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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 15, 2024

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1100)

[English]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC) moved that Bill C-377, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (need to know), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, before I get into my speech, I want to take a moment to recognize the passing of some important people we have lost in the last week and a half.

On April 4, we lost Bob Mitchell, father of Corporal Mitchell who was killed in action on October 3, 2006, in Afghanistan, and father of Mark who passed from cancer just a few months after that in 2006. He was the husband of Carol and papa of Cameron, Ryan and Jaelyn. There have been no bigger supporters of our veterans than Bob and his wife Carol. My heart goes out to Carol in particular for the continued sorrow she faces, but I know she will still be there for our members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

As well, on April 7, we lost Shawn “Lenny” MacDonald suddenly, father of Brandon and Kaitlin, and son of Kaye. He was a well-connected and important member of our community who we unfortunately lost way too soon.

April 8 was the 17th anniversary of the loss of 22B, my six soldiers in Afghanistan who were killed by an IED: Donnie Lucas, Aaron Williams, Brent Poland, Christopher Stannix, Kevin Kennedy and David Greenslade. I will never forget them.

On April 8 of this year, the father of one of my best friends, Ben Miedema, of Kingston by-way of Cloyne, passed away. He was the husband of Carla and father of Denise, Emily, Felicia, Geoff and Ian. Both his sons, Geoff and Ian, are still serving members of our Canadian Armed Forces.

I offer my deepest condolences and sympathies to all of their families and friends. May they rest in peace.

We are here today to speak to my first private member's bill, Bill C-377, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act, need to know.

I will cover what this bill would do, what it is not and, most important, the why, not only to address the threats to our democracy but to minimize the politicization around national security in our country.

I have been dealing with classified information for over 25 years, specifically highly classified information since 2007, my first tour in Afghanistan, dealing with the incredible electronic warfare capabilities and signals intelligence capabilities we possess within the military. For the last couple of years I have had the pleasure to sit on the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, but this issue was apparent to me for years before I was elected.

What is this bill? The crux of it, and literally the bill itself is one sentence, is:

A member of the Senate or the House of Commons who applies for a secret security clearance from the Government of Canada is, for the purposes of the consideration of their application, deemed to need access to the information in respect of which the application is made.

What does this mean? It means that for the purposes of applying for a security clearance, one has a need to know. However, it does not mean that one will have access to classified information. I will get into that later.

Why is it so important to pass the bill? To improve transparency and accountability, as well as education not only with respect to the ever-changing threats to Canada and our democratic institutions and processes, but for Canadians and parliamentarians to ultimately rebuild trust in our democratic processes and institutions.

I will try to explain this in the rest of my speech through the lengthy preamble, which is much longer than the actual bill itself.

The first paragraph in the preamble states:

Whereas members of the Senate and the House of Commons play a key role in holding the Government of Canada to account and, in order to be able to fulfil that role, they must have sufficient access to critical information, including the facts and rationale underlying key government decisions;

Let us look at the testimony we have heard at PROC in recent weeks.

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We had Vincent Rigby, who served as the national security and intelligence adviser from January 2020 to June of 2021. He stated that transparency needed to be increased by producing annual public threat assessments, responding to NSICOP reports, publishing intelligence priorities and, most important, sharing “more intelligence...with members of Parliament.”

Wesley Wark gave testimony at the same committee. In his view, Canadians lacked literacy about national security, a deficiency which could be improved by holding public hearings on national security, as these could increase public understanding and education about his aspect of governance.

● (1105)

I would argue that this is bigger than just the Canadian population. This is about Parliament too, and as the representatives of Canada, both elected in the House and those appointed in the other place. I will get more into how Parliament and the government have handled highly publicized issues a bit later in my speech.

The next paragraph of the preamble of the bill states:

Whereas the Government of Canada typically restricts access to classified information to individuals who pass a personnel security screening process and who need access to the information in order to perform their official duties (the “need-to-know” principle);

What is “need to know”, and how does it work? How do we protect classified information? First, people need to have a job and a reason to do it. Ultimately, that is why I am bringing this forward, to have that debate and make the case that Parliament has a need to know, not all the time and not to everything. However, we as parliamentarians have a need to know, but just because we have that need to know, we have to demonstrate that we are trustworthy, and that is done through the security clearance process.

When people apply for that security clearance process, again, depending upon the level, it is actually a very arduous process, or it can be. In fact, I could give a multi-hour speech on how we need to improve the process of security clearances. Ultimately, people applying for it are basically opening up their whole life to the national security apparatuses to vet them and to ensure they are trustworthy to have access to classified or sensitive information.

I will give a bit of a sample, so listeners can understand how many security clearances have been processed since 2016. I put an OPQ in that I got a response to last May. Here are the key departments that applied: DND, over 65,000 applications for secret level security clearances and, in that time frame, two were denied; ESCD, 8,916 applications and 14 were denied; Bank of Canada, 2,400 applications and one was denied; and NRCan, 8,900 applications and six were denied. Overall, just shy of a quarter of a million officials, bureaucrats, people within the government, applied for security clearances from 2016 to 2023, and only 23 were denied.

That gives us a scope of just how many people have access to this information and how many need to know within the bureaucracy.

As I mentioned earlier, just because people have that security clearance does not mean they get access. A good example is that during the convoy protests that were occurring in Ottawa, I still had my top secret security clearance. I maintained that when I released

from the Canadian Armed Forces. I made the case in the House that if the government was lacking that trust with the general public and there were concerns over what the threats were, etc., why would the government not share that information with privy councillors, former privy councillors, who had already been vetted, or a number of the members of Parliament who had a security clearance of some sort.

I am going to skip to the last paragraph of the preamble, because it fits better in my speech. It states:

And whereas Parliament considers that a member of the Senate or the House of Commons must be able to apply for a secret security clearance and, if the member passes the personnel security screening process, to be granted that security clearance;

I want to ensure that this is clear. It means people can apply, but it does not mean they will pass. In fact, I would argue that there are potentially individuals within both our chamber and the other place who may not pass. Who knows why? I do not have access to that information and, frankly, it is none of my business. Most of the time, in my past experience, where people fail to get security clearances, it is because they do not really want it or they are not honest when they are doing the process. The question is this: Is there something out there that a foreign state or somebody could hold over them and basically blackmail them, which questions their trustworthiness to have access to that information?

My bill, if it passes, will not guarantee that everybody in this chamber and the other place will get access to classified, sensitive information. That is not what this does. It is the first step in allowing, and I will get into it, important debate and discussions around issues that are highly sensitive or important.

● (1110)

One other note I would like make is that privy councillors, government members, do not have security clearances. In fact, one of the least vetted people, and it is not a shot on the current Prime Minister who has been vetted, is the current Prime Minister, because he had the privilege of becoming the leader of his party and ultimately the Prime Minister without being a former privy councillor.

When someone is a privy councillor, being appointed by the prime minister to sit as a cabinet member, the system vets him or her. We would hope that when the current Prime Minister was going through that process, he was being vetted and that if there were a flag that the apparatus would have flagged it to the prime minister of the day, Mr. Harper, if there had been any issues. My point is that privy councillors do not have a security clearance in the traditional sense of those of us who served in law enforcement or in the military and went through the whole process, or somebody who has had the privilege of sitting on NSICOP, for example.

What are the real risks to my bill? Really, there are no risks other than the political risk to someone who applies and is denied if that information were to ever become public. However, again, that is not something that would be released; it is privacy information and not information that is tied to having access.

Why is this so important? The next portion of my preamble gets into it. It states:

...in the face of threats to world peace and security posed by nefarious state and non-state actors, the Government of Canada needs to make challenging decisions relating to national security, which it must do in a manner that is consistent with its constitutional duty to be accountable to Parliament and that respects the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the *Canadian Bill of Rights*;

I am not going to focus on all the threats. So many committees and even the latest government defence plan update and the NSI-COP report cover the threats. I do not think I need to really explain that, but I want to focus on the accountability and transparency side.

I am going to read a few quotes from the conclusion part of *Top Secret Canada: Understanding the Canadian Intelligence and National Security Community*, edited by Stephanie Carvin, Thomas Juneau and Craig Forcece, which states that the Canadian “national security community” as a whole “has traditionally not been very transparent.” It further states, “In a democracy, first, transparency is—or should be—an end in itself.” It also states:

There is also a strong pragmatic and utilitarian case in favour of greater transparency.... Law enforcement and intelligence agencies need the buy-in of the society they seek to protect: when they have the trust of the population, it is far easier to gather information, to build and maintain collaborative ties with key communities, and, ultimately, to do their jobs. Yet when security agencies [the government] are closed and perform poorly in terms of transparency, it is more difficult for citizens to trust them, and it opens space for erroneous information, misperceptions, and conspiracy theories to circulate. This reinforces a dynamic of mistrust and suspicion.

