910)

Beyond his immense legacy in domestic, international and diplomatic policy, he left a legacy as immense as the St. Lawrence in the

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hearts of Quebecers. Every person he met was important. He was attentive, had a phenomenal memory and an absolutely infectious, unshakeable joie de vivre. Even René Lévesque was confident in his ability to unite the two solitudes. It was clear that if he could not do it, no one could.

That is why, ever since Canada's unfortunate refusal, we have been on a quest for sovereignty. We will not give up until it is achieved. This is clearer than ever, because the sad events of Meech Lake and Charlottetown dashed all of our hopes. Mr. Mulroney lost sight of his political agenda, and he too had to change course. We all know what happened next. Since then, Quebec has been sinking into false deficits caused by the federal government, and has seen the decline of its language and Quebec's weight in Parliament. Its regions are dying, and the federal government's interference in its jurisdictions is adding to its setbacks.

When Mr. Mulroney left politics in 1993, I had the privilege of singing his farewell one last time. For the occasion, I took the liberty of writing a little refrain especially for him and the political life he led.

It went like this:

A country without its captain
Is like a ship adrift upon the tide
So hear my refrain far and wide
Never in our history have we had a better captain

Today, for a brief moment, the family and I looked back on some of the good times we had. With a heavy heart, I mourn his loss, but I am grateful for all of the news stories and tributes that have given us an opportunity to reflect on the past and that recounted a time when speeches, commitments and actions truly meant something. We have all seen that, today, in many ways, such meaning has been undermined by considerations driven more by egos yearning for power at any price, to the detriment of what should be motivating all of us, which is serving the public.

When I arrived in the House in 2019, my first thought was for my father and for René Lévesque. Today, Mr. Mulroney has joined them, and my thoughts will now also turn to him. He, too, is now one of the important people who have passed away who guide me and motivate me in politics. I am also thinking about Lise Payette and others like her who empowered women to stand up and change the world.

There are still some pretty good people here. They engage in nation-building with righteousness, rationality and perseverance. Among them are the leader of the Bloc Québécois, the member for Beloeil—Chambly, my Bloc Québécois colleagues and a few of our fellow MPs, as well as our colleagues in Quebec who clearly and openly advocate for our country's independence in the National Assembly.

I also look to prominent women, such as Janette Bertrand and Pauline Marois, and to the next generation, whose excitement and joy are energizing our sovereignist political organizations. They truly inspire me and give me hope.

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As we mourn and pay tribute to this man, I hope we can all take a step back and consider what we need to do to make today's society a safe, egalitarian and inclusive space, where we respect differences and agree to pursue policies that support the community's social and shared values, policies that naturally must be secular, as we all contribute to building a better world for our children.

Politics often unites, sometimes divides and can even break fast friendships. It should never put the thirst for power ahead of the interests of the people and the survival of the planet. I suggest we all take this time to re-examine our deeply held convictions and the reasons for our commitment and open the door to something better. Let us take Mr. Mulroney's passing as an opportunity to check our egos. Look up: Righteousness is within reach.

This girl from the island humbly salutes the boy from Baie-Comeau. On behalf of all my Bloc Québécois colleagues, the people of L'Isle-aux-Coudres, Charlevoix, Côte-de-Beaupré, Baie-Comeau, the north shore and Quebec as a whole, I extend my sincere condolences, gratitude and fond friendship to Brian Mulroney's entire family.

I still have a country to strive for.
I still have a country to raise up in song.

• (1915)

[English]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Chair, I had the occasion to meet Brian Mulroney only once in my life, and it was just a few short years ago. I was attending the annual lunch of the St. Patrick's Society in Montreal around this time of year. It coincided with Brian Mulroney's 80th birthday, and he was the guest speaker that day at the luncheon. He regaled us with wonderful stories at the start of his speech for what seemed like a good half hour.

At the end of those stories, many of which had us roaring with laughter, I would have thought it normal that he would have said that was it and sat down, but that was just the beginning. He launched into an analysis of the global situation. He talked about the values that must guide us forward in this world if we are to make it a better place for humanity and for Canada.

I told him that day, when I got a chance to speak to him very briefly at the little reception before the lunch, that my wife's great uncle was Davie Fulton. I knew that Davie Fulton was a mentor to Brian Mulroney. Davie Fulton had been the minister of justice and had watched Brian Mulroney as a young, budding political activist. He watched him go through St. Francis Xavier University where he first got involved in Conservative politics. Obviously, he had great pride and pleasure in knowing that this young man aspired to hold the highest office in the land.

I remember the arc of Mr. Mulroney's career. I remember those two leadership campaigns and how dramatic they were. One was in 1976, and one, I think, was around 1982. The force of his personality just radiated across the television screen.

Brian Mulroney is an inspiration to political leaders and to politicians. He inspired leaders and politicians to be bold and ambitious, and to build relationships based on goodwill, generosity and kind-

ness. This is not just an inspiration for political people or business people, but also an inspiration for all Canadians and all people.

The idea that relationships are at the core of a meaningful life, and it is that kindness and generosity. It was mentioned by the member who spoke a couple of members before me, who talked about certain principles that guided his relationships, and the idea that we have to reach out to people who are suffering at a particular moment and give them support, and about the belief in loyalty and so on.

• (1920)

[Translation]

Mr. Mulroney was a proud Quebecker from the north shore. I think it is worth pointing out that while Mr. Mulroney was certainly both urban and cosmopolitan, he grew up in an industrial town in rural Quebec. That town was a driver of the Quebec economy, and I would imagine certain jobs there involved workplace health and safety risks.

That experience shaped him and made him into what I would call a noble populist. When I use the term populist, I am not talking about modern populism, which seemingly tries to cultivate negative emotions with the aim of seizing power. I am talking about Diefenbaker-style populism, if I can put it that way. It is a kind of populism that keeps the best interests of the community and the greatest number of people in mind. It is about the so-called "ordinary" people. We know what that means.

It means people like those of us who are not necessarily part of society's elite, who face certain challenges and who sometimes need a helping hand. That was the kind of populism he embraced throughout his career.

[English]

This communitarian spirit is really at the root of why he was so ahead of his time on an issue that was mentioned by the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands yesterday, the environment. I do not think it was because he had done a market study and thought that this was a good political winner issue to advance his career or the fortunes of his government. I think he believed in the environment because he believed in community.

He knew that supporting the environment was a way of helping the world and helping the country. Those are values that guide and inspire us today.

[Translation]

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Chair, today, this honourable House is paying tribute to a great man who devoted many years of his life to our country. The Right Hon. Brian Mulroney has closed his eyes for his final voyage, but his name and his image will live on in the annals of Canadian history.

Beyond partisanship and political views, Brian Mulroney had a big-picture perspective on key aspects that are unquestionably essential for Canadians and for the growth of our country.

Brian Mulroney was a visionary and a staunch defender of climate action, free trade and social justice. What is more, his climate activism and his zeal for fighting climate change should make many people on the opposition benches blush and should serve as a lesson to his successors at the head of the Conservative Party.

“It starts at home,” former prime minister Brian Mulroney said at the signing of the Canada-United States air quality agreement 33 years ago. It started at home and must continue at home in his memory and in honour of the extraordinary work he accomplished on that front.

I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Mulroney last November at the EnviroLys Gala in my riding. Despite his fatigue, he smiled at everyone. When I introduced myself, he told me that politics is absorbing, but that I should always put my family first. I cherish Mr. Mulroney's advice, and I will always respect his unifying and moderate approach of not burning bridges and always listening to opposing opinions.

In stark contrast to the current Conservative Party's protectionism and fear of the other, Mr. Mulroney was a champion of free trade and openness to the world.

The free trade agreement signed with the United States revitalized Canada's economy and strengthened the position of our businesses.

● (1925)

[English]

Countries do better and grow faster when they are open to trade and business flows freely across borders. Our government continued in that vision of growth and collaboration, multiplying trade agreements to allow Canadian businesses to flourish and expand their horizons.

Brian Mulroney understood well that trade agreements help strengthen bilateral trade relations and boost the economies of partner countries. FTAs also help promote and protect foreign investment, improve diplomatic relations and create a level playing field for Canadian companies to compete in global markets.

I thank Mr. Mulroney for paving the way and succeeding in putting in place an essential asset to Canada. I will always admire the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney for his courage and profound belief in social justice.

Standing up to oppose apartheid in South Africa and calling for the liberation of Nelson Mandela despite the opposite views of our allies has put Canada on the right side of history. Canadians are grateful for Mr. Mulroney's honourable service to the nation and hope that his legacy will live on in our history.

[Translation]

On behalf of the residents of Alfred-Pellan, I extend my deepest sympathy to the Mulroney family. Canadians share his family's pain and remain grateful to the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney for all his years of public service.

May Mr. Mulroney rest in peace. May the goodwill that his memory evokes in Canadians bring solace to his family as he embarks on his final voyage.

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[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time.

[Translation]

It is an honour to stand in this place and look back on the legacy of Canada's 18th prime minister, the late Right Hon. Brian Mulroney.

I would like to begin by extending my deepest condolences to his wife of almost 52 years, Mila, to their children, Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nicolas, and to his 16 grandchildren.

[English]

My prayers and the prayers of a grateful nation are with you, Prime Minister Mulroney.

Before and since his passing on February 29, I have heard many wonderful stories from Canadians recounting their interactions with Prime Minister Mulroney. There is a recurring theme.

[Translation]

It is kindness, compassion and humility.

[English]

I had the honour of meeting Prime Minister Mulroney on several occasions throughout the years, and my conversations with him were always enlightening. I feel the PM and I were kindred spirits. We both grew up in small towns and came from modest beginnings. We have Irish heritage. Our fathers were both electricians and we both eventually became lawyers. We each have four children: He had three boys and a girl; I have three girls and a boy. They are adults, parents and professionals in their own right now. His children are a proud legacy and loving support now for Mila.

Despite the understandable pride in his achievements, Prime Minister Mulroney never forgot where he came from. He had a remarkable and uniquely natural ability to connect with people. He had an impeccable memory and could recall names, faces and details of a person years after meeting them.

I remember one time when I was a minister before. I was in the parliamentary dining room in Centre Block. I was at the table next to Prime Minister Mulroney. He was meeting with some of his old colleagues from the Senate. People kept coming up, wanting their picture with him. People were bringing their kids in. Old colleagues and new were coming in to get their pictures, and he finally stood up and straightened his tie, Rodney Dangerfield-style, and said, “You know, I used to be a somebody around here. Anyone else want my picture?” He could then return and have his nice conversation with his lunch mates.

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He possessed a sense of humour that set him apart, and he was fiercely loyal to his family, his colleagues and his country. His caring and personal touch bred great loyalty in all those lucky enough to call him “boss” over his lifetime.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Prime Minister Mulroney's first election victory, the largest majority in Canadian history. He was the second of only two Conservative leaders to win back-to-back majorities. For nine years, Prime Minister Mulroney led his caucus with strength and our nation with courage and unwavering resolve. He was a skilled negotiator and consensus builder, believing strongly in constructive public discourse. He was a staunch defender of Canadian values.

From his signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the first of its kind, to his fight to end apartheid, Prime Minister Mulroney's achievements here at home and on the international stage strengthened our place in the world, laying the foundation for a more competitive and prosperous Canada. He is the architect of modern Canada in every sense of the word. Prime Minister Mulroney will be remembered as a great Canadian statesman, and history will judge his political and personal record with admiration. At the signing of the Atlantic accord, he famously said, “I am not afraid to inflict prosperity” on the people of Atlantic Canada.

Rest in peace, Prime Minister Mulroney, and thank you for your service to our country and to the Conservative movement.

My prayers and thoughts are with the remarkable extended Mulroney family and close friends.

• (1930)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the chief opposition whip and member for South Surrey—White Rock, for her excellent speech.

I, too, am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, the 18th Prime Minister of Canada.

Before I list some of his many achievements, I want to say how proud I am of the fact that he had roots in Sainte-Catherine-de-la-Jacques-Cartier, one of the 28 municipalities in the beautiful riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. His ancestors and parents lived there. His time there was brief, since his mother and the entire family left the town when she was six months pregnant with Brian to move to Baie-Comeau, hence his nickname, “the boy from Baie-Comeau”.

Brian Mulroney left an indelible mark on the history of our nation, not only through his remarkable political achievements, but also through his vision, leadership and dedication to Canadians. Under this Progressive Conservative prime minister, Canada enjoyed a period of unprecedented prosperity and economic growth. His commitment to bold economic reforms, including the free trade agreement with the United States and Mexico, created new opportunities for our country internationally and strengthened our position in world trade.

I invite my colleagues to learn more about him by taking a look at an authorized biography written by Guy Gendron called *Brian*

Mulroney: L'homme des beaux risques. In reading it, I learned a lot about his political life and the corridors of power.

Brian Mulroney played a decisive role in advocating for human rights and social justice. His leadership in the fight against apartheid in South Africa and his support for international efforts to promote peace and democracy earned Canada a reputation as a defender of fundamental humanitarian values.

He was also an ardent defender of the French language. It was under his government that the Official Languages Act was amended to include the obligation to promote both official languages, English and French, here in Canada. Then there was the privatization of several Crown corporations, such as Petro-Canada and Air Canada. I am not sure he would be happy about the use of French at Air Canada nowadays, but that is a topic for another time.