The final paragraph of the book states, “a challenge for government”, and I would say for Parliament, “remains to deepen the public’s understanding of the workings of the national security sector.” It goes on:

Canadians (and indeed, their political leaders) must have context to avoid swinging wildly from indifference to panic when security events occur. Likewise, transparency and national security literacy help citizens tease apart real scandals from the noise. More generally, Canadians shall need to develop a renewed understanding of the hard dilemmas that frequently arise in securing a free and democratic state.

I will not read the last couple of points in the preamble, but they really focus on allowing that access. That is what this speech will do. Again, it talks about two examples, under the current government and in the previous government. We had the Winnipeg lab scandal and the Afghan detainee files issue under the previous Harper government. How did Parliament address those issues? They formed ad hoc committees at the last minute and created a lot of undue politicization of that whole process. Whereas, if we had members already cleared, we could speed up that process and help downplay the politicization. We have seen this most recently, even with the foreign interference issue.

In conclusion, I want to get to what PROC passed unanimously last week in its recommendation 3. It states:

That the government work with recognized parties’ whips to facilitate security clearances, at Secret level or higher, of caucus members who are not Privy Council-

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lors...who shall be taken as satisfying requirements for a “need to know,” to ensure that they may be adequately briefed about important national security matters, including foreign intelligence threat activity directed toward Parliament, or their party or its caucus members.

● (1115)

Considering that PROC has already unanimously passed what my bill is basically calling for, I could seek unanimous consent to have my bill pass at all stages. I will not, because the importance of my debating this is that it is to improve the education of Parliament and Canadians.

I look forward to any questions my hon. colleagues may have.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the rationale he set out in his bill.

I do not particularly disagree with his important comments about accountability and transparency, which I think would actually go a long way in accomplishing what he has set out to do. My question comes down more to the need to know, and how that relates to various different operations that might be ongoing and somebody's getting access to information. If there are too many people with access to particular information, it could actually end up jeopardizing an ongoing operation.

I am not saying this is a reason to vote against the bill, but my question would be this: What are the member's thoughts on that, and how can we continue to keep individuals safe?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, I highlighted just how many people have security clearance in the country already. Over the last eight years, it is almost a quarter of a million people. The government ministers themselves, and likely some of the parliamentary secretaries, have the privilege of access to a lot of classified, sensitive information. NSICOP gets access to things, although it is prevented from accessing ongoing current investigations. Again, ultimately, just because someone has it, and this gets to my point, it does not mean the government has to give it.

When a committee, such as foreign affairs or public safety, makes the case for why it needs access, and it secures it, that is the will of Parliament. I have given a couple of examples, of the Afghan detainee files and the Winnipeg lab files, that show that it does not mean that the access is going to get there, but part of the reason, in both of those cases, that the government came up with an ad hoc process was that it said members of those committees did not have appropriate classification.

The bill before us would help address that, but ultimately it is on the individuals to protect the information if it could compromise security for individuals in this country.

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• (1120)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think the bill has some very interesting portions to it. It was interesting to listen to the member speak today.

I have received security clearance because of some of the work I have done with my other colleagues on the Winnipeg lab documents, and I recognize his perspective that the bill would increase transparency. I think it is very important to have that there. I also recognize that the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians Act is supposed to have a statutory review every five years, and we are two years overdue on that.

The question I have for the member is this: Has he looked at what other countries around the world do? We know that the U.S. has much more oversight, but I am wondering whether he has looked at other G7 countries, other allies, and how they deal with this issue.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, I have looked at some of them, but not specifically on this process, because for a lot of them it is actually a lot simpler to get a security clearance or access to information. In general, the U.K. has a much broader system to allow it. I am not proposing we adopt a U.S. system of congressional or senatorial oversight; I am just suggesting the first step in a process that would just allow us to apply. As I have mentioned, my bill would not guarantee that a member or a senator would actually get the clearance, and it would not guarantee they would get access. All it is saying is that the government of the day, regardless of political party, would not be able to deny somebody's applying to get a security clearance.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's contribution. Often when people come to this place, they try to either build up the government or build up Parliament. The proposed bill, obviously, would be building up Parliament. He talked about education, and I know there is a lot of confusion around oversight and review. To me, the bill really would create a floor, not a ceiling, as to how much. It is usually ministers who have oversight duties, and it is usually parliamentarians, in certain cases, who would have the review duties.

Could the member explain how this would benefit, and which side would?

Mr. Alex Ruff: Mr. Speaker, my whole point is to increase the level of education and, I would argue, parliamentary oversight. I talked at length about accountability and transparency. Ultimately, all of us in this place were elected to represent Canadians. There is a huge demand, and I am sure the member has heard from some of his constituents, asking why they cannot know about certain things. In reality, there are legitimate reasons why we need to protect information. I am just saying that here is a way, through a proper process, that Parliament could actually get to know the information, hold the government to account and provide greater transparency as we continue to improve national security and intelligence in this country.

Mr. Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to Bill C-377 and the important issues therein.

The role of Parliament is crucial to protecting our democracy and holding government to account. Since 1867, members of Parliament have upheld the principles and practices of Canadian democracy, and we must ensure that they are able to continue to do so in the future. That is why the government takes the issue of transparency very seriously. In fact, in 2017, we announced the national security transparency commitment and made a number of changes within the National Security Act. The national security transparency commitment is about integrating our core democratic values into our national security activities.

Canadians need to understand what the various departments and agencies that are working tirelessly to protect each and every Canadian do. Canadians also need to understand the legal structure required to protect our national security, and how difficult choices are made every day. Finally, it is important that we engage with Canadians openly so they understand what issues have an impact on our national security. I am proud to say that the government has made great progress since the announcement of the national security transparency commitment and continues to advance that work tirelessly to ensure that everyone in Canada understands the issues at play and how we are working to protect Canadians.

The national security transparency advisory group was created in 2019 to help the government deliver on the national security commitment. The role of the NS-TAG is crucial as it provides advice to the deputy minister of public safety and other government officials on the implementation of the national security transparency commitment.

The National Security Act, 2017 also created the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency, which is an independent body that is external to government. NSIRA has the mandate to review all Government of Canada national security and intelligence activities to ensure that they are lawful, reasonable and necessary. NSIRA can also investigate public complaints regarding key national security agencies and activities. The NSIRA's reports provide invaluable information to parliamentarians and Canadians, and are a way to inform them of the lawfulness of the government's actions.

I want to make it clear that no government department or agency's national security and intelligence activities are exempt from scrutiny by NSIRA, and by extension, by parliamentarians and Canadians. To be clear, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Communications Security Establishment's activities are not exempt from this scrutiny. The national security transparency commitment and the National Security and Intelligence Review Agency provide important means of enabling public transparency and expert scrutiny of national security and intelligence activities.

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There is also a third component that is vital to making an effective accountability framework for national security and intelligence activities, which is parliamentary oversight. The sponsor of the bill before us is right to highlight the important role that parliamentarians play. Recognizing this important role, the government enacted the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians Act, 2017, which created a committee of parliamentarians made up of members of either House to scrutinize the national security and intelligence activities across the federal government.

The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians can look into intricate details of national security and intelligence agencies' activities. The committee may also undertake strategic and systematic reviews of the legislative and policy framework for national security and intelligence activities, including studies of expenditures and administrative decision-making structures. This is important work, and its importance is reflected in the committee's powers. To enable it to do its work, the committee has the right, under its enabling legislation, to access information needed to conduct its reviews. There are only limited exceptions to this right of access, where there is an absolute need, such as to protect the identities of human sources and witnesses protected under the witness protection program.

There are a number of aspects of the committee's legislation that I want to emphasize. The first is that the mandate of the committee, its powers, its right of access and its safeguards are legislated. It is vital that there be clear guardrails for processes that deal with the security of information and bring it near the vigorous debates we have in this place.

• (1125)

The second is that the committee has membership from multiple parties. We can all appreciate how important it is that the processes for managing sensitive information remain non-partisan. The multi-party nature of the committee is vital to its credibility. This also reflects the care that must be taken when dealing with sensitive information. When sensitive government information enters into the parliamentary space, it must be provided in a transparent, fair and non-partisan manner to ensure that there are not allegations of misuse.

Third, I want to note the care that is taken to ensure the security of information entrusted to members of the committee. Each member of the committee is a person permanently bound to secrecy under the Security of Information Act, meaning they may be prosecuted for disclosing special operational information. Members also swear an oath of secrecy and obtain a security clearance.

Finally, the act also provides a pathway for members to make Parliament aware of anything concerning they find. The committee provides reports to the Prime Minister, and when it does so, changes may be required to protect information. This is appropriate to ensure that sensitive information is protected, but the extent of the changes and the reasons for changes must be noted when the report is made public.

There are significant challenges to dealing with classified information in a way that enables transparency and accountability while also ensuring that what needs to be protected remains secure. The National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians Act reflects that there needs to be care taken within the manage-

ment of information. Simply providing access to parliamentarians is not enough; it needs to be done in a way that is transparent, non-partisan and secure and that provides proper mechanisms for concerns to be brought to Parliament's attention.

In addition to the NSICOP, the government has also established ad hoc processes. For instance, in 2021, when opposition parties in the House of Commons asked for the production of government documents from the Public Health Agency of Canada in relation to the March 2019 revocation of security clearances for two scientists at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg, we established a process to ensure that parliamentarians had access to this sensitive information.

On June 2, 2021, the House of Commons adopted an order for the production of sensitive documents held by the Government of Canada in relation to that incident. In 2022, the leader of the Government and leaders of the opposition parties signed a memorandum of understanding that outlined the mechanisms for parliamentarians to both access and safeguard the requested information. An ad hoc committee composed of select members of Parliament was established, and committee members were provided with full access to all documents requested in the June 2021 House order.

In addition, the Treasury Board standard on security screening allows for any individual to be security screened by a government department, should there be a need. This applies even if the individual is not an employee, and so can be applied to a parliamentarian.

There are already many mechanisms in place to provide parliamentarians with access to sensitive and classified information. I have just highlighted the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, as well as ad hoc approaches that have been adopted for special circumstances. These procedures and approaches require careful thought about what information is being provided to whom, and under what safeguards.

Most importantly, it is vital that there be effective, credible and transparent ways to bring information of concern to Parliament's attention, after removing information that would harm Canada's national security. It is not enough to simply provide a security clearance. Attention must also be provided to the entire process of providing, analyzing and releasing information to ensure an effective means of ensuring government accountability and contributing to public trust. The government has put in place processes that do just that, and as needs shift and evolve, the government will continue to ensure that they function properly.

I appreciate the member opposite's interest in ensuring that classified information appropriately flows to parliamentarians. I share the intent of ensuring that proper processes are in place, and I am thankful that they are. I urge all members to consider whether an additional proposal is needed and whether it appropriately considers the protection of information that is provided.

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● (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Conservative member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is proposing that we examine Bill C-377.

It is an important bill that requires serious consideration. The bill summary states the following, and I quote:

This enactment amends the Parliament of Canada Act to specify that a member of the Senate or the House of Commons who applies for a secret security clearance from the Government of Canada is, for the purposes of the consideration of their application, deemed to need access to the information....

The whole issue of confidentiality is rather vague in the bill. Like my kind neighbour from Barrie—Innisfil, this morning, I received an email because I am a member of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics. The committee had asked Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada for some information about TikTok because we are doing a study on that app. This morning, we got an email saying that it is none of our business. Come on. The question that has to be asked is whether parliamentarians, who have the privilege of obtaining information, should be able to get it. The answer is yes.

Now, let us look at how that should be done, what the guidelines are and what could be done.

What are we talking about here? If we want to define privacy, we are talking about a secret. What is a secret? A secret is what is not said. It is as simple as that. However, that includes things that we do not wish to say, things we cannot say and things we must not say. It can be a bit tricky.

Everyone agrees that the government must be accountable. However, it cannot be the sole judge of what it is to be accountable for. The member who spoke earlier cited the example of the special committee that studied the documents concerning the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg. I was part of this committee. It was a good initiative, but, quite frankly, we had to twist the government's arm for nearly two years before this came about. Yes, it was a good choice, but there were many bumps in the road.

The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound wants to promote a bill aiming to rectify certain situations and to ask Parliament to act wisely when it comes to accountability. The topic of secrets is by no means new. According to Voltaire, "To say the secret of another is a betrayal, to say yours is a stupidity". The current government seems to be taking a page from Voltaire.

What is a secret? For the purposes of our discussion, it is the redacted portion. The French term for redaction, "caviardage", dates back to the time of Nicholas I in Russia. At the time, it meant to conceal or remove. I am going to stay with the idea of concealing. To redact something is to conceal it. Over the years that I worked in the ethics field and the months that I spent on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, I came to realize that redaction is one thing, but preventive redaction is another. Preventive redaction is when something is excessively redacted just in case. That is problematic.

According to an article that appeared in the spring 2022 edition of Foreign Affairs entitled "Keeping the Wrong Secrets", the pref-

erence is to conceal more so as not to conceal too little. The article goes on to say that information that is kept secret often should not be. Certain information is treated like the Crown jewels, but at the same time we fail to even protect private data. This is all frustrating. The example cited in the article, which was positively ridiculous, had to do with a Christmas card that someone had redacted. Frankly, this makes no sense.

The sheer number of "overredacted" documents is huge. At the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, historians have come to tell us they cannot learn anything about the Second World War because the information is classified "Top Secret." There are things that will always remain secret, but I cannot believe that the entire body of government decisions concerning the Second World War must be off limits. When documents are needlessly redacted, we cannot attain wisdom, we cannot do as our good friend Socrates suggested, which is "know thyself".

If we do not know our own history, we cannot know ourselves as a population, as a people. There are things that must be kept secret, but for how long, for what purpose and from whom? These questions must be asked as part of the debate sparked by Bill C-377. That said, I understand that certain things, of an intimate, sacred, delicate or dangerous nature, must be kept secret forever. These are things we have always sought to keep secret.

However, the bill does not deal with the intimate, sacred, delicate or dangerous. It deals with classified information. We know from experience that there is a confidential level, a secret level and a top secret level. There is also a "for Canadian eyes only" level for certain documents. We can see that classified documents are often classified at too high a level. This prevents people who should know from being able to know. Of course, many pieces of information marked "Top Secret" come from a foreign source, such as a member of the Group of Five, and making the information public could well harm that member.

● (1135)

We have to be careful and use judgment.

It takes judgment, but the Winnipeg report basically consisted of 600 redacted pages, pages that were redacted by the ad hoc committee. When we see 600 pages redacted under the pretext of national security and in the end there are only 13 or 14 pages left, then no wonder we have questions about the "overredacting" at issue, the "overclassification" or the excessive secrecy, if you will.

Unfortunately, keeping too many secrets leads to mistrust. Not keeping enough secrets, of course, is unworkable. Too many secrets breed mistrust, and, in today's world, with its echo chambers and the conditioning created by some social media, this leads to defiance. We saw some of that defiance in the streets last winter in front of Parliament, but that is not the only form of defiance.

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Let me come back to Bill C-377, a bill to provide access to documents under two conditions. First, individuals must pass a personnel security screening process. That makes sense. Second, they must need access to the information for the purposes of their work. Of course, it is easier to define the scope and parameters of that work for public officials than it is for parliamentarians. In the case of a parliamentarian, it may be more complicated, but it can still be done.

As I said earlier, the government is accountable to Parliament for all of its activities. It should not have the right to decide on its own what needs to be kept secret from the get-go. That is a first recommendation.

Bill C-377 takes this into account by proposing subsection 13.1(1), as follows:

A member of the Senate or the House of Commons who applies for a secret security clearance from the Government of Canada is, for the purposes of the consideration of their application, deemed to need access to the information....

The proposal is good, but let us just say that it seems an automatic approach that could go awry at times. Bill C-377 considers parliamentary privileges. It is a step forward, but it could be dangerous.

One thing I do like about this bill is that the government will not be the sole judge of its own secrets. That is a very good thing. However, it does not mean that information should be handed over lock, stock, and barrel simply upon request. That could be dangerous.

My colleague spoke earlier of the Winnipeg lab. I sat on the ad hoc committee that studied that issue, which was made up of parliamentarians from four parties. I will say again that the committee was struck as a result of a wild discussion. Nevertheless, we four parliamentarians were able to issue an opinion on the redaction in question and that opinion was submitted to three judges for arbitration. To my great surprise, their verdict was identical to that of the committee members. The document was released “unredacted”. There was no national security issue concerning that document. There was certainly some embarrassment, along with some shame and discomfort, but no national security issue.

As La Rochefoucauld, another soul I greatly admire, said, everyone agrees that a secret must be inviolable, but we do not always agree on the nature and importance of the secret, and we consult only ourselves on what we should reveal or withhold. That is the dilemma here. The problem is that the government itself decides what should be kept secret.

As a second recommendation, I propose that steps be taken to put an end to overclassification and preventive redaction. Redaction keeps us from knowing who we are and what happened, and it exacts a great cost in terms of maintaining the secrets in question.

With Bill C-377, we have an opportunity to initiate a discussion on the very concept of secrecy. That kind of reflection is healthy for democracy. It can only make parliamentarians more confident, while boosting Canadians' confidence in parliamentarians and government, which admittedly could really use it.

Let us begin this reflection.

• (1140)

[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in support of Bill C-377, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act, which was introduced by my colleague, the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

This legislation would amend the Parliament of Canada Act to specify that when a member of Parliament or a senator requests a secret security clearance, that the member would be treated as being deemed to need to know the information for which the security clearance is sought. This is important because, as it presently stands, it is highly unlikely that any individual member of Parliament or a senator would receive a security clearance.

Unless a member or a senator already has a security clearance as a result of their profession prior to being elected or appointed, or has served as a member of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, or NSICOP, the chances of a member of Parliament or a senator successfully obtaining a security clearance are almost zero. That is because security clearances are issued on a need-to-know basis. Essentially, the policy of the Government of Canada is that members of Parliament and senators do not need to know.