As prime minister, Brian Mulroney also demonstrated great diplomatic skill, strengthening Canada's ties with its international partners while preserving our national sovereignty and identity.

Beyond those political achievements, Brian Mulroney was a man of principle, integrity and compassion. His passion for public service and his commitment to the well-being of all Canadians will be remembered for generations to come. His respect, generosity and social skills were phenomenal.

For example, I was at the Montreal airport one day with my colleague and friend from Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook on a mission for the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, and we happened to run into the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney. It was really something to see him. He was the one who influenced me, motivated me and inspired me to get into politics. He cut an impressive figure because of his stature and his unique voice, but also because of his open and approachable nature and the interest he took in me and my colleague. There is a photo of us on my Facebook page. It was a privilege for me to meet and talk with him.

This may or may not be a coincidence, but Saturday, March 23, the day of this legendary Irishman's funeral, is the same day that Quebec City will host its St. Patrick's Day parade.

In closing, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney. He has left quite a legacy, and it will be a lasting one.

I would like to extend my deepest condolences to the great woman behind him, Mila; his children Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nicolas; and the 16 Mulroney grandchildren.

Prime Minister, thank you and Godspeed.

• (1935)

The Speaker: I just learned something about his *in utero* beginnings in the beautiful riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

The hon. Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations.

[English]

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an absolute honour for me to speak to pay tribute to the late prime minister, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, upon his demise. He lived an incredible life and I want to honour him today.

There are a number of reasons I felt compelled to speak this evening. Let me begin with probably the most important reason for me. I am a proud Tamil Canadian. I was elected in 2015 to represent the largest Tamil community in Canada, which is Scarborough—Rouge Park. One moment I remember vividly from growing up is when 155 Tamils landed on the shore of St. Shott's in Newfoundland. At that time, it caused a great deal of controversy. As people are aware, Canada has not always been generous toward people seeking asylum on its shores. I could talk about the *MS St. Louis*, the *Komagata Maru* and other instances when Canadian generosity fell short.

However, on that particular occasion, the leader of the country, the late prime minister, wanted to ensure they were welcome. That year, when they arrived, the controversy was very loud. People called for the deportation of the refugees. There was a great deal of racism. The prime minister stepped in and said that Canadians needed to show compassion to Tamils.

One of the things he said was that his government would do anything but allow refugees in lifeboats to be turned aimlessly around in the ocean, away from our shores. He said that to think in some way that 155 Sri Lankan Tamils would diminish our citizenship and ruin our immigration policies was not the resilience and strength of Canada. He embodied that strength of Canada by standing up for what was right at that time.

On behalf of the entire Tamil Canadian community, I am absolutely obliged to thank the late prime minister and to honour him for his graciousness. The community is now over 300,000 strong from coast to coast to coast. I really do wish to extend my profound gratitude to the Mulroney family.

His work on apartheid will stand the test of time. As someone who grew up dismayed about what apartheid, racism and human beings can do to each other, I was so impressed as a young person to see a world leader, the leader of Canada, lead the way in fighting apartheid. When the late President Mandela came to Canada, I was able to see him at Queen's Park, and I can tell everyone that this would not have happened without the leadership of the late prime minister. By that, I am always inspired. In politics we can do great things, and he was able to achieve that.

I represent Scarborough—Rouge Park. Pauline Browes, who was the first minister of environment under a Conservative government, served under Prime Minister Mulroney. The work that the prime minister did on the environment is something I am very grateful for, particularly because Pauline Browes is one of the champions of Rouge National Urban Park, an area I represent.

I had the opportunity to meet the late prime minister on my grade 9 trip to Ottawa, right in front of Rideau Hall. We were in two school buses. He talked to us. It was a consequential day in Canadian history, the day that the Meech Lake accord was signed. He

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found the time that day to say a few words, and I will always cherish that moment.

To Mark, Mila, Caroline, Nicolas and Ben I extend my deepest condolences and share with them that this loss is felt by all of us across Canada.

• (1940)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, a remarkable individual who served in the chamber for over a decade but who served this country his entire life.

In January 1984, I immigrated to Canada. It was later that year that I witnessed my first Canadian federal election, in which the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney was first elected as the 18th Prime Minister of Canada.

It was very coincidental that on September 17, 1984, I celebrated my birthday in Canada for the first time. That is the day Brian Mulroney took the office of Prime Minister. It was very inspiring to see a fellow born in a middle-class working family become the Prime Minister of Canada. That can happen only here in Canada. I was later recruited by the Right Hon. Paul Martin, in 1990, to support him in his leadership race.

From 1984 to 1993, Prime Minister Mulroney won two majority governments and steered Canada through several important policy decisions, including the end of the Cold War, the introduction of the GST and the free trade agreement with the United States. Prime Minister Mulroney was instrumental in establishing the North American Free Trade Agreement, which played a pivotal role in the economic strength of our entire nation. He will be remembered for his engaging personality, which was key to strengthening the important relationship between Canada and the United States at a time when there was a rising tide of American protectionism.

Long after he had formally retired from public life, Mr. Mulroney continued to apply his energy and efforts to protecting Canada's economic and geopolitical interests. In 2017, I had the opportunity to sit as a member on the Standing Committee on International Trade, and we carefully studied the ongoing negotiations of a revised NAFTA agreement. When then president Donald Trump was preparing to rip up NAFTA and impose import restrictions that would have hampered Canadian manufacturing, it was Mr. Mulroney who stepped up to help.

He had thorough knowledge of the U.S. political scene and understood the movement that was transforming American politics. Mr. Mulroney knew many of the key players personally and applied both his knowledge and his contacts in ways that helped Canada. He was a former Progressive Conservative prime minister offering aid to a Liberal government. Mr. Mulroney simply did not care about the domestic political considerations, as he was all-in for our country.

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Today, I had the privilege and opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Mulroney at the official lying-in-state here in Ottawa. I am saddened by the loss of a man who cared deeply about Canadians. Mr. Mulroney's principles helped shape this nation and the world for the better.

On behalf of my constituents in Surrey—Newton, I would like to convey my sincere, heartfelt condolences to Mr. Mulroney's family, including his wife, Mila, and children, Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nicolas. I also want to wish Mila good health and strength, and the very best to his children so they can continue to follow the trail he blazed for all of us to keep us proud.

May Prime Minister Mulroney rest in peace, and God bless his soul.

● (1945)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Thornhill.

As the Conservative Party of Canada's political lieutenant for Quebec, it is a privilege for me to rise in the House this evening to pay tribute to an outstanding Canadian and a proud Quebecer. I am speaking, of course, about the former prime minister of Canada, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney. February 29, 2024, will go down in history as the day that an extraordinary man left this world.

The “boy from Baie-Comeau” represented many of the groups that built this country. To start with, his family came from Irish Catholic stock, and they were also English-speaking. Nevertheless, the Mulroneys attended mass in French and lived in a predominantly francophone small town. Little wonder he had such a strong command of the language of Molière. That might also be why he got along so well with everyone. In hindsight, it is easy to remember him as a much-loved prime minister, though it might not have been so obvious toward the end of his time in office. I am sure that even his most vocal opponents would say the same thing today, and this is what we must and will remember most about him: He was a gentleman above all.

If the measure of a man is how he treats others, it is easy to see why we have lost a giant. It is also easy to see why his treatment of others was so remarkable. We have heard thousands of moving tributes from people of every political stripe, from coast to coast and around the world. We have heard about his kindness, freely given and expecting nothing in return. His was a profound, authentic, warm-hearted kindness rarely seen in this place, where the chill of political quarrels can hold sway. That is how he won Canadians over, securing the largest majority in our history. What his policies and the risks he took had in common was that they rallied people around shared values of justice and doing the right thing. He had the courage to stand up for what he believed in, even when it was not politically popular.

With all his heart, he wanted to include Quebecers in the Canadian Constitution, with honour and enthusiasm. He wanted to stop the suffering and discrimination in South Africa. With all his heart, he wanted to do what was right and just. That is why we feel such an outpouring of emotion today. Canadians and Quebecers have

just lost someone who was truly good, someone who truly embodied the golden rule of treating others as we would want to be treated. This is in stark contrast to today's political environment. It is almost unbelievable to think that this way of being, this particular way of engaging in politics, would be possible today, let alone that it would be a winning strategy. For him, however, it was not an election strategy. It was simply who he was. That was Brian Mulroney.

I was lucky enough to meet Mr. Mulroney on several occasions, all of which I will never forget. I can personally attest to the fact that he was the kind, larger-than-life character we have heard so much about. I can also attest to the fact that his legacy of kindness will stand the test of time. It is a legacy of moral rectitude, a legacy of altruistic efforts to make things better not only for his fellow citizens, but for all of humanity. He certainly did not always live up to the high standards he set for himself, but history will retain little trace of his shortcomings. In fact, history will instead retain rich memories of the person he was.

On behalf of Quebec, the Conservative Party, all Canadians and, above all, on behalf of humanity, thank you, Prime Minister.

● (1950)

[*English*]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to rise and pay tribute today to a prime minister is one of the distinct honours here, but to rise and pay tribute to a prime minister who so enormously changed this nation, and one whom I knew, is the dream of a kid from a hard-working immigrant family, who in her earliest memories of politics understood that this country is one where success was ours to make.

I offer to Mila, Caroline and Andrew, Ben and Jess, Mark and Vanessa, and Nic and Katy, to their children and to the rest of their family, my sincerest condolences as they seek comfort in the memories this country shares with them.

Prime Minister Mulroney led a life that can only be described as extraordinary, one that saw him rise from the mills of northern Quebec to the halls of power here in Ottawa, a life characterized by his own devotion to family, community and country, and a life that will have a lasting impact on Canada and indeed the rest of the world.

During my time in politics, I was fortunate enough to hear his speeches, his stories, and much later, I would get to know the Prime Minister as someone who he had called, one day on an idle Thursday, to come back to a life in politics, which I had thought for a brief moment that I had left. He was warm, tough and full of colourful language when it was required and deserved.

He often quoted scripture, in particular, one passage from Acts; young men have visions, and old men dream dreams. He intended it. I believe it to be a reflection on the nature of things as he saw them and the world that we live in today, but in many ways, it describes his life too. He was a visionary of a continent brought together by commerce, where everyone would be uplifted by the blessings of trade and a free market. He was a visionary of a world united by common values like democracy, peace and justice.

The accolades that have poured in from allies and adversaries alike speak wonders about the esteem in which he was held by people from all backgrounds. The respect that he commanded and that he showed equally to others might be the among the best lessons that somebody could learn from this place. Many people, luminaries here at home and abroad, leaders in their fields, have spoken eloquently about that tenure and what it meant to Canada.

I cannot say much about what it was like to live in Canada when he was prime minister, but I can say what it is like to live in Canada after he was prime minister. For the economic prosperity that we saw through the 1990s and the 2000s, we can thank Brian Mulroney. For the foundation of fiscal stability that made it possible, we can thank Brian Mulroney. For the long-standing respect and admiration that Canada enjoyed throughout the world, we can certainly thank Brian Mulroney. The very fact that we are here today in Parliament, working on behalf of a united Canada, is a testament to the work he did to preserve our national unity at a time when many people thought it could not be done.

All those accomplishments were made possible by a deep and abiding faith to our country, to our people and to what we stand for here as a nation. This place perverts that, and it's to his legacy that we should look when we fight for the preservation of values here: to doing what he knew was right, even when it was unpopular; to persevering, even in the face of intense and often visceral opposition; and to an always-resonant voice of moral clarity in these dangerous times.

We know one thing for sure. His legacy and success will live on through his four children, who are already leaders in their own fields of politics, broadcasting and business. They, in their own right, embody their father's character, ambition and decency, and I am lucky enough to call them friends.

I thank Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nic, for sharing their father with Canada. This is something that is fitting for them, just a few days after St. Patrick's Day, and especially so for Prime Minister Mulroney, whose Irish eyes were always smiling. "Death leaves a heartache no one can heal; Love leaves a memory no one can steal." May those memories comfort you in your time of grief. May you treasure the love that he clearly felt for you and for this country, and may his memory always be a blessing. I know it will be in the hearts of millions of Canadians.

• (1955)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, let me add my deepest condolences to Mila, Caroline, Ben, Nicolas, Mark and the 16 Mulroney grandchildren on behalf of my own family, the people of Calgary Rocky Ridge, and on behalf of myself, a Mulroney-era Conservative activist. My formative years are bound up in the years when Brian Mulroney was prime minister,

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and it was during that time that I first became a Conservative political activist, which is something I have not stopped since that time.

It is impossible to measure the impact of Brian Mulroney's life and legacy without first saying a few words about Canada in 1984.

In 1984, Canada was broken. It was, quite literally, broke. Canada was kiting interest payments on the national debt like an insolvent debtor using one credit card to pay the interest on another. Interest payments from the previous government's debt were 38% of government expenditure. Foreign investment was explicitly discouraged as a matter of national policy, and that was in favour of hundreds of money-losing taxpayer-funded Crown corporations. Canada was not trusted by our most important allies, and the disastrous national energy program had destroyed the Alberta economy. Inflation, interest rates and unemployment were in the double digits. That was the state of the country that Brian Mulroney was elected to lead. What followed was a series of reforms and policy reversals that saved this country from the downward spiral that had been set in motion by the government that had come before it.

Brian Mulroney became prime minister during a dangerous final peak in the Cold War when the increasingly unstable Soviet Union was led by the government of Konstantin Chernenko, who was the third, old, sick, hardline communist leader, who in his many years was running a dangerous, potentially apocalyptic arms race with the west. It was during this critical, frightening time that Brian Mulroney firmly replanted Canada in the western camp with countries that shared Canada's values, like democracy, pluralism and the rule of law. This was in sharp contrast to a previous prime minister who seemed more comfortable sucking up to dictators of the Soviet bloc, like Honecker, Ceausescu and Castro rather than leaders of the free world.

It was perhaps in global affairs where Brian Mulroney's star shone the brightest. He reopened Canada to business, and before the end of his first Parliament, he negotiated the free trade deal with the United States, ushering in the era of prosperity that followed. He convinced Ronald Reagan to expend Reagan's own domestic political capital so that Canada could have an acid rain treaty. He was an indispensable ally in forcing an end to the hateful apartheid system in South Africa.

By the time of his retirement, he was a global leader with easy and productive relationships with the giants of his time: François Mitterrand, Helmut Kohl, Reagan, Bush and Thatcher. All of those people took his calls any time. However, he did not just spend his time on the phone talking with world leaders. He always remained grounded to his family, his friends, his caucus and his party, and his use of the telephone was truly legendary.

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I was a very young political activist in that time. People knew that if there was a pressing issue, even right down to local electoral district politics, he was always a phone call away, not because he was a micromanager, not because he wanted to stick his leadership's nose into business, but because he cared so much and just wanted to help, and he made himself available to people.

His humanity, his compassion and his good humour inspired intense loyalty. I have been told by many who were in his caucus in those years that even when his government was at 12% in the polls, MPs could not wait for Wednesday morning to get together and to share in the camaraderie and the team work at that time and to hear his pep talk.

● (2000)

However, all the changes and reforms that Brian Mulroney undertook in his time were met with intense, vitriolic, bitter resistance. The Liberals and the NDP of the time viciously opposed free trade. They accused Brian Mulroney of outright disloyalty to Canada. He was accused of selling out Canada to the Americans, repeatedly, by his opponents on the left.

For some western Canadians, the changes that he brought did not come quick enough. He could not undo the damage of the previous government quickly enough for some, despite fiscal reform, abolishing the national energy program and mass privatization of state-owned enterprises.

Many Quebecers turned their backs on Brian Mulroney over the failure of the Meech Lake accord. People now have forgotten the depths of the deeply personal and bitter opposition that Mulroney faced, especially during his second Parliament, from 1988 to 1993. Nobody would have blamed Brian Mulroney if he gave up on national affairs, but that was not his way.

He could have just walked away. He could have stopped being a presence in the lives of so many political activists and stopped making all those phone calls, but he did not do that. His determination in forging a better Canada was matched by his equanimity in the face of tremendous setbacks in opposition.

I am so glad that he lived long enough to see the undeniable proof of his legacy as a great world leader and a transformational Canadian prime minister whose legacy endures. Rest well, Brian Mulroney, with a grateful nation's thanks. Posterity is already much kinder to him than his contemporaries were.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 2, 2023, thanks to my friend François Vaqué, I was able to attend the penultimate public appearance of the Right Hon. Martin Brian Mulroney, whose passing on February 29 we are commemorating today.

It was Laval University that organized this event to pay tribute to the career of Mr. Mulroney who, as we know, earned a degree from Laval University. He was always proud to say that he was an alumnus of its law school.

When he spoke in response to the university's president, we got the sense that his mind was clear even though we all knew that he was in the deep winter of his life. He was as solid as an oak and he

spoke easily, as only he knew how. When he finished his speech, the room was captivated and he closed with these famous words: not bad for a boy from Baie-Comeau. Of course everyone, tears in their eyes, stood up and applauded him.

Martin Brian Mulroney, the greatest prime minister in Canada's history, was always proud of his humble roots in Baie-Comeau. He was born in a bilingual, bicultural city that shaped the man he became. He was the son of a tradesman, but, as a child, he was perfectly comfortable singing *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling* to the big boss of the Chicago Tribune. That was how Brian Mulroney was. He was destined early on for a career of national scope, and that is what he achieved.

Before entering politics, Mr. Mulroney was a lawyer, but not just any lawyer. For starters, he took care of his family. His father died very young, so he took care of his entire family and brought them to Montreal. He was literally the Mulroney family provider in Montreal.

He became a negotiating lawyer and was quickly recognized as a winner. One of his accomplishments as a young lawyer was settling a bitter strike at La Presse. He was always involved in tough conflicts, and, ever the masterful negotiator, he always sorted them out. He was also a member of the Cliche commission, where he brought down the villains who, unfortunately, corrupted Quebec's construction industry in the 1970s.

He also became the president of the Iron Ore Company, one of the big companies that was, unfortunately, affected by dozens and dozens of labour disputes. Thanks to Mr. Mulroney's leadership, the labour disputes were resolved and he even spent the holidays and Christmas with his workers, as our leader mentioned in the tribute he gave two days ago.

Brian Mulroney was made for politics. At the age of 17, when he was attending St. Francis Xavier University, he was getting phone calls from the Conservative prime minister, the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker. He had a talent for making friends with a lot of people. It was clear that he should go into politics. Mr. Mulroney was likely the greatest political leader Canada has ever known, but he began his political career with a defeat. On February 22, 1976, he lost the Conservative leadership race, placing third behind Claude Wagner and the Right Hon. Charles Joseph Clark, who surprised many people by becoming the Prime Minister of Canada.

He had a rematch in 1983. On June 11, he became leader of the Conservative Party. He was a very active and relevant politician, capable of stirring up crowds better than anyone. I was a young supporter at the time as well. I joined the Conservative Party in November 1981. I later met Mr. Mulroney in action for the first time on October 10, 1982. It was at the Hôtel Gouverneur on Laurier Boulevard in Sainte-Foy, at the invitation of our candidate in the riding of Louis-Hébert, Suzanne Duplessis. For the first time, I saw with my own eyes this great politician, Brian Mulroney. He was very impressive.

He led the greatest victory in Canadian political history when he was elected prime minister on September 4, 1984, with over 200 seats.

There are so many things I could say about this wonderful prime minister's great achievements. The first thing that springs to mind is apartheid. He was the one who led the global battle to put an end to the human horror that was apartheid. It may seem surprising, but just 40 years ago, in this great country, Black people did not have the same rights as white people. Fortunately, people like Brian Mulroney paved the way and led the fight. In fact, Nelson Mandela said that the first trip he wanted to take abroad was to Brian Mulroney's country, to Canada. When Mr. Mandela said that to Prime Minister Mulroney, the latter offered to send him a plane right away. Mr. Mandela eventually made it here.

● (2005)

He was also a leader on the environment, in the Mulroney way. He is the one who used his pragmatism to come up with a solution for acid rain. Mr. Mulroney was a pragmatic man. When President Reagan visited the House of Commons to deliver a speech, Mr. Mulroney brought him to his office to show him a globe. He explained how acid rain worked by showing him where it came from and where it went, as well as the problems it caused. He did such a good job of explaining the problem of acid rain to President Reagan that Mr. Reagan told his entourage that they needed to talk about it and to change some of the wording in his speech. That was unheard of in politics. Only Mr. Mulroney was capable of convincing the most powerful man on the planet that he needed to take action, and he did it in a pragmatic way.

He was also the architect of la francophonie and the gatherings that were held. He was also, of course, the architect of the Meech Lake accord, which was a success until some malcontents scuttled the deal. That is all I will say about that. Mr. Mulroney's premiership also left an indelible mark on the economy. Shortly after he was elected, he went to New York to say:

[English]

Canada is back in business.

[Translation]

In this particular case, it worked. He privatized 23 state-owned enterprises that were struggling and turned them around. Most importantly, he created free trade. At the time, Canada had a closed economy. We needed to open our borders, especially with the United States. As a result, nearly 40 years later, our country is a world leader in free trade. Among those who helped make that happen, I would like to recognize the outstanding contribution of the member for Abbotsford, who has helped Canada sign more than 40 free trade agreements.

Free trade also led to the creation of the GST. Why? Before free trade, Canada had a tax on production. However, it was hurting businesses to have to pay a tax on what they produced and then send their products abroad, so Mr. Mulroney did away with the tax on production and implemented a consumer tax. Obviously, everyone was against it at the time, except the Conservatives. It was such a bad idea that, 40 years later, that tax still exists and no one has

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done away with it. Perhaps that is a sign that it was the right thing to do.

Members have talked a lot about Mr. Mulroney's extraordinary style and friendships. He was the only one who could have such strong, meaningful relationship with leaders who had completely different views. Whether it be François Mitterrand or Ronald Reagan, only Mr. Mulroney was able to bridge the gap. Then, he became a great elder statesman.

[English]

This is the kind of man that we need more than ever. He was a man who, after serving the country so well, was ready to help the country, whatever the colour of the government. That is what Mr. Mulroney did. It was so impressive that he was the only prime minister who did this.

[Translation]

He is the only foreigner in the United States to have delivered a eulogy for two American presidents. Family was the most important aspect of his life. That can still be felt to this day. His wife Mi-la and his children were always with him. He was there for his children and his family. His family and his children were always there together. Yesterday, Nicolas, who was born the year after the election, in 1985, told me that his father called him regularly. He often asked his father for advice, and his father gave it to him. That was Mr. Mulroney's strength.

In closing, the National Post has published a poll. I want to read it, because it is pretty interesting. The poll was conducted just a few days ago and it says the following:

[English]

"Brian Mulroney did 'good job' as prime minister, according to 83 per cent of Canadians".

[Translation]

Eighty-three per cent of people thought that Brian Mulroney did a good job as prime minister.

[English]

Brian, rest in peace.

● (2010)

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour to pay tribute to a great Canadian, a great statesman, a great Conservative and a great man. He was someone who truly lived out his life in service to his fellow Canadians.

When I think of Brian Mulroney, I think of a man who led Canada out of a very difficult time. I cannot begin to enumerate the challenges that Brian Mulroney was facing when the Canadian people placed their trust in him at an unprecedented level. The massive majority that he won in 1984 was a testament to his leadership, his charisma, his ability to connect with people and his ability to show the people of Canada that he was genuinely on their side.

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When we think about what he inherited, he inherited runaway inflation. My parents had to struggle with mortgage payments back in the early eighties. I remember the stories about it at the family table. My parents were stressing about how they were going to keep a roof over our heads as interest rates were well into the double digits for many years. That was a pain known by many Canadian families, all across the country.

He inherited a deficit that was out of control, with debt costs that were burdening the taxpayers and the state. He inherited an economy that, over the years, had become choked with government intervention. There were over 60 Crown corporations in 1984 when Brian Mulroney became Prime Minister. Canadians might not know this, but at one point the Government of Canada owned gas stations, Petro-Canada. The previous Liberal government had nationalized and created Crown corporations to manage all the different aspects of the oil and gas sector, including at the retail level. Let us imagine the Government of Canada running gas stations.

Crown corporations had so choked out the productive parts of our economy that Canada was in a very difficult economic situation with minimal growth, rampant deficits, runaway inflation and interest rates that followed. What did he do? He implemented a vision of free market economics, unleashing the power of hard-working Canadians that follows when government gets off their backs and out of their way. Brian Mulroney unleashed that on our country and freed our people to do what they do best.

We can look back and see how, at the end of his tenure, he had wrestled inflation to the ground and brought those interest rates down, and the dynamic private sector flourished and grew. Canadians rewarded him with a second term in 1988.

I truly believe that the mark of a leader who holds an office of power, whether it is a premier, prime minister or a mayor, is whether their political opponents undo the things that they have done. We all remember the debates at the time when Brian Mulroney was bringing in his vision of free trade. Free trade is such a great example of his leadership ability, his passion and his conviction. It was terribly unpopular for many months and years, but he saw the long-term benefits that would pay off for Canada. He saw that, once businesses and people would be able to freely trade back and forth with our largest ally, our largest economy and our largest trading partner, the gains would be massive.

In the 1988 election, every other political party fought him tooth and nail. This was not just a secondary or small issue that flared up a little. This was the seminal question of the 1988 election. Every single vested interest group that knew it had been benefiting from state protection went to war to confuse Canadians, undermine the arguments that were being presented, and try to scare people into voting against the free trade deal and against the Conservative Party. Many a politician would have taken a look at those polling numbers and said that they could not touch it, that it was not something that would fly.

• (2015)

It is campaigning 101 when we sit down with our team, look at our platform, look at the polls and say that we might like to do something one day, but the Canadian people are not there; we are not going to offer it and are not going to commit. Brian Mulroney

said to forget the polls, that it was about what our country needed, what would make our country stronger and what would make our country more prosperous, and he fought through it all. With the power of his conviction, with his amazing communication style and with that smooth, silky baritone voice, he was able to convince Canadians to place their trust in him once again.

Of course, every single successive government has not only promised to keep that free trade deal, but now competes for better free trade deals. Political parties now have to show Canadians how they are going to find more markets for our exports and how they are going to sign new free trade deals with other countries. It is now remarkable to watch when we think back to that 1988 election and look at elections today.