That may come as a surprise to Canadians. I would submit that it is problematic, which I will get into momentarily, but that is the policy. This bill would change that; it would amend the Parliament of Canada Act such that, for the purposes of processing security clearance applications, members of Parliament and senators are deemed to know. In short, it provides a presumption that when a member of Parliament or a senator applies, they be granted a secret security clearance. That is what Bill C-377 would do. That is all Bill C-377 would do.

It is important to note what this bill would not do. It would not guarantee that a member or a senator would be granted a security clearance. They would have to be vetted, just as any Canadian who applies for a security clearance must be vetted. If they are deemed untrustworthy, or if there are security issues or other red flags associated with the member or the senator, pursuant to the security clearance review process, they would be turned down. They would not obtain a security clearance. This bill would not change that.

Moreover, this bill is targeted insofar as it applies specifically to secret security clearances, and I emphasize “secret” security clearances. It does not apply to, and will not create, a presumption of issuing a top secret security clearance to members of Parliament and to senators. Further, it is important to note that just because someone has a security clearance, it does not mean they have the unfettered ability to obtain whatever information they want. Obtaining a security clearance merely gets one's foot in the door.

Private Members' Business

I would further note that this bill would importantly establish a certain level of uniformity with respect to how applications for security clearances involving members of Parliament and senators are dealt with because, at present, the process has been one that is ad hoc in nature. Members of NSICOP have security clearances, quite appropriately so. However, if members of NSICOP have security clearances, would it not also make sense for members who serve on committees such as the national defence committee, the foreign affairs committee and the public safety committee to also have security clearances, provided they are properly vetted?

• (1145)

The government has established, for instance, a special committee to review the classified Winnipeg lab documents. Members on that committee were granted security clearances. Similarly, with respect to reviewing the Afghan detainee documents, the Harper government established a special committee in which members again had security clearances. Therefore, there is no consistency and no uniformity, with the granting of such clearances being done on an ad hoc basis. I would submit that this is not desirable and can be improved; this bill would improve it by providing greater certainty and transparency around the application process.

As I noted at the beginning of my speech, I find it problematic that, as a general rule, members of Parliament and senators are unable to access security clearances. After all, Parliament deals with matters of national security and intelligence, which fall within its purview.

It is the responsibility of Parliament to hold the government accountable and to provide meaningful oversight on these matters. It follows that not having a security clearance and, therefore, not having the ability to access what may be pertinent information around national security and intelligence matters impedes the ability of members of Parliament and senators to do their jobs, to hold the government to account and to provide proper oversight and accountability.

In addition, there is value in members having security clearances, insofar as this enables them to better understand national security and intelligence matters. It creates a culture of greater awareness and enables a member to, in certain areas, perhaps fill in the blanks and have a better context with respect to national security and intelligence issues that they might be dealing with as, for example, a member of a parliamentary committee or a shadow minister.

In that regard, I cite the ruling of Speaker Milliken in April 2010 concerning the Afghan detainee documents. Speaker Milliken said the following: "In a system of responsible government, the fundamental right of the House of Commons to hold the government to account for its actions is an indisputable privilege and in fact an obligation." He quoted, "The right of Parliament to obtain every possible information on public questions is undoubted, and the circumstances must be exceptional, and the reasons very cogent, when it cannot be at once laid before the houses."

With respect to members of Parliament and senators being trusted with sensitive information, Speaker Milliken said:

The insinuation that members of Parliament cannot be trusted with the very information that they may well require to act on behalf of Canadians runs contrary to

the inherent trust that Canadians have placed in their elected officials and which members require to act in their various parliamentary capacities.

I concur wholeheartedly with Speaker Milliken. This bill is an important step in the right direction to enhance transparency and accountability around national security and intelligence matters, as well as from the standpoint of better empowering members of Parliament and senators to fulfill their oversight responsibilities.

• (1150)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad to rise on this bill. I appreciate the sponsor's commitment and listened to his speech with regard to wanting to have this conversation to educate people. That is a very worthwhile conversation that we, as parliamentarians and Canadians, should be having.

I too once served on NSICOP; perhaps the sponsor had similar feelings to mine, which were to think about how little Parliament talks and thinks about national security. Frankly, there is a lot to be done with regard to cyber safety for Parliament and parliamentarians. I am not sure whether this was part of the member's rationale in thinking about this, but, certainly, I realized as a member of NSICOP how little parliamentarians are briefed in terms of just good cyber-hygiene measures. I will not say protected. I also realized how all parliamentarians must take this very seriously. I think there should be more conversations not only in our own caucuses but also among parliamentarians as a whole.

With that in mind, the idea and concept around this bill have merit. However, in the course of my speech, I will point out a few challenges with this bill that we could perhaps have further conversation on. I welcome feedback. There are some areas in the bill that need to be reflected upon, the first being with regard to parliamentary privilege.

One thing that is specified in the NSICOP Act is around clearance given and the waiving of parliamentary privilege. This is done to ensure that any members who receive clearance and, therefore, national security information cannot share that information and then use the protections of parliamentary privilege. For Canadians who may not know what that means, it means that we are protected in this place to be able to say things without fear of reprisal.

Private Members' Business

However, a higher level of protection needs to be ensured around national security matters, confidentiality and the safety of Canadian Armed Forces members and our security teams around the world. The NSICOP Act specifically waives parliamentary privilege. For a member who receives national security clearance through, let us say, legislation such as this and not the NSICOP Act, it would mean that they could say anything and not be prosecuted under the Security of Information Act, as an example. I do not know if that was a technical oversight.

I am certainly not saying that the sponsor of this bill is suggesting that parliamentary privilege should allow national security information to be shared through a loophole, but that is certainly a flaw in the drafting of this bill. As I said, the NSICOP Act specifically addresses it. As a former member of the committee, I had to sign documents saying I no longer had parliamentary privilege as a condition of my NSICOP days. Dealing with national security, it makes sense that we want to make sure that this technicality is clearly defined.

The issues around the need-to-know principle have been discussed, so I will not spend too much time on it. Members opposite spoke about the need or opportunity for this. However, they also indicated that there may never be a guarantee that information is given. It makes me wonder what this legislation would actually accomplish.

• (1155)

It is worthwhile to have the conversation to ensure that parliamentarians have access to classified information where it can help us in our duties. However, to just go through this process in this bill, knowingly accepting that the need-to-know question is not being addressed, again, makes me wonder if this is the best use of a private member's bill or the best way to provide information to parliamentarians on a national security level. Again, that is not to say the merits of this conversation are not worthwhile, but it is a challenge that we should discuss.

I also want to talk about NSICOP and the whole rationale of why it was originally created. It was created with kind of the intent of this private member's bill in mind. Members may recall that the recommendation for a national security committee of parliamentarians was made during former prime minister Harper's time. Canada was one of the only Five Eyes countries without any sort of parliamentary oversight, without access to classified information. The former Harper government said no, absolutely not; there would be no national security clearance provided to any parliamentarians. It is interesting to me. I would be very pleased if the Conservatives had now come to see this as a mistake.

However, that is precisely why NSICOP was created, to create this space for national security clearance. It was not just clearance to members or individuals but also the process and the place to share that information in a proper and secure manner. It was how the information is then accessed, which must also be done in a way that respects national security.

That was precisely the design of NSICOP, to provide parliamentarians with access and the ability to determine their own areas of study. They can choose, as a committee represented by all parties, as well as the Senate, to make that determination.

Again, on the idea to provide more opportunities for people with clearance, I understand where the member is coming from. However, it does not address what information they would be looking for, where they would access it physically, how they would maintain it and, on this ad hoc basis, what would actually come of it.

It is important to know that pieces of intelligence do not equal a conclusion; there could be several individual pieces of intelligence, but unless they are all compiled together and a proper determination and reflection is done, they could be used out of context. This could actually mean that parliamentarians and other people are not better informed, and it could lead to some interesting outcomes, without the full picture. This is why NSICOP is a place where there is an opportunity to truly reflect on and bring all the intelligence pieces together then properly move forward on a recommendation, reflection or further study.

In regard to clearance itself, again, I recognize that the sponsor has said this does not guarantee anyone can receive clearance. This is a fair point, and I do not think the sponsor has that intention. However, I found it interesting when, not too long ago, the Conservative leader was actually offered national security clearance and to receive briefings on foreign interference, but he refused. He claimed it was because he would "not be muzzled". It makes me nervous to see the Conservative leader not understanding the difference between breaching confidentiality and taking in information, being able to hold it in confidence and secret, but still being able to advocate one way or the other. He did not feel he could actually do that and not breach the confidentiality that would be required. Therefore, he chose not to seek clearance.

• (1200)

This raises concerns about who is accessing a clearance, what information they might receive and how they will actually view that in terms of sharing that information.

Again, I think the sponsor of the bill has very good intentions, and that is not part of it, but we cannot ignore the fact that his own leader believes national security clearance is a form of muzzling. That raises some questions for me. Again, I would love to have further conversations about how parliamentarians can better protect national security and work together with better cyber-goals.