He denationalized, as my colleague from Quebec just mentioned a few moments ago, over 20 Crown corporations that were cluttering up the economy. We all know what happens when governments run things. When governments run things, they do not provide great services at affordable costs. They are not responsive to consumer needs; they are responsive to what works best for government. We see this across the board. Imagine living in a country where there are 63 Crown corporations in everything from railways to airlines to retail gasoline. Brian Mulroney helped declutter the economy. He went to work weeding the garden.

That is how I evaluate a former prime minister's legacy. Despite all the opponents who were promising to fight tooth and nail over his vision and agenda, have any of them undone what he did? The answer is largely no, because he was right. It did make Canada a better place to have free trade deals. It did make Canada a better place to have a more dynamic free market where Canadians were free to do what they do best and be prosperous. The fact that so much of his legacy is intact today and that political parties compete over who will protect that legacy stronger is an amazing testament to Brian Mulroney as a statesman.

I want to share a couple of anecdotes to show what Brian Mulroney was as a human being.

To say that he was magnanimous would be an understatement, and he was not just charming. When we give praise, sometimes people think we are just engaging in flattery or trying to be nice so that someone reciprocates. With Brian Mulroney, it was genuine. People genuinely felt, whether it was in a phone call, when bumping into him at an event or when having the opportunity to sit down and really unpack something, that the entire time they were with Brian, they were the most important person in the world at that moment.

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He was so quick to compliment and so slow to criticize. His criticism was always constructive, and he was such a booster, not just of the Conservative Party but of Canada. He wanted Canada to succeed. We saw this time and time again. When political parties of different stripes reached out to him for help on a file, he always said yes, because he always put his country first, and he always knew that his Conservative principles would make his country so much better.

He would often call me during my tenure as leader of the party. I was so thankful that I had the opportunity to tap into that wisdom and experience. Every single phone call I had with Brian Mulroney started off with the subject of what he wanted to talk about. He would say, "I want to talk to you about something", and he would say what it was. However, he would also say, "Before we get there, how is that wonderful wife of yours? How is Jill doing? How are Thomas, Grace, Madeline, Mary and Henry?" He knew all their names, and he knew how old they were. He knew what I had told him the last time I was on the phone with him. If I mentioned that one of my children was playing sports, he would ask how that basketball team of theirs was going. He genuinely demonstrated that he cared about people on a human level, not just because of the office they happened to hold.

I could tell in everything he did that his guiding light was his family too. Mila was the rock, the person he credits with all his success, and his wonderful children have all gone on to be very successful themselves.

● (2020)

I just want to thank Brian Mulroney. I thank him for the service that he provided for our country. I thank Mila and their children. I thank them for putting up with the fact that they had to share their dad and husband for so many years with this wonderful country.

I sincerely wish that he rests in peace and that his friends and family are comforted in this difficult time and during the public state ceremonies and his funeral.

Thanks very much, Brian Mulroney. May you rest in peace.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding name is Grande Prairie—Mackenzie now, but when I was first elected it was the riding of Peace River. When I was running for the nomination in that riding, a larger riding than the one I currently represent, I called my predecessor's predecessor. It was a guy by the name of Albert Cooper.

It was a bit of a cold call because I did not know Albert. I knew my parents had met him during his time serving as a member of Parliament. I knew his reputation. He was a guy engaged in business. He owned an airline at the time. I made a cold call to him and said, "Albert, would you mind if I dropped by and give you my pitch? I would like to become the member of Parliament for a riding." I was a young guy. Interestingly, I was a very similar age to the age Albert was when he was first elected.

Albert took the time to meet with me. We got to visiting and Albert talked about his time as a member of Parliament. Having been elected first in 1984 and then in 1988, Albert had remarkable stories. He had stories of his leader, the guy who Albert, whom I just spoke to on the phone, credits as the strongest leader and the most

incredible leader he has had the privilege to serve under and work with.

Albert told me in those stories that Brian Mulroney was a remarkable guy who had an incredible ability to connect with caucus in ways that no other leader or, it seemed, no other human had ever figured out how to do. When Albert's son was born, flowers were delivered to the Peace River hospital. When someone had a sick aunt or a grandma who had health difficulties, Brian just seemed to know. He would pick up the phone, call and have that human connection.

Those were interesting stories, and over the years that followed, every time I would visit with Albert, he would have good instruction for me as a member of Parliament, as a young guy getting into the business, both personal and professional. Every single time we met, there were stories of Brian Mulroney.

Those loomed large in my head. As a young Albertan member of Parliament, I tried to reconcile them with some of my earliest remembrances of watching the news with politicians debating and hearing the stories of the great Brian Mulroney, who, of course, was not immune to controversy during my young life. As a matter of fact, Albert mentioned to me today that it was often Brian's humour that would get him into trouble because he was so often able to bring up a joke but it did not always land the way he intended. That is the danger with humour, and I wish that was not the case for those of us who are elected, because if we had more of that, I think we would all be a bit more human and could all survive in this business a lot better. Canadians would be better served by that.

These stories continue to bang around in my head, and it would have been about five years into my service as a member of Parliament that I was up in the dining room of the Centre Block dining hall, the parliamentary dining room. I was sitting there with the guy who went on to be Alberta's finance minister, Travis Toews, who was at that point the president of the Cattlemen's Association.

We were having a great lunch, and out of the corner of my eye, I saw that Jim Flaherty, the finance minister at the time and a good friend of mine, was getting up from a table and I realized that he had been dining with Brian Mulroney. Having never met Brian Mulroney and seeing that they were going to pass right by my table, I decided to stand up and honour the former prime minister.

I stood up and barely got the words "Hello, Mr. Prime Minister" out of my mouth when he said, "Christopher Warkentin". I was somewhat startled and he said, "I have been watching you in your work as the chair of the aboriginal affairs committee, and I want to tell you how remarkable I think you are." He heaped on all kinds of compliments.

● (2025)

He went on to talk about the importance of being a member of Parliament, but also of being a Conservative member of Parliament, and how important it was, at that time, to have strong men and women who could stand up and be in different roles within Parliament. He paid tribute to what I thought was a smaller role in our Parliament at that time. He then went on to learn about my family and to talk about what an important thing family was and how important it was for him.

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He finally decided that it was time to move on. I would have talked to him all day. I did not want to take up the rest of his afternoon. I would have loved to sit there, but I wanted to respect his time. He was willing to continue to talk to me until he was done, and he finished his message by telling me how important family was. He then thanked me for serving and thanked my family for letting me serve.

Today, as we reflect on the great Brian Mulroney, there are so many stories like that. As a matter of fact, when Brian finally moved on, Travis Toews looked across the table and said that he did not know I was such good friends with Brian Mulroney, to which I said this was the first time I had ever met him.

He was struck by the fact that Brian not only knew something of what my career had been, but spent so much time building up the importance of that role. He encouraged me to continue in that role and spent so much time ensuring that I recognized the importance of family.

As we now move past and reflect on Brian's time, we want to thank him for his service. We want to thank his family for their service and their willingness to share their dad with us as a country. To Mila, Mark, Caroline, Nicolas and Ben, we say thanks for sharing their dad in building our country.

We know that Brian encouraged us to know the importance of our family because he knew the importance of his family. On behalf of all Canadians, we want to thank them for sharing their dad. We want to thank Brian for his service. We want to let his family know that our thoughts and prayers are with them as they go through this difficult time of saying goodbye. May he rest in peace.

• (2030)

Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is hazardous stuff, I think, for any Canadian to attempt to pay tribute to a man who eulogized two U.S. presidents, particularly a Canadian of Irish descent. Brian Mulroney did big things. When we remember the scale and the stakes of what this man took on, I think of the poor advisers in each meeting whose job it was to remind him of the risks.

When we consider how deeply Mr. Mulroney loved this country, we cannot imagine he was fearless. The man had so much to lose with every decision that he made, but he was courageous. He took chances. He made gambles. He was confident in himself. He was confident in the people around him. He was confident in Canadians. He was confident in this country and, more often than not, he won big for this country.

When he was asked about the Hibernia oil platform off the coast of Newfoundland and the enormous amount of federal money he put behind it, Mr. Mulroney said, "If certainty of results and the elimination of risks had been required in advance, Sir John A. Macdonald would never have proceeded with the great endeavors which bound Canada together."

People say he was born in Quebec, but that has never stopped those of us out east from claiming him as one of our own. He was a fellow ex-grad, a son of Nova Scotia and the founder of Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore.

It was in a crowded hotel ballroom in St. John's on February 11, 1985, that Mr. Mulroney signed the Atlantic accord with Premier Brian Peckford. It is hard to state what that accord means to people out my way. It recognized what we, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, brought to this country, that the profits reaped from the resources off our shores should benefit the people of our province, first and foremost. It ended years of conflict between the federal and provincial governments over offshore rights and gave investors the stability that they needed to build a stellar energy industry.

Mr. Mulroney had his critics, but he refused to buckle. "I am not afraid to inflict prosperity on Newfoundland and Labrador", he famously said. To this day, the accord, as we call it, is like the Charter of Rights and Freedoms but for prosperity, and we have prospered.

I was lucky enough to be in Premier Brian Tobin's office for first oil, and that was in 1997, a dozen years after the Atlantic accord was signed. That is the long-term vision that Brian Mulroney had, that John Crosbie had, that one needs to have in this job.

That was such an important moment in the history of my province, but that moment was never a certainty. It was a fight. It was a fight for our economic future. It was a fight for the rights of provinces in this Confederation and a fight against those who doubted us, who doubted that Newfoundland and Labrador was capable of such ambition and capable of fulfilling that ambition. He never doubted us.

Back in 1990, he put up \$830 million in federal grants and over \$1 billion more in loan guarantees to get that platform built. Then again, in 1993, with a partially built project at risk when Gulf Canada pulled out, Mulroney stepped in with an 8.5% share. Today that platform still stands as a testament to his faith, his faith in us.

Mr. Mulroney always believed in the workers of my province. During COVID, he called on the federal government and on me as natural resources minister at the time to support the industry when it was reeling from the impacts of a global shutdown. "Failure is not an option", he said, and he was right. We delivered almost \$400 million to the province to support workers and to lower emissions in the industry, and then we came through with another \$5.2 billion for Muskrat Falls.

In the midst of everything he did for the people of our country, he still had so much time for this particular Newfoundlander. There are many of us who will tell stories in the coming days, weeks and months ahead of how this man touched individual lives because he understood people. That was the thread running through his greatness. I thank Mr. Mulroney for everything that he did for me on that day, for my province and for my country. I thank Mila, Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nicolas for sharing such a wonderful husband, father and grandfather with all of us.

I admired him so much for his ambition, for his humanity, for his love of country. He had faith and he believed. He took to heart the words of the great Seamus Heaney, “Walk on air against your better judgement.”

May he rest in peace.

● (2035)

[Translation]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues from all parties in the House in recognizing the role and contributions of Canada's 18th prime minister, the late Right Hon. Brian Mulroney.

I would like to begin by extending my condolences to Mila and to Mr. Mulroney's entire family. Losing a family member is difficult under ordinary circumstances, but Mr. Mulroney's family is mourning his loss under the grateful gaze of Canadians and Quebecers and every other country around the world.

[English]

Mr. Mulroney's legacy is worthy of reflection.

He was elected with the largest majority in Canadian history in 1984.

His 1985 bilateral summit with President Ronald Reagan proved to be, as the *Toronto Star* noted, “foundational for a number of major bilateral agreements on shared security, the environment and cross-border trade, eventually culminating in the North American Free Trade Agreement.” I will come back to the free trade agreement momentarily.

With respect to the environment, the 1991 acid rain accord was critical to Canada, because the pollution that found its way into our rivers, lakes and forests came mostly from south of our border, namely the United States. In fact, a 2016 report by the International Joint Commission marking the 25-year anniversary of the acid rain accord found significant declines in the amount of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, particularly in the U.S., from 1990 levels.

Brian Mulroney was the prime minister who created the Environmental Assessment Act and the Environmental Protection Act. He did it not because it was popular, but because he truly believed in protecting our environment for his future and for future generations.

I would also be remiss if I did not take a moment to express our gratitude for his unwavering efforts, against staggering international political odds, to end apartheid in South Africa. It is reported that, upon his release from prison, Nelson Mandela said, “We regard you as one of our great friends because of the solid support we have received from you and Canada over the years”. Upon learning of Mr. Mulroney's passing, the President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, issued a statement on behalf of his nation, saying Mulroney was a “leader that holds a special place in South Africa's history.”

It proves that when Canada has the political will and leadership it can punch above its weight. It can lead the global community to make the right decisions. On behalf of New Democrats, we thank

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him and the Right Hon. Joe Clark for their collective efforts on this front.

Mr. Mulroney has been called one of the most consequential prime ministers in Canadian history. There is substantive evidence to support that claim, but some of these consequences are controversial, and in the minds of many historians, academics, political experts and partisans, these consequences impacted negatively on Canada and Quebec both economically and politically.

Let me begin with the free trade agreement. The agreement, which came into effect in 1987, codified one of the most important and lucrative trade relationships in the world, that of Canada and the United States, eliminating a range of trade barriers over the course of a 10-year period. However, opponents argued that Canadian manufacturers, which relied on tariff protection, would be decimated by free trade. Critics were concerned that American branch plants would move back to the United States and take advantage of cheaper, non-unionized labour. To some extent, this proved to be right.

Then there was the GST. Mr. Mulroney replaced the federal sales tax with a 7% goods and services tax. Many arguments were made regarding the pros and cons of this measure as well. No matter who someone is, be they prime minister, cabinet minister or parliamentarians such as us, there are always decisions that are made which may or may not be popular. We make them because we and our party believe they are the right ones, the right ones for Canada and at times for our global partners, and the right ones on so many other fronts, including human rights.

Mr. Mulroney also took a valiant risk attempting to bring Quebec into the constitutional fold, not once but twice.

● (2040)

Following an interview with *The Globe and Mail* on June 11, 1990, two days after he concluded a difficult round of negotiations with Canada's 10 premiers, Mr. Mulroney said, “It's like an election campaign. You've got to work backwards. You've got to pick your dates and you work backwards from it.... I said (to my aides) that's the day that I'm going to roll all the dice. It's the only way to handle it.” There were serious political consequences to that statement, resulting in a lack of resolution on our constitutional front.

In conclusion, it is not an understatement to say that Mr. Mulroney's legacy has been consequential. His contributions have been immense. He was able to work across party lines to get things done. His commitment to Canada was unquestionable. His dedication to advancing human rights was admirable and noteworthy. His family must be so proud of his contributions and I know colleagues in this chamber are truly grateful.

As we speak here today, Canadians are filing in to pay their tributes and express their gratitude. I know that many in Quebec and across Canada will attend and watch his state funeral on Saturday, as a grateful nation accords him the farewell he actually deserves.

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To his family, his friends and his colleagues, I extend my deepest sympathy on behalf of the New Democratic Party.

May he rest in peace.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what an honour it is for me to stand in this place, pay tribute to the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney and express my sincere condolences to his family: his wife, Mila; daughter, Caroline; and sons, Mark, Nicolas and Ben. I had the opportunity to meet with the family today, and I expressed my sincere condolences on behalf of the people of Barrie—Innisfil.

On my 18th birthday, I was a kid working the all-night shift at a country music radio station in Brandon, Manitoba. I think the member for Brandon—Souris thought I was going to tell that story. The reason I mention it is that it was around the time Brian Mulroney had entered the political scene. I had not really thought much about politics at that time, but there was just something about him. There was something about his magnetism and his communication skills.

Maybe it was the background in radio that I was pursuing, my fledgling radio career, but there was just something that drew me to him. At that moment, during that period, I became a Progressive Conservative. I was not as active in the political movement at that time. I later became very active, under former prime minister Stephen Harper. However, there was something that piqued my interest in politics, and it was Brian Mulroney, not just in the way he communicated but in his vision.

If I were to describe him in one way, in one word, it would be “bold”. I have sat here through most of the debate tonight, and I know there are a lot of ways to describe the former prime minister. He was bold. He was bold at a time when Canada needed to be bold, not just domestically but internationally as well.

I know several of my colleagues have recounted how we had come out of a period of great despair; interest rates were high. He made some bold decisions, and they were not very popular. That is really the sign of leadership, when we think about it: moving people in a direction they know they should be going in when they are not willing to do so. That is what Brian Mulroney did for this country. He led us into a period of economic prosperity, for which we ought to be grateful. In many cases, it was a long-lasting prosperity.

Brian Mulroney obviously won the largest majority in the history of this country. Not only did he draw in a young, impressionable 18-year-old radio DJ at that time, but he did the same for the rest of the nation, and there was a reason for that. He had the type of personality that drew people in. He had the capability to communicate effectively and share his vision for the nation. He did that very well.

We can think of his accomplishments, many positive, some controversial, and what he did around the world: He restored Canada's place as a well-respected global leader. Brian Mulroney was the epitome of a statesman in the way he carried himself and communicated with other leaders.

We can think of where he was in terms of the stature of other world leaders: He was their equal. He was not below or above. When he walked into a room and talked about the things that were

important globally, such as fighting apartheid in South Africa and environmental issues, he had the respect of the room. Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl, François Mitterrand and Mikhail Gorbachev were larger-than-life figures for their own reasons. Brian Mulroney could walk into a room and deal and talk with those people at a level that I do not think we have seen in this country for a long time. He garnered respect.

He was bold in his love of Canada. It was what this nation meant to him. He believed in Canada and our Confederation. He believed in the inclusion of all the provinces. We saw that evidenced by his work on the Meech Lake accord and the Charlottetown accord. He really worked to bring this country together at a time when it needed it the most.

• (2045)

He did this not only in the time that he was prime minister but also long after he was prime minister. We have heard stories tonight of him reaching out and influencing. Even earlier this week, when the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition spoke about Brian Mulroney, they spoke about receiving phone calls from him; based on his experience, he gave them his best advice. Whether it was the update to the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement or other things, he was always there to provide advice. He was always there to comfort people in their time of greatest need, whether he would make phone calls or simply write people notes.

I heard these stories long ago, and it is a practice that I have adopted as a member of Parliament to write notes to people in a way that Brian Mulroney would have done, or simply call people just to see how they are doing. He had the ability to draw one in, and when in the room with him, it did not matter whether there was one person or 1,000 people; he had a way of making a person feel special and that he could connect with them.

Later on, after the election in 2015, I got to know the prime minister. We shared a desire, he and I, on the Gulf War veterans. As members know, it was Brian Mulroney who cobbled together a coalition of like-minded countries that saw the need to deal with Saddam Hussein in Kuwait. Again, it was that principled foreign policy approach. Brian Mulroney brought this alliance together and caused Saddam to retreat out of Kuwait, which was the impetus for the war in the Persian Gulf. I know that Prime Minister Mulroney cared very deeply and was very passionate about sending Canadian troops over to the Persian Gulf.

Brian Mulroney could tell a story like nobody else, and in our shared desire to see the Gulf War veterans elevated to wartime status as opposed to UN mission status, I recall a story he told. He was talking about his concern over sending CF-18s to the Persian Gulf. He was on the phone with Hosni Mubarak, who was then the president of Egypt. Brian told this story at an event, and he said in that deep baritone voice, "Hosni, I'm very concerned about sending CF-18 pilots to fight in the Persian Gulf War." Hosni Mubarak said to him, in his Egyptian accent, "Brian, you don't have to worry about that." Brian goes "What do you mean, Hosni? How can I not worry about that? These are our pilots flying our planes." Hosni said, "The reason you don't have to worry about it is that we trained the Iraqi pilots. We know they're bad pilots." Prime Minister Mulroney said at the time that it gave him comfort in the fact that he was making the right decision at that point to send our troops over to the Persian Gulf.

As I said, we shared the desire to see the Persian Gulf War veterans elevated to wartime status. I say that in the past tense, unfortunately, with his passing. If we are going to pay tribute to the legacy of Brian Mulroney and the deep compassion, the empathy and the concern he had for so many others, I would call on the House as a matter of his legacy to see if we can come together as parties, as government, to ensure that the desire to have those Gulf War veterans elevated to wartime status is met. We have done that twice in our history, with the Korean War veterans and the merchant mariners. In honour of Prime Minister Mulroney, we should be doing that for our Persian Gulf War veterans.

As I conclude, I am fortunate that my riding of Barrie—Innisfil is adjacent to that of the president of the Treasury Board for the Province of Ontario, Caroline Mulroney. I get to spend a lot of time working with Caroline on joint issues and shared common things within our area of central Ontario.

On behalf of the people whom I represent in Barrie—Innisfil, I stand here tonight to express my sincere condolences to Mila, Caroline, Mark, Nicolas and Ben and to thank them for their contributions to our nation and for sharing who was, in my view, a very remarkable Canadian: Brian Mulroney.

● (2050)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too want to join with my colleagues in recounting my fond memories of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

I am going to focus my speech on his colossal trade achievements on behalf of Canadians. One has to understand that, as is true for so many other Canadians, my life has been profoundly impacted by the life of Brian Mulroney.

I grew up in Vancouver and, as a young child, at nine years of age, I already knew that perhaps, one day, I would make a life in politics. Little did I know that I would end up in this place.

However, my member of Parliament, back in those years, in south Vancouver, was a fellow by the name of John Fraser. He was elected in 1972, became fisheries minister under Brian Mulroney and then, yes, became the Speaker of the House of Commons. He basically sat in the chair the current Speaker is sitting in today.

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I used to admire John Fraser from a distance. He was now a cabinet minister in the Mulroney government, and I often thought that it would be wonderful to represent the constituents of my community in Ottawa someday and help shape the future of my dear country.

I went through university. I graduated with a law degree, and my wife and I moved out to the beautiful city of Abbotsford, which is still my home today.

Very quickly, these aspirations of being a member of Parliament disappeared, because my wife and I had four daughters. A member of Parliament is away from his or her family for long periods of time, 40%, 50%, 60% of the year. That is not good for raising a family, so I put those ambitions on the back burner. I got involved in local politics.

In 1983, in Abbotsford, our MP at the time was Alex Patterson. He announced that he was retiring. There was a lot of excitement in Abbotsford, because Canada needed change. Brian Mulroney represented that change.

We had a nomination contest, a very big one, with 12 different candidates vying to be the Conservative candidate in the upcoming federal election. My candidate, a man by the name of Ross Belsher, won that nomination; he went on to win the election and serve in the Mulroney government for two majority terms. He later became a good friend.

Four years later, I had the chance to manage the campaign of the other MP representing the western part of Abbotsford, a man by the name of Bob Wenman. I was able to manage his campaign successfully. He also served two terms in that Mulroney majority government.

I now had experience and was following the various issues that were playing out here in our capital city. I took note of the fact that Mr. Mulroney had a resolute character, where he identified the most important issues that needed to be addressed in Canada. One was Canada's competitiveness within the world economy. Mr. Mulroney proceeded to negotiate a free trade agreement with the United States.

One has to understand that, back then, this was not necessarily universally popular. In fact, the naysayers came out. They said we were going to hollow out our economy, that Canada was going to lose its universal health care system and the Canada pension plan. Canada as we knew it would be gone; however, as we know, Brian Mulroney prevailed.

He understood what was at stake. He spent the political capital that he had, and he prevailed. Canadians today are thankful that he did. By the way, all the fears of the naysayers were put to rest, because none of those fears ever materialized.

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• (2055)

Today we still rely on the successor to NAFTA as the most important economic agreement Canada has in the world. The reason I recount this is that when I was supporting the different candidates to be part of the Mulroney government as Brian Mulroney implemented his grand vision, a more robust and outward-looking vision for our country, little did I know back then that someday his work would intersect with mine in the House. Years later I was in fact elected to the House, and in 2011, I had the privilege and honour of serving as Canada's trade minister as the Harper government rolled out the most ambitious trade agenda our country had ever seen.

We negotiated a trade agreement with the 27 countries of the European Union, the largest consumer market in the world. We negotiated trade agreements with some of our most trusted Asia-Pacific partners in the TPP. We negotiated trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia and Peru, and numerous investment agreements. The bottom line is this: The tone that had been set by Brian Mulroney and the work he had done in achieving the momentous and historic free trade agreement with the United States, and then later bringing Mexico into our North American partnership, would pay huge dividends as Canada continued to look outward at all those opportunities Canadians could have as we engaged in the global marketplace.

He was a visionary, and I am so grateful I had the opportunity to benefit from his work. Today we benefit from the elimination of trade barriers, tariff barriers and non-tariff barriers, as we look outward. Canada today benefits from a comparative advantage as we do business around the world. Today Canadian companies have opportunities they would have never had if were not for Brian Mulroney.

Let me close by saying that Brian Mulroney intuitively understood that he would be setting the stage for our country. He set the stage for subsequent governments to expand on the golden opportunities that he so deftly and courageously negotiated. Today our prosperity depends on freer and fairer trade with the world.

We who followed Prime Minister Mulroney rode on the shoulders of a giant, a political giant and an economic giant. More than that, it can truly be said of him that Canada has lost one of its great Canadians. We all owe him and his family a debt of gratitude. To Mila, Caroline, Ben, Mark, Nicolas, their spouses and children I say thank you for sharing their husband, father and grandfather with us.

Rest in peace, Prime Minister Mulroney.

• (2100)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to remark on the life of the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, in the hope of looking at his life as a way for us to look toward the future.

I was a young, grade 11, student at Centre Wellington District High School in Wellington County in 1988 when I joined the Conservative Party. There was an election that would take place later that fall. That spring I joined the party to campaign for my local member of Parliament at the time, who has become a very good

friend, the Hon. Perrin Beatty. That was my first step into the life of politics.

I clearly remember why I joined the party. I clearly remember why I helped campaign for Perrin Beatty in 1988 as a young high school student. It was because I believed in the vision that Brian Mulroney outlined for this country. It was the free trade election that many have referenced in the House. It was a big shift in Canadian policy, the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States. In fact it was arguably the biggest shift in foreign policy in Canada in a century, since the reciprocity election of, I believe, 1911, when then prime minister Laurier argued for free trade and the Conservatives of the day argued against it and in favour of what was called the national policy. Canadians at that time decided against free trade and decided to implement a series of tariff barriers to protect domestic industry and shield it from foreign competition.

Brian Mulroney, after listening to experts in 1986 and 1987, decided that it was time to spend some political capital and convince Canadians to do away with the over 100-year-old policy that Sir John A. Macdonald had implemented, the national policy, in order to ensure our future prosperity. That is exactly what he did. The 1988 free trade election was arguably one of our only recent modern elections that have been about foreign policy, because it essentially was about Canada's relationship with the United States. I joined the party at that time as a young teenager, a high school student, because I believed in his vision, in his confidence in what this country was and could be.