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The time provided for consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADIAN SUSTAINABLE JOBS ACT

Hon. Kamal Khara (for the Minister of Natural Resources) moved that Bill C-50, An Act respecting accountability, transparency and engagement to support the creation of sustainable jobs for workers and economic growth in a net-zero economy, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today in my capacity as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources. This is the third time I rise in this place to move forward the Canadian sustainable jobs act, Bill C-50, and I am frustrated that it has been such a difficult journey to get us to third reading on this legislation.

It is a bill that is only about a dozen pages long and that has been supported by workers and industry. However, it seems to have touched a nerve with the Conservative opposition, so we have had to overcome a massive amount of obstruction to get to this point. Just last week, we faced a voting marathon that took over 12 hours of voting time as resources were taken up with recorded votes forced by the Conservatives. This bill matters, so Liberals did not hesitate to stand up and vote for each one, but let us be clear that the result of that Conservative charade was wasted time and taxpayer resources.

I was not surprised, because this voting marathon was just one more example of the obstruction that we, and I, have faced in this place and at committee. In December, the natural resources committee, on which I sit, faced over 20,000 amendments put forward by the Conservatives, and this was on a bill that is only about 12 pages long. The amendments were not serious proposals, and in all of my years in this place, I have never seen such awful behaviour at committee.

At these meetings, the Conservative members were loud and disruptive, and their tone was like nothing I have ever seen. It was not just a filibuster. That is a normal tool for opposition members. It was repeated, loud yelling of "point of order", so that nothing could be said or heard. It was filming a video at every point of suspension in pursuit of a social media click and social media videos, rather than in pursuit of getting the policy right.

All of this was while workers from across the country were telling us over and over again that they wanted to see us move forward with the sustainable jobs act and that they wanted the Conservatives to end their obstruction.

At a conference last week, the Conservative energy critic stated that for her, with respect to this bill, a mutual and evidence-based middle ground is not a thing. So much for developing policy on the

evidence and for working with each other to get the best results for our communities.

Why does the Conservative Party look to oppose a bill that would empower workers and a bill that acknowledges a need for workers to be at the table as our country charts a path toward a net-zero future? That is what this bill would do. Let me set out quickly what is contained in the sustainable jobs act. It has five parts.

• (1205)

[Translation]

The first part sets out principles guiding a coherent approach to economic development and climate action, including measures to support workers and help create sustainable jobs, while aligning with international best practices and sending a strong signal to investors that Canada is ready to play a leading role in the emerging world of the clean growth industry.

The second part aims to create a sustainable jobs partnership council to provide independent annual advice to the Government of Canada and to engage with Canadians. This council will ensure that experts, including workers, indigenous leaders and industry representatives, are at the table to guide government action.

The third part sets out a requirement to publish action plans every five years, drawing on input from stakeholders and partners as well as expert advice from the sustainable jobs partnership council.

The fourth part is designed to establish a sustainable jobs secretariat to ensure coordinated action to implement the law across the federal government.

The fifth and final part designates the minister or ministers responsible for implementing the legislation.

[English]

Those five things are what have given rise to all of the Conservative furor. This is why they have put up so much time and energy to oppose. That is what it is, legislation that helps workers to seize the opportunities and have a say in how it can be done.

On Thursday, the Minister of Labour asked, if they are not listening to industry or workers, or the environmental community, who are they listening to? That is a good question, because it certainly is not the many who have spoken publicly.

The president of the Business Council of Alberta said, "The Sustainable Jobs Act represents an important opportunity for Canada: to shape our future and create jobs by providing the resources that the world needs—including energy, food, and minerals."

Government Orders

The International Union of Operating Engineers said, “The Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act is a step toward a future that puts the interests of energy workers at the forefront of a low-carbon economy.”

The president of the Canadian Labour Congress, which represents millions of Canadian workers, said, “The Sustainable Jobs Act signals a crucial milestone in our fight against climate change and the protection of workers’ interests. Canada’s unions stand committed to working alongside all stakeholders to ensure effective implementation towards a sustainable and equitable future for all.”

Those statements confirm to me that workers in industry see in the sustainable jobs act an unlocking of opportunities; they see it as a part of our country’s commitment to seize global opportunities in sustainable jobs, all the while making sure that workers are at the table as we work together to fight climate change and slow the natural disasters that are impacting our communities through wildfires, floods, droughts, hurricanes and other events.

[Translation]

As we strive to reduce the emissions that fuel the climate crisis, we are equally determined to ensure that our young people have a thriving future in careers that help build a strong, sustainable and prosperous economy.

Both are possible, and they go hand in hand.

• (1210)

[English]

All of our communities are feeling these impacts on our clean air, and floods and fires that damage homes, farms and industry. It has been shocking, in this bill’s very long journey, to hear the Conservative colleagues from across the way say that they do not believe in climate change. For example, the Conservative MP for Red Deer—Mountain View, during his filibuster of this very bill, claimed that climate change is having no impact on the frequency or severity of wildfires, which is entirely false. The Conservative MP for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, in a newsletter to constituents, simply said that “the global warming gig is up”.

These statements explain why the Conservative Party’s plans have been to just let the planet burn. That is not only frightening; it is also out of step with the rest of the world, because the world is looking for clean energy and renewables and to build their businesses in Canada because of our clean electrical grid. These are the opportunities we could seize with the sustainable jobs act.

We have a target to hit net zero, and many subsectors, like cement and electricity, have similar pathways and road maps based on modelling and market trends. All of this means expanding and deploying new technologies using skilled Canadian labour. These range from installing electric arc furnaces for steelmaking, like at Dofasco; finding ways to harness solar and biomass in remote communities, like in Old Crow, Yukon; or using deep-lake cold water from Lake Ontario to cool downtown Toronto’s hospitals and buildings through a district energy system operated by Enwave. There are hundreds of examples across this country of innovative projects that are being advanced to create clean power and sustainable jobs.

[Translation]

RBC estimates that in this decade alone, just in the next few years, the global shift to a low-carbon economy will create up to 400,000 new Canadian jobs in fields where enhanced skills will be required.

[English]

Last summer, I had the chance to talk with people working on wind turbines in Ontario. One of these workers told me how he had chosen to train to work on wind turbines, because he liked the opportunity to be outdoors while doing the technical work he enjoys. He was making a better living, and he was living better.

I met people at George Brown College who are part of a program to provide certification for electric vehicle mechanics. A large percentage of the people who were studying the certification were new to the field of mechanics. One person commented that the workplace for EVs had cleaner air than a traditional shop. Given that my grandfather worked in an autobody shop as a mechanic, Dabrusin Motors, it hits home how no emissions in his shop would have been a much healthier workplace.

On International Women’s Day this year, I had the opportunity to join the Millwright Regional Council, AECON and Ontario Power Generation at the graduation of a group of women. They had been part of a special program to encourage women to become millwrights, and upon graduation, they were able to get jobs working on the refurbishment of the Darlington nuclear power plant. It was inspiring to meet these graduates and the people who had come around them to create this special program.

We are talking about good-paying jobs in nuclear energy, a form of energy that has helped Ontario move away from coal-fired electricity and that is bringing cleaner air to our communities across the provinces. Through the sustainable jobs act, we want to make sure that workers help chart the course to make sure that women, such as those in this graduating class, can find good-paying jobs that are a part of our country’s future.

In fact, these are the jobs of our planet’s future, and investment is flowing to clean technologies. In 2022 alone, over \$2 trillion went to clean technologies globally. This bill would help support coordinating the labour force’s development needs in these fast-growing industries. As we rapidly look to expanding Canada’s advantage in clean technologies to meet our domestic and global needs, we must also expand the skills and training of Canadians to ensure that high-quality jobs are created here.

Government Orders

I will ask members to allow me to provide two examples of how we are creating sustainable jobs in Canada for Canadian workers and communities while supporting our allies around the world. If the world wants more clean energy, and it does, let our talented workforce meet that demand. If the world wants more products made through a low-carbon manufacturing process, let us attract that investment that helps our workers to fill that gap.

The first example is our nuclear financing agreement with Romania. Romania has been a NATO ally of Canada for 20 years now, and it is strategically placed as a leader in Eastern Europe to supply zero-emissions power to its neighbours with Canadian CANDU reactors at Cernavoda's power station.

Nuclear power and technology is a vital part of Canada's legacy as a tier 1 nuclear nation. We are providing \$3 billion in financing to Romania to develop two new CANDU reactors. That is a good deal. It is one that will be paid back with interest, which will flow entirely to Canadian companies. It will create good jobs across Ontario, help Romania to phase out coal several years ahead of schedule and displace Putin's energy blackmail with a steady supply of reliable, zero-emissions power. That is a win for climate action, a win for our allies, for our economy, for workers and for Canada.

The second example is about hydrogen. A few weeks ago, the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources led a delegation to Hamburg, Germany, where Canada became the first country in the world to cement a hydrogen window with the Germans, making the first deal of its kind between any two countries. Part of the reason Vice-Chancellor Habeck had such confidence in Canada is the enormous clean power potential presented by our Atlantic offshore.

As the Minister of Labour mentioned last Thursday, offshore wind power and the hydrogen that it can create represent the largest economic opportunities for the region in a generation. They present us with the potential to economically revitalize entire coastal communities across both provinces. That is an example of strategic investment and partnership being used to create thousands of sustainable jobs for Canadian workers on the path to net zero here and around the world.

• (1215)

If I go back to my frustrations, it has been deeply frustrating. The Conservative members of the natural resources committee have repeatedly talked down the offshore opportunities and stated opposition to Bill C-49, the bill that would allow these offshore wind projects to proceed and create that green hydrogen that is sought after by our allies. These are good opportunities to create good-paying jobs.

We are standing up with provinces to make sure Canadian workers can seize these new opportunities. Workers are at the centre of the sustainable jobs act, and as I have pointed out, unions have strongly supported this bill. When workers organize, they do not just ask more of their employers. They expect more from government too, and that is a good thing. We are advancing replacement worker legislation and investments in union-led training centres because we believe in unions.

Just this weekend, I talked with a unionized worker in my community who was telling me about the importance of his union and

his strong support for our replacement worker legislation. He wants a government that supports unionized workers and collective bargaining, and I could assure him that our Liberal government does support those things.

That stands in sharp contrast to the previous Conservative government, in which the Leader of the Opposition was a cabinet minister. As a cabinet minister in the Harper government, the Leader of the Opposition championed two of the most anti-union and anti-worker bills the House has ever seen: Bill C-525 and Bill C-377.

Bill C-377 was an unconstitutional bill to silence unions by burying them in onerous reporting requirements, including forcing them to show their strike funds to employers, which would weaken the prospect of deals at the bargaining table. Bill C-525 was similarly an attack on workplace democracy, making it very difficult for workers to form unions and easier for the then Conservative government to arbitrarily decertify unions.

In 2017, our government repealed both of these bills, and since then, we have continued to stand up for unions. Despite all of the Conservative games, we have been pushing forward, and we will continue to fight for workers. This is precisely what our sustainable jobs plan and act would deliver.

• (1220)

[*Translation*]

I will conclude by highlighting the widespread support that exists for this legislation.

First, Equiterre had this to say about the bill: "It is an essential step toward more cohesive climate action and there's absolutely no reason to delay the adoption of this bill. Building a sustainable workforce starts now—not in 2050."

[*English*]

The executive director of the Pembina Institute stated the following:

Passing the Sustainable Jobs Act and getting the new Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council working will deliver the message, loud and clear: Canada is a great place to invest, with workers who are second to none and ready to get the job done.

A youth-led organization called re-generation said it supports the plan and the bill because:

This Act will help ensure that green jobs are available for anyone who wants one. It will establish a partnership council to directly involve workers and communities in the transition, and allocate critical funding to green skills development and training.

Finally, the vice-president of IBEW International said that, through this legislation, the Government of Canada is demonstrating its “commitment to protecting good-paying, highly skilled jobs.”

Countries around the world know that we have two choices ahead of us. We can advance plans for the future that would allow us to seize economic opportunities while fighting climate change, or we can simply stick our heads in the sand and hope for the best.

I sincerely hope that every member in the House agrees to choose the first path because, as countries around the world race to seize economic opportunities ahead of us, we must also quickly pass Bill C-50. We need to keep working to ensure we have a sustainable future and sustainable jobs for future generations.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government always talks about supporting union jobs and supporting a transition. I would like to ask the member opposite about this.

The oil sands and the potential for LNG could create the capital necessary to give opportunities not only to first nations but also to unions and workers to be able to grow a stronger economy, export, bring dollars from outside of Canada and support our allies. Instead, the government wants to put a cap on oil sands development, and the B.C. NDP wants to put a similar cap on LNG. If we are going to make a place in this world where we are going to create the new technology and employ Canadians, the answer is a free market approach, not a managed approach, such as the government, with this bill, wants to do. Establishing a new committee to manage the destruction of that capital formation is the wrong direction.

Could the member answer some of these arguments?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I find that interesting, because this bill is about making sure that people in our communities, including workers, indigenous people and those in industry, have a seat at the table in determining what skills are needed for the future economy.

When we are looking at the worldwide global changes ahead of us, how do we set ourselves up for success? This bill creates three seats for indigenous people on a partnership council, three seats for workers, and seats for industry. This is where we look forward, working with the people who need to be a part of these decisions and letting them be a part of these decisions.

• (1225)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to know why this bill does not comply with the Quebec-Ottawa agreement on labour and why it does not properly respect the collaboration with Quebec's partners.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, we worked with the provinces and territories in the development of this legislation. We did collaborate with them.

I want to make it clear that this bill applies only to areas of federal jurisdiction and does not infringe on any provincial jurisdiction. This was done in consultation with Quebec and all the other provinces.

Government Orders

This bill is squarely within federal jurisdiction. We always respect the provinces and territories, which are our partners.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for sharing her experience on International Women's Day this year and meeting women millwrights.

How are women and diverse genders, indigenous workers and workers with disabilities being economically harmed by the games and delays Conservatives are bringing both to the House and to committee with respect to the sustainable jobs act?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, delay is never a good thing when we are trying to make sure we are moving forward in meeting the challenges faced by climate change and to seize those opportunities. The world is moving ahead in this direction. When we look at the International Energy Agency and its predictions, the world is moving toward renewables. We see it in the investments that are happening right now.

When I talk with union representatives in my community, they talk about needing more skilled workers to build mass timber buildings, for example, and all of the different types of jobs that are there. However, if we disempower workers by not allowing them to have a seat at the table, we are harming those opportunities from going forward.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I would agree with what Equiterre said about this bill, which is that there is no reason to hold it up for any MP in the House, because there is almost nothing in it.

We heard a quote from a young people's group, I think I understood from the parliamentary secretary, which I believe is being misled when it talks about the investments that are being directed by this bill. There is nothing about that in here.

This bill creates a council. It requires the government to create an action plan that has not been written yet, but would be created in a few years, and is going to create a secretariat to then advise on the bill.

The bill could have had significant investments in young people's future in a just transition. It could have had investments in just transition transfers to provinces and territories. None of that is in this bill.

The member is a vocal and strong advocate for taking action on the climate crisis. Why is she not pushing the government to move further and faster?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, what my colleague says is interesting. Why are the Conservatives so scared of this bill, which would set up the structures to make sure we have, like I said, workers, indigenous peoples and industry at the table to look at how we seize the opportunities from the green technologies and clean technologies that the world is asking for?

Government Orders

In every place, we are always fighting to make sure we are getting those deals. Like I said, when it comes to hydrogen, we had the first agreement between any two countries in getting to green technologies for hydrogen. We are working to attract those investments, but this bill is about supporting workers. I do not know why it has taken so long, but the Conservatives seem to have been bent on making sure it does not go forward.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I get a real kick out of the question from the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, who continues to heckle. He said the government is not needed to set up the system and to let the market do it, which can do it all on its own. That is right, because for decades we have not been helping the oil sector and basically providing government intervention to make sure the oil sector is successful in Canada. The hypocrisy that comes from the Conservatives is absolutely amazing.

Why does the member think the Conservatives are so afraid of this legislation? If they do not think the future is in this technology, why would they even bother to get all worked up about this?

• (1230)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, as I stated in my speech, I am a bit stumped as to why the Conservative members have been so strongly opposing and wasting time when we talk about this bill. It has been fairly incomprehensible, because it does not say within it which industries would form these sustainable jobs. What it does say is that we should make sure industry, workers and indigenous peoples have a seat at the table to look at all of these options and to understand how we are going to make sure we have the skills development programs and the plans so that Canadian workers can be at the forefront of these new sustainable jobs, which the RBC was predicting to be 400,000.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are talking about the unjust transition legislation, which is basically a piece of legislation that would create a committee to create a committee to create another committee. Ultimately, the member, in her speech, talked about electric arc furnaces. We already have those in Regina. They are already there and are already working. It was the industry that created that and not government. She talked about cement, and the reality is that cement is a bigger polluter than coal in emissions, but we are going to promote cement production. The only other product that is used more than cement is water.

Ultimately, though, she talks about the committees and how everyone would be involved. When I talk to coal workers, miners and energy people in my riding about being included in these committees, they are not being talked about. The people the member is talking about who would be brought to these committees are people who are sitting in downtown Toronto. That is the only place this person is talking about where jobs would be created.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, I think the member opposite missed that the people I was referring to who have been supporting this bill are people like the International Union of Operating Engineers, the president of the Business Council of Alberta, who is not based on Toronto, the president of the Canadian Labour Congress, Equiterre and IBEW. This is supported by workers across the country. I do not know what the Conservatives are afraid of, but

in my world, we make sure that workers have a voice and that we look out for their needs.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that we can have passionate debates, but there are rules in the House and one needs to be recognized to be able to participate. Members can ask questions, but they need to listen to the answers. If they have other questions, they should wait to be recognized.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lakeland.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, it sure is telling that every time the NDP-Liberals get up to talk about the bill, they talk about almost anything other than Bill C-50. I think that is because Bill C-50, the just transition, is actually the culmination of nine years of the NDP-Liberals' anti-energy, anti-capitalist and, frankly, anti-Canadian policies, which they know will hurt Canadians.