When we look at the track record of the Mulroney government, we see a remarkable record. It implemented the last series of big tax reforms that we have seen. We all know about the 1971 tax reforms that were the result of the Carter commission, but many of us have forgotten the reforms of 1987 and 1988 and, subsequently, of the early 1990s. The Mulroney government took 10 federal tax brackets and reduced them to three. It eliminated a punitive 13.5% manufacturers sales tax and replaced it with a value-added goods and services tax that expert economists had been arguing for since the early 1970s, all in an effort to unleash the productive capacity of the Canadian economy. It implemented monetary policy reform at the Bank of Canada under the leadership of then governor John Crow by implementing inflation targeting of 2%, which is with us to this day. It also privatized and deregulated many industries, unleashing productivity, growth and job creation in those industries.

On top of doing all of that, it actually, over its term in government, brought the budget to an operating surplus. The reason that is significant in today's context is that it was the Mulroney government that was the last government in this country to meet our NATO 2% defence spending commitment. It was also the last time we came close to meeting the overseas development assistance goal of spending 0.7% of gross national income on aid to the world's most vulnerable and poorest.

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● (2105)

It was also the government that was ambitious in its foreign policy when it came to the environment. It was the government that helped put in place the Montreal Protocol, which banned substances that contained chlorine and bromine, came into effect in 1989 and effectively helped close off the ozone hole, which continues to be repaired to this day as a result of that protocol.

It was the government that implemented what we now call the acid rain treaty, which was known as the air quality agreement, that convinced Republican President Ronald Reagan to sign on to such an agreement, as well as his successor George Bush, in order to de-acidify the freshwater lakes in much of Canada, particularly throughout the Canadian Shield, many of which had become dead lakes because they had become so acidic they no longer could support the native flora and fauna as they once did.

It was the government that introduced the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, which is something near and dear to my heart as an Ontario MP, that touches on four of the five Great Lakes, Great Lakes that hold one-fifth of all the surface freshwater on the planet.

It was a government that accomplished those foreign policy goals in the environment, in defence and in overseas development assistance, all the while bringing the Government of Canada's operating budget to a surplus during the nine years it was in power.

On top of all that, the late Prime Minister Mulroney led the charge in the Commonwealth to stand up against an apartheid regime in South Africa. He was a leader in joining with allies on so many other initiatives.

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the late prime minister Brian Mulroney was to instill in this country a confidence about who we are and what we could be. He was the prime minister who said to Canadian businesses that they can compete with the best in the world and that they do not need a tariff wall to protect them from competition, because he knew Canada, Canadians and Canadian businesses, and he knew they were excellent. He knew they could compete with the best in the world.

He instilled in our academic researchers that same kind of confidence with the initiatives he undertook to fund post-secondary education and research. He instilled in all parts of the country this idea that Canada had boundless potential and that it was only limited by our own limited horizons about what we could be.

Perhaps his greatest accomplishment was to instill in a new generation of Canadians, who would later follow him to serve in the House and who hopefully will come to serve in subsequent Parliaments, the idea that we can be the best in the world, that we can compete with the best in the world and that we can strive for and can achieve excellence.

I want to thank Mr. Mulroney for his contributions to this country. I want to particularly thank his family, Mila, Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nicolas, for the sacrifices they made over so many years and for allowing Mr. Mulroney, a father and a husband, to donate and to contribute so much to this country we call home.

● (2110)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not part of my notes, but 40 years ago this year, Brian Mulroney became the Prime Minister of Canada. Like my colleague from Barrie—Innisfil and many of my colleagues, it was around that time that I got more interested in politics and started years of serving in various farm leader and agriculture organizations. I had no ambition to ever be an elected member of Parliament, but here I am. Brian Mulroney did have that impact on a lot of us.

It is a real honour for me to rise in this place and pay tribute to Canada's 18th prime minister, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney. On February 29, we all know that Canadians lost a remarkable statesman, a visionary, a leader and a powerful advocate for this country we love. More than that, those closest to him lost a husband, a father, a grandfather and a dear friend.

I extend my condolences to his wife, Mila, and their children, Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nicolas, and their families. I had the opportunity to meet with them yesterday and again today as we honoured the procession across the street to where he lays in state. It was those folks, his family, who so generously shared Brian with all of us in Canada.

Born into a working-class family in Baie-Comeau, Quebec, Brian worked hard to become a successful lawyer and business executive before entering politics in the late seventies. He won a seat in the House of Commons in the 1983 federal election, and shortly thereafter was elected leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and became the leader of the official opposition.

The following year, in 1984, Brian led the Progressive Conservatives to a landslide election victory, becoming the Prime Minister of Canada. He received another convincing mandate when he was re-elected in 1988, the famous "free trade election" that so many of my colleagues from all parties have spoken about here in the House tonight. An historic opportunity to serve is what Mr. Mulroney called his 1984 election win during his victory speech to supporters, marking the beginning of a prime ministership that would run through to 1993.

During his leadership, Brian Mulroney propelled Canada onto the world stage with an unparalleled commitment to economic reform, national unity and international diplomacy. Among his most enduring achievements was his role in negotiating the historic Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, a pact that reshaped North American trade dynamics and bolstered Canada's economic prosperity.

Despite facing skepticism and opposition, Brian Mulroney remained resolute in his conviction that free trade would unlock Canada's full potential on the world stage. This agreement paved the way for the subsequent North American Free Trade Agreement, further solidifying Canada's position in the global marketplace.

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On top of that, Brian Mulroney's leadership was characterized by a determined commitment to national unity. In the face of regional tensions, he championed the cause of federalism and worked to strengthen the bonds that held Canada together. He undertook to address constitutional issues and promote unity among our provinces and territories.

Brian's legacy is also defined by his role in shaping international relations, fostering partnerships and advancing global co-operation. Notably, he championed the fight against apartheid in South Africa. He was unwavering in his conviction and rallied countries against apartheid, going as far as imposing sanctions on South Africa, even as other key allies refused to speak out. His steadfast approach gave Canada a new sense of respect and presence on the international stage.

He is also widely considered, as some have mentioned today, Canada's greenest prime minister. That is not because of his Irish roots. This is a nod to his emphasis on environmental conservation through a variety of policies and initiatives. One was the signing of the acid rain treaty with the United States in 1991, which aimed to reduce acid rain pollution and mitigate its harmful effects on ecosystems and human health in North America. Another was his advocacy for the Montreal protocol, which aimed to phase out the production and use of ozone-depleting substances.

● (2115)

He expanded Canada's national parks system, further enhancing conservation efforts across the country, and funded habitat restoration projects, wildlife conservation programs and community-based environmental initiatives aimed at engaging citizens in environmental protection efforts. I also want to mention that he was the first world leader to recognize the independence of Ukraine, in early December 1991.

Something that has not really been highlighted yet was his contribution to agriculture. Speaking as a former farmer and farm leader, I know several of his agricultural policies stood out for the ways they improved the lives of Canadian farmers and farming communities. His government introduced various programs aimed at stabilizing farm incomes and supporting Canadian farmers during periods of economic uncertainty. This included the establishment of income stabilization programs to provide financial assistance to farmers affected by fluctuating commodity prices and adverse weather conditions. His government also prioritized the promotion of Canadian agriculture products in international markets and invested in agricultural research and innovation to enhance the productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of Canadian agriculture.

Brian Mulroney surrounded himself with good people to ensure that he delivered results for farmers. I am reminded, a little lightheartedly, of the three Ms of Brian Mulroney's cabinet. They were MPs from the west who held various cabinet portfolios in the Mulroney government.

There was the Hon. Don Mazankowski from Vegreville, Alberta, who was the deputy prime minister of Canada and the minister of transport at the time. There was the Hon. Bill McKnight from Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, the MP for Kindersley—Lloydminster, who was the minister of defence. We could add Jack Murta to that as well. Also, my friend and colleague, the Hon. Charles Mayer, the

MP for Portage—Marquette, was the minister of the Canadian Wheat Board and agriculture throughout Prime Minister Mulroney's time in office. Mr. Murta would have been a fourth M, so to speak, but they were all diligent, hard-working parliamentarians who carried the voices of their constituents to Ottawa with dedication and who supported Mr. Mulroney in his public service. It says a lot about a man that he was able to build such an effective team.

These achievements, among others, highlight Brian Mulroney's significant contributions during his time in office and beyond. Even as we mourn his loss, we honour the memory of the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, a distinguished statesman and a remarkable leader. We will not soon forget his contributions to our nation and our world.

As the Manitoba Conservative caucus chair, I offer condolences to Mila and his family. May he rest in peace.

● (2120)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Chair, it is my sad honour to rise today in Canada's highest democratic institution to pay respects to a great man, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, Canada's 18th Prime Minister.

A great man has passed. Time waits for no one. We honour him and reflect on his life and all that he has done. For many of his great accomplishments, we, a generation of Canadians, are the beneficiaries.

First and foremost, in service to his country here and elsewhere, he helped build and strengthen our nation. Dividing us was not his path. He built us up.

I recall serving his government here over three decades ago, and I will recount to members on all sides of the House what Ottawa and eastern Ontario looked like before Brian Mulroney's time as our prime minister. Buildings had been boarded up. Architectural landmarks, like the Elgin Hotel, were closed and poised for demolition. Neighbouring towns in eastern Ontario were lobbying for government jobs, because the unemployment rate was so high and people had little hope. Opening a prison meant that at least some people would get jobs. The unemployment in the area reached 12.5%. Such was the economic malaise this region faced in 1984.

To paint a clearer picture of the country at that time, government spending was out of control. The latest budget posted a massive \$37-billion deficit, which is about \$98 billion in today's inflated dollars, a record at the time. Inflation had only recently fallen from 12.5% with the introduction of wage and price controls imposed primarily on employees by the federal government. The Canadian dollar had fallen in value by 25% over the previous decade. Our armed forces were underfunded and demoralized, and our international commitments went unmet. We were a nation desperately in need of leadership. Nature abhors a vacuum.

[Translation]

Just when this country most needed a leader, a determined man stepped forward. Martin Brian Mulroney, the son of a hard-working electrician in Baie-Comeau, in Quebec, a labour lawyer and well-known business leader in Montreal, had become the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada a year earlier. He showed that he had bold plans for the country, and Canadians rewarded him with the largest majority government in Canadian history in the 1984 election. He was ambitious, he did not shy away from complex problems, and he did not worry about doing too much, because he had a lot of work to do.

[English]

One of the people who worked for him at the start of his time in government told me that they worked hard because he worked hard, and they felt that, if they did not succeed, the country was at stake. His leadership saw successes, and it saw failures. No one likes to fail, least of all those who possess ambition to do great things. Failures feel personal, but in the end they are overwhelmed by the successes. This is one of the marks of true leadership.

“Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.” That is a quote from Nelson Mandela, a man whose life Brian Mulroney would change.

I recall the 1988 election, when he was campaigning on free trade. His opponent, the Right Hon. John Turner, had landed a blow during the English-language debate, and polls suddenly shifted against our direction. Undaunted, Brian Mulroney took up the fight the next day and led the campaign across the nation. He said that the fight of John Turner's life was to tear up that document, but he fight of his life was to build a country. Canadians reward leadership.

Let us celebrate the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney's life by acknowledging his successes: restarting Canada's economy; privatizing Crown corporations; rebuilding Canada's armed forces; building trade alliances that once made North America the largest trading bloc in the world; reforming a broken tax system; healing divisions in Canada's federation; indigenous advancement with the forming of Nunavut as Canada's third territory; striking environmental treaties to address acid rain in North America and to end worldwide emissions associated with the world's thinning ozone layer; leading the world in confronting South Africa's apartheid system, resulting in the freedom of one of the world's great statesmen, Nelson Mandela; standing shoulder to shoulder with Canada's allies as the world changed; and earning Canada's position on the international stage and joining our peers in organizations like the G7. Take on no small tasks, so to say.

His ministers and his caucus followed him and emulated his ambition and his work ethic. Those of us who had the privilege of working for him and his ministers felt that compelling requirement to do our utmost to get it right. Leadership is about inspiration, and the generation of Canadians whom Brian Mulroney inspired watched and learned. For a while emulating that example led this country to greatness in many ways.

Most Canadians knew him as a politician, and politics is a team sport. Our team has to win in order for us to move forward. Never-

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theless, his treatment of all those contributing to Canada's public life was magnanimous. His was an example from which we have much to learn.

● (2125)

[Translation]

Let us look at the legacy of political, economic and social leaders in Canada over the decades that followed the political leadership of Brian Mulroney. So many people had a connection with him. These relationships were special to him. His kindness was legendary.

I remember seeing him at the funeral of the Hon. Jean Corbeil, one of the ministers I served. I remember the people he brought with him. Brian Mulroney said they deserved to be there because he was the leader of a special team.

[English]

Two years ago I was talking with a friend, someone who has helped me on my political path. We were comparing the qualities of leaders in Canada, and I referred to the qualities of the former prime minister. My friend retorted, “Come on; that was Mulroney,” as if it was an example that illustrates itself, kind of like drafting Wayne Gretzky in a hockey pool. He was a man who came a long way from his roots in a Quebec mill town to lead a country, and lead us well, and to change the world in a very positive way.