The bill's proponents say Bill C-50 will deliver jobs and skills training programs, but the bill itself would do nothing of the sort. Instead, it would set up a fancy appointed government committee that would set up another committee to dictate five-year economic plans to governments. Despite what it claims, the costly coalition knows the just transition would actually disrupt the livelihoods of millions of Canadians and threaten 2.7 million jobs in energy, agriculture, transportation, construction and manufacturing, which is about 15% of Canada's total workforce.

However, do not just take my word for it. These numbers come from the natural resource minister's own briefing memo about the just transition from a couple of years ago. That is really why the NDP-Liberals colluded to ram Bill C-50 through the House and committee without hearing from any of the Canadians they know this bill will affect, because they know just how much harm their so-called just transition will cause.

In the fall, the cover-up coalition limited debate to less than eight hours for all parties, allowed only two hours for clause-by-clause debate at committee and, ultimately, blocked any single witness, anyone, from speaking about the impact of Bill C-50. It limited report stage debate to one day and now will only allow less than six hours of debate during the third and final reading. This is undemocratic.

Obviously, the Liberals know how unpopular the just transition is among Canadians, and that is exactly why they do not want to let Canadians speak out about it. No wonder they rammed it through committee in the middle of the night, silenced everyone and hoped no one notices. It is because they are showing their true colours. They care more about global accolades and international mutual admiration societies than about Canadians and, frankly, they care more than they really care about Canada, about their home, my home and our home. The Liberals argued that they had to rush through the bill because of how supposedly important it was, but once they sidelined Conservatives and prevented any witnesses from speaking at committee, they did not bring it back for four more months. Time and time again, Liberals say one thing and do another.

Canadians do not want this top-down, economic-restructuring, wealth-redistributing, central-planning just transition. That is why they rebranded it and changed the name with buzzwords to distract, but Canadians see through them. In fact, the majority of Canadians think Canada should not be forced to pay for or to go through anything like the just transition until the world's big polluters make serious efforts of their own.

People around the world face energy and food emergencies every day. Countries are switching to coal because of the NDP-Liberals when Canada should supply them with LNG instead. While Canada accounts for only 1.6% of world emissions, China approved more coal power in the first quarter of 2023 after building six times as many coal plants as the rest of the world combined in 2022.

Last year, over 70% of India's power came from coal. Instead of supporting Canada's LNG development to help countries get off of coal by exporting the world's cleanest LNG, helping to lower global emissions, the Liberals fixate on destroying Canada's economy and the livelihoods of the millions of workers who depend on jobs in Canada's energy sector. How does this make any sense?

While the NDP-Liberals punish Canadians for working in one of the world's most sustainable and transparent energy sectors and for living in a cold, distant, northern country, other countries burn more and more coal every day. The NDP-Liberals say things like "the world is moving this way". I wish they would really pay attention to what is actually happening in the rest of the world. The rest of the world is moving away from the agenda that the costly coalition imposes on Canada. The virtue signalling and empty words here must stop. Reality and common sense must prevail.

No wonder they made that last-minute name change to the bill, launched a coordinated spin job, broke and made up the rules and rammed it all through. It was so the fewest people would find out, but Conservatives said not so fast. We proposed reasonable amendments that the NDP-Liberals rejected outright, with no hesitation and no consideration.

They rejected amendments from Conservatives outlining measures to ensure access to affordable and reliable energy, to ensure a strong, export-oriented energy sector, to avoid regulatory duplication and unnecessary delays, to improve affordability and to facilitate and promote economic growth in Canada. They rejected amendments to create sustainable jobs through private sector investment and to ensure that major and clean energy projects under

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federal regulatory frameworks can be delivered on time and on budget. They rejected that.

• (1235)

There were measures to ensure the importance of collaborating with all levels of government, including provincial and municipal governments, engaging all relevant partners and stakeholders; measures to include representatives of provincial governments and indigenous governance bodies; and measures to recognize local and regional needs, including in indigenous communities. They rejected measures to ensure ways to create economic opportunities for indigenous communities. I guess that was because they know indigenous Canadians work at double the rates in Canada's oil and gas sector than in other sectors. As well there were measures to ensure the bill promotes economic growth, including the economic growth of indigenous communities. All of those were proposed by Conservatives, and all were rejected by the NDP-Liberals.

If members did not believe before that the just transition would be anything but fair and equitable for Canadians, now they know for sure. What would be the reason for voting against all these changes, changes calling for measures to improve affordability and to create economic opportunities for indigenous communities? They even rejected a Bloc amendment because it sought to preserve existing jobs.

Bill C-50 would not create sustainable jobs. It would kill them. It is clear that there is nothing well-intentioned about this bill or the NDP-Liberals' costly coalition.

Conservatives also proposed further amendments for Canadian workers and the energy sector, but the NDP-Liberals opposed them all. They were things like, "Canada's natural resource sector, including oil and gas, has been a reliable source of revenue for the Government of Canada, and has contributed to the sustainability of core social programs", "Canada's plan to reduce its production of oil and gas should be done in lock step with major emitters...including China, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the United States", "Canada should sell liquefied natural gas to its security partners in Europe, so that they can break their dependence on Russian natural gas" and "Canadian oil and gas workers produce cleaner products than those of any other country in the world". All of those were rejected by the NDP-Liberals.

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The costly coalition truly has no regard for the hard-working Canadians in the energy sector in local communities right across the country who keep Canadians' lights on, vehicles running, homes warm and cool, and businesses going. The costly coalition actually ignores the lessons from other countries that began imposing a combination of anti-energy and anti-free market policies years ago. However, the NDP-Liberals do not care about reality. It is all about ideology for them.

For example, the consequence of Ireland's anti-energy just transition agenda shut down manufacturing jobs in Ireland, only to have the same jobs be created in other countries abroad, with no impact on emissions but a lot of harm to the economy and the livelihoods of their citizens. Germany was forced to reopen coal plants after initiating their suite of top-down economic restructuring policies years ago. Last year, over a third of Germany's electricity came from coal, and the government waived its emissions tax due to the high cost of energy.

Poland is dependent on coal for over 70% of its energy mix, with no plans to phase it out until 2040. The Netherlands was forced to end its cap on energy production from coal-fired power plants to protect themselves and stop their reliance on Russian natural gas. Austria reopened its coal plants just two years after finishing their so-called just transition. In New Zealand, just three years after initiating their just transition plan, the country burned more coal than ever before.

Last year, Britain had to bring coal plants back online in the face of cold snaps, with the risk of over three-hour rolling blackouts even with the coal plants that were able to come back online, something that Canadians are already experiencing across the country.

Sweden, which currently holds the EU's presidency, ceased all of its efforts to net zero and upset EU plans to phase out fossil fuel subsidies earlier this year, when it put forward a motion to allow countries to prolong subsidies for coal-powered plants. Sweden also dumped their 100% renewable target amid ongoing concerns about short-term energy security and extended their timelines for alternative energy to 2045.

In Scotland there is no planned phase-out of oil and gas, but rather a commitment to continued exploration and production with the hope that investments in sustainable energy and carbon capture, utilization and storage technologies would help reduce sectoral emissions. In Norway, which anti-energy Canadian activists love to celebrate, they continue to export oil and gas, with 49% of Norway's annual revenues coming from the petroleum sector. Warm, small and sunny Mexico also hit record-high fossil fuel-powered generation in 2023.

That is the reality around the world where the just transition has been tried. Somehow the Liberals think that if they ignore all of the warning signs and alarm bells, they will avoid these same problems faced by all of these countries around the world. The Prime Minister and his costly coalition need a serious reality check.

Canadians do not even have to look abroad to see the failure of just transition claims and plans. In 2017, the Liberals accelerated the forced shutdown of coal operations in communities in Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, which killed the

jobs of 3,000 workers across the four provinces, in approximately 13 communities.

● (1240)

The Liberals' promised just transition did not materialize. Despite 150 million tax dollars spent, jobs were not replaced; communities were devastated, and municipal representatives worry that local governments will not be able to afford to keep the water running and the town services operational much longer.

The Auditor General said that the Liberals' just transition for coal workers was anything but just. The program lacked employee retention, and it actually led to a loss of skills and skilled workers, which hiked the cost of housing and infrastructure in remote areas as people fled those smaller communities. Impacted workers were not identified in advance, and 86% of the workforce was left behind with generic, untargeted and unhelpful programs. None of the recommendations of the task force were implemented and all of the government departments that were supposed to monitor and to report on the status of activities that measure whether projects actually helped communities did not report and could not determine whether the millions of taxpayer dollars actually did anything.