Today, we lament with his family and friends, but we are lucky to have had him in our midst. Now, we wish him a safe final journey in eternal rest, from a very grateful nation.

Rest in peace, Martin Brian Mulroney.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Chair, I have had the opportunity to listen to many colleagues from all sides of the House provide commentary on one who was no doubt a great Canadian, parliamentarian and statesman. There are many wonderful words one could use to describe Brian Mulroney.

In many ways I reflect not as someone who has a personal story, of which I have heard a great many, but I reflect on what I would perceive Canadians as a whole would see: an individual who contributed immensely. We have heard reference made to acid rain, apartheid, the independence of Ukraine and so much more. All of these things, I know, have had a significant impact.

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I was first elected in 1988 when Brian Mulroney was the prime minister. I remember the discussions that had taken place in the Manitoba legislature, a lot of which were not necessarily positive with respect to him. What I do know and appreciate is that leadership is demonstrated by making difficult decisions and, in many ways, by advocating. We heard a great deal about free trade. I campaigned against free trade in 1988. I heard about the issue of the GST and campaigned against it when it was introduced. However, time has shown that these are policies that continue today and have been expanded upon. I am now an advocate of the benefits of the GST and a strong advocate of the benefits of trade. The five policies I have listed have had a profoundly positive impact on Canada as a nation.

A member made reference to polls, and I believe he said that at the time Brian Mulroney left politics, the government was at around 12% in the polls. If we look today at how Canadians feel about the prime minister, it is well above 80%. I think that the more people get to know about the different things a prime minister and their office can accomplish, the more they appreciate everything that has been done.

At the end of the day, Brian Mulroney has a wonderful legacy. I want to extend not only my personal condolences but also those on behalf of the residents of Winnipeg North to Mila, the children, the grandchildren and all whose lives have been touched by him over the years.

• (2130)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Chair, I am both honoured and saddened to be standing in my place today as we pay our respects and send our condolences to the family of the late Right Honourable Martin Brian Mulroney, Canada's 18th prime minister.

I was recently asked by a local journalist what words I would use to describe our former prime minister, and it was these: statesman and leader. It was that leadership and dynamism of Brian Mulroney that drew me to the Progressive Conservative Party in 1983. How many young Canadians can say they were rivetted to their television screens, watching a political convention? I was in June 1983, so please do not hold that against me.

Learning more about our leader and his background, his story really resonated with me. Here was a successful businessman and lawyer who had come from modest means, yet family was the foundation upon which he would build his future life and career. He was so proud of his upbringing and his father, a hard-working electrician employed at the iron ore mine in the small town of Baie-Comeau.

This struck me because, as a first-generation Canadian, my family came here in the 1950s with nothing more than the hope of a better future for their family and future children, family as the foundation. After arriving in Niagara Falls in March 1951, my dad landed a job at Cyanamid Canada in May that year and went on to a successful 40-year career, working as a general labourer, and then he retired as the facility's maintenance supervisor.

Simply put, my dad loved his job, and his great wish was for both me and my brother to go to school and to get a great educa-

tion. The great success of Canada is the fact that if one was prepared to work hard, one could accomplish anything one set their mind to. My dad personified that statement and went on to provide everything we could have ever asked for as children and young adults.

My dad knew nothing of the operations of our political system. However, when I decided to get involved after university, he was there to support me and my local Conservative candidate and member of Parliament for Niagara Falls, who I would later go on to work for. Why would my dad do this? He knew that it was my passion and that family was our foundation.

It really is an interesting path that all of us take, which allows us to become those individuals fortunate enough to have the extreme and rare privilege of sitting in this esteemed place to represent our communities and our constituents. That path for me was forged first in 1983 and then, following university, in 1988 when I came here to Ottawa to be a political staffer for the Hon. Rob Nicholson. When I came here, I had the good fortune of establishing great friendships with a number of people, including with the member for South Shore—St. Margarets and the member for Calgary Centre.

I became involved politically at that time because change was needed, and I believed the agent of that change was Brian Mulroney, leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. What an incredible time it was to be in Ottawa, as the Conservative government under the leadership of Brian Mulroney tackled issues head-on, be it standing against racist policies like apartheid, advocating for the release of Nelson Mandela, achieving the acid rain agreement or establishing free trade with our largest trading partner, the United States.

Former Prime Minister Mulroney did what he always felt was right and was in the best interests of all Canadians. He did so because he built his success and his drive on the foundation of family: his loving wife Mila, and his children, Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nicolas.

Recently, in a CTV interview, the late Prime Minister Mulroney's official photographer, Bill McCarthy, relayed the story of how family was incredibly important to him, and he told the photographer, "Billy, I'm going to tell you something right now: there's nothing more important in your life than your family."

I want to end on a quote from the former prime minister when asked what leadership was and what it entailed. In 2004, he said, "Leadership is the process, not only of foreseeing the need for change, but of making the case for change. Leadership does not consist of imposing unpopular ideas on the public, but of making unpopular ideas acceptable to the nation."

Brian Mulroney was a leader, and he will be greatly missed. My deepest condolences to his wife Mila, and to his beloved children and family.

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● (2135)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Chair, it is a privilege to rise to pay tribute to the life and legacy of Canada's 18th Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney.

At the outset, I would like to extend my condolences to his wife, Mila, as well as to his children, his grandchildren and the entire Mulroney family.

Although I did not have the privilege of personally knowing Brian Mulroney, I have always admired and appreciated the tremendous statesmanship and leadership he provided during the nine years he served as our prime minister. To understand the many achievements and accomplishments of Brian Mulroney, it is important to understand that, when he was elected in 1984 with the second largest majority government in Canadian history, save for John Diefenbaker's landslide win in 1958, he inherited very difficult circumstances. They were difficult economic circumstances, with double-digit inflation, double-digit unemployment and interest rates that were north of 20%. It was also a difficult fiscal situation, with the fiscal cupboard being bare.

Notwithstanding those challenges, he got to work to implement many bold policies, some of which were controversial, many of which were transformational and, with the benefit of history, have proven to have been for the benefit of Canada on the whole.

It should be further noted that, when Brian Mulroney was first elected, the unity of the country was very much imperiled. There was great division across the land. It was Brian Mulroney who spoke about bringing Quebec back into the constitutional fold with honour and enthusiasm.

Although he, in the end, did not succeed, he must be credited for the tremendous leadership and courage he demonstrated, at considerable political cost to himself and his party, but it was for the betterment of strengthening the unity of Canada. That was his objective, and he brought Canadians together. He brought Albertans and Quebecers together in 1984, and again in 1988, when he made history by being the only Conservative to win a back-to-back majority government, save for Sir John A. Macdonald.

When Brian Mulroney was elected in 1984, speaking as an Alberta MP, Alberta was reeling. Alberta had been devastated as a result of the national energy program, which had devastated Alberta's economy and had driven many Albertans to unemployment and bankruptcy.

Brian Mulroney recognized the difficulty Alberta faced, and his government moved expeditiously, in difficult circumstances, to abolish the national energy program, as well as the petroleum and gas revenue tax, the PGRT, which was a punitive tax. However, it was not just in the context of energy policy that Alberta benefited from Brian Mulroney. His government also abolished the Foreign Investment Review Agency, a board whose decisions often imperiled the flow of investment to Alberta and the west.

Brian Mulroney negotiated the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, which was a win for Canada, but which was very much in Alberta's economic interest. Indeed, free trade continues to be in Alberta's economic interest. While Brian Mulroney was not always popular in Alberta, he demonstrated, or history has demonstrated,

rather, that Brian Mulroney consistently had Albertans' backs. He delivered for Alberta.

● (2140)

While much has been spoken this evening about some of his obvious important achievements, including negotiating the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and the acid rain treaty with the United States, standing up to apartheid and strengthening our most important bilateral relationship, that being with the United States, there are other areas he deserves great credit for that he often has not received credit for.

One example is that it was the Mulroney government that restored fiscal responsibility to Ottawa. When Brian Mulroney was elected, he inherited a deficit that, in today's terms, would be approaching \$100 billion. That is a large deficit even by the current Liberal government's standards. It has exceeded deficits on that scale, but I digress.

The Mulroney government faced a bloated federal government and program spending that was being increased on an unsustainable basis annually. Does that sound familiar? The Mulroney government responded by initiating policies to reduce the size and scope of government to get spending under control. Indeed, on an incremental and responsible but significant basis, annual program spending growth was substantially reduced in the neighbourhood of 70%. Consequently, what was a very large operating deficit turned into an operating surplus. In short, the Mulroney government fixed Canada's budget.

It is true that Jean Chrétien did inherit a deficit from the Mulroney government, but it was because of the costs associated with servicing that debt, debt that had been accumulated by the previous Trudeau government and not the Conservative Mulroney government.

Of course, Brian Mulroney's government deserves significant credit for contributing in a major way to building Canada's modern economy through the policy of free trade, yes, but also through a series of free market policies, including a comprehensive program around privatization, deregulation and tax reform. Together, these policies contributed over the long term to growth and prosperity and to the enhancement of Canada's competitiveness.

I could go on with a long list of the many other achievements of Brian Mulroney and his government over nine years, but time does not allow it. However, what these achievements I have highlighted and my colleagues have highlighted over this evening demonstrate is that Brian Mulroney was a transformative prime minister. He was a consequential prime minister. He will go down as one Canada's greatest prime ministers, and Canada is better off because of his leadership.

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● (2145)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Chair, as always, it is an honour to be able to rise in this place. Tonight, I would like to begin my remarks by passing along, from Danielle and myself, and on behalf of the people of Battle River—Crowfoot, condolences to Mila, Caroline, Ben, Mark, Nicolas and the entire Mulroney family on the passing of Brian Mulroney, the 18th Prime Minister of Canada.

I am of a generation where, although I was alive for a few short years during his latter years in office, I did not have a chance to experience first-hand the leadership that he provided to our country. Upon reflection, after learning of Mr. Mulroney's passing, I came to realize how consequential he was. We have heard a lot tonight about how impactful his legacy was and is in the country that we know and love today.

When I was reflecting back, in reading my social studies textbooks, things such as free trade, the fact that CFCs damaged the ozone layer and the need to stand up for what is right, as well as that Canada could play a consequential role in challenging policies like apartheid in South Africa, were taken for granted. I have looked at that image many times over the past number of weeks, of the three great Conservative leaders who dominated so much of those formative years that saw the end of the Soviet Union: former U.S. president Ronald Reagan, former U.K. prime minister Margaret Thatcher and, of course, Canada's own Brian Mulroney.

The impact and the legacy of his leadership led this country from challenging years, challenging decades of policies that held Canada back to a renewed hope and optimism. That is what I will briefly touch on here.

Shortly after the world learned of Mr. Mulroney's passing, I received a text message from a constituent. His reflections were interesting; he said that he remembered that 1983 convention. He was there. His family was involved in politics. At that time, he was a much younger man. He reflected to me how much hope Brian Mulroney's leadership victory at that convention gave to him for Alberta's place in Canada, as well as for the future and the potential that existed in our country. It is consequential, and the reason I bring it up here this evening is that this hope and promise of what Canada is and what Canada could be is so key and such a significant part of the legacy of the late prime minister.

I would also share that, after learning of Brian Mulroney's passing, I reached out to one of my predecessors, Arnold Malone, who served for a number of years prior to the 1984 election and then for the two majority governments. Notably, he served as a member and chair of the defence committee. I reached out and introduced myself; we shared a region and many constituents, although he had since moved away from Battle River—Crowfoot. I asked if he had any thoughts or reflections.

I would like to share a couple of those with the House and a grateful nation. I would just reference, and I will quote a poem in a moment. What struck me about the stories that Mr. Malone shared with me about his experience as a part of the Mulroney government over two successive majorities was that they came back to people. One story is an example of Brian's kindness.

● (2150)

This is what Arnold Malone had to say. He was with a group of businessmen in Japan, and on the return flight, a Sunday, Brian got the message that the wife of a member, Stan Darling, MP for Parry Sound—Muskoka, had passed away and the funeral was the next day, on Monday. Brian had the pilot divert the flight and, unannounced, attended the funeral for Stan's wife.

What I think speaks to the level of humility that is so important in remembering Brian Mulroney's legacy is this. Mr. Malone goes on to say that as Stan was leaving the front rows of the church, he was shocked to see Brian sitting halfway back next to the aisle because it was unannounced and unexpected that he would make the time to attend that funeral. It was his personal touch and how impactful that truly was. I would suggest it is that impact and personal connection that allowed the pioneering of things that we take for granted in our nation today, things like NAFTA free trade, an idea that was surprisingly not popular at the time it was introduced, but has had an impact on our nation.

It was that care for people that I see in another story shared with me. Before Brian Mulroney entered politics, he was the chief executive officer of the Iron Ore Company. I know the Conservative leader has referenced this a number of times. One of the stories associated with that work and his time as the chief executive officer, the boss of the organization, is that he was known to carry a lunch box into work. While he was an executive at that company, he wanted to make sure he could eat lunch with the employees. It was no surprise that after a fairly short time, with his care for the people at that company, labour disputes dropped and productivity rose. That sort of leadership is very impactful.

There is a very well-known poem that has been referenced over the course of the discussion this evening and in the tributes that were made this past week. It is Rudyard Kipling's famous poem *If*—. One of the lines is, "Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch". It is this legacy that I would suggest defines so much of the impact that Brian Mulroney was able to leave on this country.

I will share something else that I had the opportunity to learn about when I was a university student. It was the boldness to tackle challenges. Specifically, although not successful in leading constitutional change, his leadership to take on those issues head-on is a lesson for us all today.

We all know of the Meech Lake accord and the Charlottetown accord. I will not get into many of the details, but in his boldness, he took the challenges of the nation, boiled them down to action that could be taken and then took action knowing that he may not be successful. These are things like constitutional reform, which would have, in the case of the Charlottetown accord, brought about significant democratic reform, including through changes to Canada's Senate.

I will conclude by saying that we are remembering much about Brian Mulroney's legacy as the 18th Prime Minister of Canada, but in addition to that, he was a father, a husband and a grandfather. To Mila, Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nick, as well as his larger family and his many grandkids, I say thanks for sharing their husband, father and grandfather with a grateful nation, and I acknowledge the leadership that it provided in turning Canada into the country it is today.

May he rest in peace and may God bless his family and give them peace during this time.

● (2155)

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Chair, it is an honour to stand in the House and speak, as always, but of course on this special occasion I am particularly grateful to my dear friend and colleague from Battle River—Crowfoot, who just told a story about the legendary Stan Darling, former member of Parliament for Parry Sound—Muskoka, which of course is the magnificent part of this country that I am honoured to represent here today.

Stan Darling represents, in many ways, the very beginning of my understanding of politics and recognition of political life, as does Prime Minister Mulroney. My earliest recollection of a prime minister was of Prime Minister Mulroney when he was first elected. I remember as an elementary school student this grand campaign to raise awareness about acid rain and its deleterious effects on the lakes and forests of Canada. Stan Darling, who was the member of Parliament for Parry Sound—Muskoka at the time, was a champion for arresting the causes and effects of acid rain and addressing the issue, which was not just a Canadian issue but a binational issue. He was a champion to the point that he was in the ear of Prime Minister Mulroney enough that he finally convinced him that this was an issue that had to be addressed.

As a small kid in elementary school, I wrote a letter to the prime minister of the country about acid rain, and I remember with great awe receiving a response from him, assuring me that he thought it was an important issue and that he was working to deal with it. I felt incredibly special as a kid in grade 4 or 5, whatever it was, getting a letter from the Prime Minister of Canada.

Fast-forward to my first year in university, when Prime Minister Mulroney resigned, after I had watched his career as my first prime minister. I remember taking that day off school, watching every moment of it on television and writing him another letter to thank him for his leadership, particularly on acid rain, because that was the issue that stood out in my mind most particularly in terms of what I thought was his inspired leadership.

We have heard so many speakers here tonight talk about the remarkable statesmanship and courage of this man to expend political capital to do what he felt and knew was right for Canada, not for tomorrow and not for political purposes but what was right for Canada for generations to come. I was once again incredibly honoured to receive a letter back, thanking me for my letter and for everything, saying that he did in fact believe that he governed for what was right for Canada for generations to come, not for tomorrow or just for political expediency.

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In many ways, then, this was part of the inspiration for me as a little kid growing up in Huntsville, knowing Prime Minister Mulroney's story of growing up as the son of an electrician in a small town in Quebec, just as I was the son of an electrician growing up in a small town in Ontario, and not in a wealthy family. I grew up in a family of Jehovah's Witnesses that was not remotely interested in politics. We were not supposed to vote. We were not supposed to be interested in politics, yet I secretly always was. I admired this man who I thought was a great leader, so in many ways Brian Mulroney was my inspiration to enter politics, and, at the ripe old age of 21, I was convinced to run for public office in my community of Huntsville. By the skin of my teeth I was elected, which in many ways was quite surprising and of course changed the trajectory of my life quite dramatically.

I spent almost a whole lifetime, really, in municipal politics. I was a councillor for many years. I ultimately became the deputy mayor of Huntsville. I was the mayor of Huntsville for one term and was re-elected. Only one year after my re-election, I was elected to Parliament. After being elected to Parliament, I thought about something I had never really thought of again. I thought about the early days when I was watching the then prime minister in this place and how he would debate.

● (2200)

I regret not having my reading glasses with me, because I had a moment when I thought I would put my reading glasses on the way Brian Mulroney did. I admired him, watching him do that in the House. He would put his glasses on and read a quote. It was the most magnificent thing to watch. I could not believe it. Of course, I forgot my glasses.

As I found myself elected to this place, I realized that I knew so many people who had worked for Prime Minister Mulroney. He was the only political figure in my lifetime whom I ever really wanted to meet, whom I was excited to meet. I thought I should really meet this man one day. I knew Bill Fox, who had been his communications director. He and I had worked together a little bit at a firm in Toronto. I knew Senator Segal, who was his chief of staff for a short time and ran for the leadership of our party, a great friend. Of course my dear friend Scott Munnoch served as his personal assistant and advance man for many years. He continued to be not just in service to the former prime minister but also a close, personal family friend. He was kind of like a big brother to the Mulroney kids.

I thought I said to Scott, "For goodness sake, I know all you guys and I have worked for him all these years. Why have I never met him?" Mercifully, a few years ago, Scott arranged for me to finally meet Prime Minister Mulroney and his lovely wife, Mila. It was a bit of a magical moment for me, going from those early days as an elementary school kid and thinking the prime minister responded to me, to being a member of the chamber and meeting the man who was my hero.

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I should mention that when we stood for a picture, he asked me what riding I represented. I said, "Well, I represent Stan Darling country, Prime Minister." He loved that. He told me many great stories. He said, "You know, Stan was a great man. He's the reason we have an acid rain treaty." Everybody credits Prime Minister Mulroney with the magnificent negotiation skills, and former president Reagan for the relationship they had in forging an almost inconceivable agreement on acid rain at the time. In his humility, he never stopped praising Stan Darling or remembering that Stan was the man. We call him "Stan the man" still in Parry Sound—Muskoka. Stan never stopped fighting to save the lakes of the Canadian Shield, to save the forests of the Canadian Shield and to save maple syrup.

He told me these great stories, and then we stood for a picture. It was very entertaining because I thought of how I had been in public life for 30 years and that now we were standing for a picture. He told me to do up my jacket. "Oh yes, sir, Prime Minister; I'll do up my jacket." I did up my jacket and got myself prepared. I had the opportunity to tell Mrs. Mulroney, just the other day, that story. She remembered it. I still cannot believe she did. I said to her that it was just so lovely, that interaction the first time I met him and he said, "Do up your jacket." She said, "Of course he did, because that picture is forever, Scott". In that moment, I realized that something Prime Minister Mulroney always understood is that what we do in here and what we do in our lives has an effect, an impact, forever.

As I watched his beautiful family stand in the hall of honour greeting every Canadian who came in and wanted to pay their respects at the coffin of one of our great prime ministers, I thought about that, that this is forever. This will always be remembered. What we do here will always be remembered. Nation building is forever. That is why I do believe that the words of King Solomon most appropriately apply to a man whom I admired and who reached out to me, encouraged me, motivated me and inspired me: "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to...the house of feasting: for that is [in the end] the end of all men; and the living will lay [this to their] heart."

May Brian Mulroney's example be one for all of us as we build a nation and as we do things here that will last forever.

• (2205)

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Chair, "Am I remembered in Erin, I charge you, speak me true? Has my name a sound, a meaning, in the scenes my boyhood knew?" These are the words of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, shared by Prime Minister Mulroney at the funeral of the late Ronald Reagan.

Like Thomas D'Arcy McGee, it is natural for those who serve in public life to question and wonder whether their memories will live on past their earthly lives. For Canada's 18th prime minister, there is no need to wonder. The Right Hon. Martin Brian Mulroney, the boy from Baie-Comeau, has left a legacy that will shape our country for generations.

This evening it is my great honour to conclude the debate in honour of Canada's 18th prime minister.

Since we first learned of the passing of the right hon. gentleman, so many have shared of his political, policy and transformational accomplishments. Free trade, NAFTA, tax reform and the GST, the acid rain treaty, the fight to free Nelson Mandela and end apartheid in South Africa, all these and more are because of the leadership of Brian Mulroney.

Last night I spoke with one of my predecessors, Dr. Harry Brightwell, and his wife, Dorelle, about their memories of Brian and Mila Mulroney. Dorelle shared her memories of Mila and how she was such a lovely representative and lovely person, and how any time she spoke to someone they were always the centre of her attention.

Brian and Mila Mulroney were truly a team.

Dr. Brightwell observed that as they fought the battles on the ground in communities across Canada, he never realized at the time how momentous the work they were doing really was, but they were truly part of a sea change in Canadian history.

In Perth County, we proudly lay claim to Canada's 9th prime minister, Arthur Meighen. As one of the greatest orators the House has ever known, Meighen's power of language is rivalled perhaps only by the man we honour here tonight. When Brian Mulroney visited St. Mary's in 1988, he was photographed in front of Arthur Meighen's portrait, and it is a striking image that was shared with me by one of our wonderful historian volunteers in St. Mary's. Brian Mulroney, like Arthur Meighen, had the confidence to know when tough decisions needed to be made. He would do them and make them, the right decisions, for Canada.

While the decisions may not have always been popular, time has proven him right. I could certainly speak here for hours about the political and policy legacy of the late prime minister, but it is his dedication and commitment to the people of this country and those around him I wish to focus on.

I will always remember the first time I received one of his famous phone calls. I almost did not answer it. It was a 514 area code and I assumed it was probably a wrong number or a telemarketer, but I am glad I did. There on the other end was the deep and familiar baritone saying, "Hello, John. It's Brian Mulroney calling."

He was eager to know about what was happening in the political arena and was most gracious in offering his thoughts and advice. After he had delved into all the issues of the day, the conversation would turn to family. He wanted to know about my family, about my wife Justine and our three children, and he seemed most pleased that our daughter, like his daughter, was named Caroline. I think he was a little proud that my little girl, Caroline, has a picture of her with Brian Mulroney's Caroline, which she keeps in her room.

Family was important to Brian Mulroney.

As some colleagues may know, I have a long, languishing Ph.D. that I have been working on, and it's about the role of caucus. There was no greater person in dealing with caucus than Brian Mulroney.

Prime Minister Mulroney was very gracious in sharing his thoughts with me on caucus. While I will share, in a few moments, more about his relationship with caucus, I want to first say how central family was to him in his service as prime minister. He explained to me his daily routine of work in the House of Commons and on Parliament Hill and the extensive outreach he did. He listed the dozens of responsibilities on matters of state and then very succinctly and matter-of-factly stated, “and then I would go home and have dinner with the kids.”

Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nicolas meant the world to him, and over these past few days we have seen the country join with them in honouring their father. We have lost a prime minister, but they have lost a loving father and grandfather. I thank them and the wonderful Mila for sharing this remarkable man with us.

• (2210)

I want to share a few words about his relationship with caucus. Until the day he left office, his caucus stood with him. Even in the most difficult times, when their approval rating might have been lower than those who believed that Elvis was still alive, he had a way of bringing his caucus together and building them up. He told me, “There was nothing more important to me than caucus.” When I asked him what his secret was, he replied, “Well, I would not begin my week on Monday; my week would begin on Wednesday, and I viewed the caucus as members of my family.” He would never miss a Wednesday caucus meeting, even if it meant delaying a departure for an international summit. When caucus needed him, he was there for them, and they for him.

I remember chatting with the late Ken Monteith, who served as the member of Parliament for the riding of Elgin. He recounted a similar story to the ones we have heard tonight about chatting briefly with the prime minister in the lobby behind the House of Commons. The prime minister asked how he was doing. He said, “I’m not so well actually. I just lost my mother-in-law.” By the time Ken got back to his office here on Parliament Hill, Prime Minister Mulroney had called his wife to express his condolences on the loss of her mother. That is a memory that stuck with Ken for many years to follow. If we can take a personal lesson from Brian Mulroney, it is to pick up the phone and make those calls before they can no longer be made.

Before I conclude, I want to share a few words from Arthur Milnes, a wonderful historian from Kingston, Ontario, who was part of the late prime minister’s memoirs. I think this short paragraph really encompasses the prime minister’s power of storytelling. Arthur writes:

As he did for millions while campaigning, Mr. Mulroney held me in his spell each time. Often the crowds he described became larger and larger as the story continued, but that didn’t matter to me. Through him, and our private conversations, I

Royal Assent

too was soon in the arena alongside him as together we faced in triumph the mighty Grits of old.

As we bid adieu to this remarkable Canadian, I close as I began with the words of the great Irish Canadian father of Confederation, Thomas D’Arcy McGee:

From far and near, from isle and glen,
Came mourning priests and sorrowing men,
And with hymns repeated, the sleepless throng
Waked him with solemn psalter and song.

Farewell, Prime Minister Mulroney.

• (2215)

The Deputy Chair: Resuming debate.

[Translation]

There being no further speakers rising, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, the committee will rise.

(Government Business No. 37 reported)

ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

March 19, 2024

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 19th day of March, 2024, at 6:04 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ken MacKillop
Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill C-35, An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada and Bill C-57, An Act to implement the 2023 Free Trade Agreement between Canada and Ukraine.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 10:17 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:17 p.m.)

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