The Liberals' just transition for coal was a perfect and expensive failure trifecta: a failure to plan, a failure to implement and a failure to measure outcomes. Left behind are dozens of communities and thousands of workers and their families who now have to make new lives for themselves because far-away and out-of-touch politicians and program administrators implemented an accelerated plan to fire those hard-working Canadians and to make their communities ghost towns, and they patted themselves on the back while they were it. That is exactly what Bill C-50, the just transition, is all about.

The Liberals want to do it all again, but this time with energy, agriculture, manufacturing, construction and transportation workers who rely indirectly or directly on the oil and gas sector. That internal memo to the natural resources minister says, "[large] scale transformation[s] will take place in...Agriculture...292,000 workers...; [in] Energy...202,000 workers...; [in] Manufacturing...193,000 workers...; [in construction]...1.4 million workers...; and [in] Transportation...642,000 workers".

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The Liberals know it will kill 170,000 oil and gas jobs immediately. That is their plan. The just transition is an attack on all the livelihoods in all those significant sectors in Canada, and it would ultimately hurt all provinces. What does the minister's memo say those workers would be retrained in? Some of those people would be retrained in jobs as janitors and drivers. Janitors and drivers are obviously essential workers in any business and in all sectors, but the costly coalition should be honest enough to tell the millions of workers already in sustainable, highly paid jobs with significant pensions, benefits and advancement opportunities that this is really the Liberals' plan for them.

The just transition is the pinnacle of the NDP-Liberals' anti-energy agenda for Canada. It goes hand in hand with their cruel and inflationary carbon taxes 1 and 2, the tanker ban, the emissions cap, drilling bans, anti-development zones, the unrealistic EV targets and the incoming ban on internal combustion engines, or ICEs, their overreach on plastics, endless and impossible permitting timelines and red tape and their "no more pipelines" bill, Bill C-69, which was ruled unconstitutional over 185 days ago with no response or changes yet from the Liberals. This long line of anti-energy policies from the Liberals is a deliberate effort to accelerate the phase-out of oil and gas in Canada. The Liberals know it will not be produced if it cannot be exported, so they block pipelines and turn away world leaders and allies who ask for our resources, like LNG. After nine years, those policies have already driven billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of jobs out of Canada. It is clearly not worth the cost.

At a time when the world is in an energy crisis and when millions of people are living in energy poverty, Canada's resource wealth should be used to support our allies and the people in developing countries, and not to force them to support their adversaries. If the just transition in Canada goes ahead as intended, the Liberals would continue to reject allies who so desperately want to get off Russian energy to quit funding Putin's war machine. This is the reality. Global demand for oil and gas has risen, and it will continue to rise in the foreseeable future. Therefore, instead of forcing countries like Japan, Germany, Greece and others to turn to dictators and despots for their energy needs, Canada should be the reliable and the environmentally responsible source they can rely on. However, the NDP-Liberals' gatekeepers hold Canada back.

Canada has the third-largest oil reserves in the world, while being the fourth-largest producer, and the 18th-largest natural gas reserves, while being the fifth-largest producer. Common-sense Conservatives would ensure that Canada accelerates and expands the development and exports of traditional oil and gas for the benefit of our people and our home, and to help allies around the world. Canada could rank sixth in LNG exports if all the 18 proposed projects were completed and could displace all natural gas from Russia to allied nations in Europe and East Asia, like Germany, Ukraine, France, Japan and South Korea. However, the government's regulatory regime has killed all but three of those proposed LNG projects in Canada and, still to date, none are operational. Only one, which was previously approved under Conservatives, is under construction.

• (1245)

The Liberals also ignore the fact that the oil and gas sector has been, and continues to be, the top private sector investor in clean technology in Canada. In fact, 75% of Canadian private sector investment in clean energy comes from oil and gas and pipeline companies. However, the NDP-Liberals would apparently spend billions of tax dollars on re-education programs that their internal briefing notes explicitly say would leave workers at risk of only being able to get jobs that are more precarious, with less pay and lower skill requirements, and would shut down a sector that is already the leading research and development investor, and skills trainer in alternative, renewable and future energy technologies in Canada. By the way, 90% of companies in the oil and gas sector have 100 or fewer employees. They are small businesses; they are not big union jobs.

No matter what they say, the Liberals just transition will not be able to replace the quality, quantity or pay of those working today in Canada's energy sector, never mind the tax revenues to all governments, which benefit every Canadian.

Indigenous people in Canada and visible minorities, who are more highly represented in the sectors that Liberals want to transition away from, will face even higher job disruptions and more trouble finding new opportunities. The worse thing is that the NDP-Liberals know it.

Canada should be the world's energy producer and supplier of choice. Canada should be energy secure and self-sufficient, but the Liberals put ideology and partisanship above reality, the economy and Canadian sovereignty.

Politicians should be honest about the outcomes of their policies. No wordsmithing can negate the socio-economic consequences of the just transition concept for Canada. Besides, Canadian oil and gas jobs are sustainable jobs. The solutions are transformation, not transition; technology, not taxes; led by the private sector, not government. Conservatives would bring costs and red tape down and would accelerate approvals to make both traditional and alternative energy more affordable and accessible for all Canadians, while green-lighting green projects to help lower emissions globally.

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I believe Canadians can see through the costly coalition. I believe they know that they are not worth their trust and not worth the cost to Canada. For my part, I will not stop speaking the truth, no matter what vile names or crass insults they throw at me, no matter how much double-speak and gaslighting they do. I will not back down, and I will not cower.

The truth is this: Common-sense Conservatives are the only party that wants to make life more affordable for all Canadians, to green-light green projects and to expand traditional oil and gas for Canadian energy self-sufficiency, to protect Canada's sovereignty, to enhance Canada's security with free and democratic allies and to help lower emissions globally.

The best things for workers right across the country are jobs. This bill, Bill C-50, could create a fancy government committee that would create another fancy government committee, all behind closed doors, with no transparency and no accountability to deliver plans to restructure Canada's economy on a five-year cycle. This is exactly the kind of anti-energy, anti-private sector and anti-democratic policy agenda that has led other countries around the world to have expensive power, to have unaffordable and unreliable fuel and power, to have protests from their citizens, followed by governments rolling back suites of bad policies that are harmful to their countries and harmful to the people.

Given Iran's attack on Israel, Canadians should also be thinking about the necessity for Canada to become completely self-sufficient with our own energy supply and security, which is what Conservatives would ensure we could have, under a new common-sense Conservative government.

Madam Speaker, I would like to move the following amendment, seconded by the member for Provencher. I move:

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

the House decline to give third reading to Bill C-50, an act respecting accountability, transparency and engagement to support the creation of sustainable jobs for workers and economic growth in a net-zero economy, since the bill will displace workers, kill jobs, and kill the very sector that provides the most investment and most advancements in alternative energy.

• (1250)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is in order.

Question and comments, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish I could be surprised by that proposed amendment, but I am not because it goes with the continued obstruction that we have seen and the efforts by the Conservative Party to shut down the voices of workers as we talk about the important changes happening right around the world in the fight against climate change.

However, I have heard the member opposite, in several instances, refer to a "globalist agenda" or a "globalist plot". As a Jewish Canadian, I know that is an anti-Semitic dog whistle to people, questioning the loyalty of Jewish people to Canada. I am won-

dering if she would like to take a moment in the House not only to retract references to a "globalist plot" or a "globalist agenda", but also to apologize.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1255)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I am not sure if it is heckling or if people are trying to answer, but I want to remind members to wait until being recognized. I know that the hon. member for Lakeland can certainly respond effectively to the questions being asked. I also want to remind members to try to keep their comments, questions and debate to what is before the House.

The hon. member for Lakeland.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, globalism is, of course, a political theory that believes in policies being designed by global organizations and then being imposed on sovereign countries through global agreements. That is what globalism is. It is where the concept of the just transition comes from. It has been developed at exactly those kinds of meetings over the course of decades, and instead of putting Canadian jobs, the Canadian economy, Canadian security, Canadian sovereignty and Canadian energy independence first and ensuring that Canada can be the world's top-most supplier of our energy products and technology, the Liberals, through Bill C-50, the just transition, are imposing that concept that comes from the globalist globalism theory and thinking.

The Speaker made exactly the right point, which I would also like to emphasize. Again, it is very telling when the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources will not even get up on her feet and actually defend the bill, actually clarify if she thinks there are claims that I have made that are not true and actually stand up for what they are doing here. However, the Liberals will avoid that at all costs, just like they will not let any Canadian speak about the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I greatly admire my colleague from Lakeland, with whom I serve on the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. She is always kind and gracious. However, I still have to ask her a rather difficult question, because there is one thing that has been nagging at me when I think about all of the things she has said in committee.

Does she believe in climate change and does she think that the oil and gas industry are currently taking any responsibility when it comes to climate change?

I would like her to give a rather simple answer to those two short questions.

[English]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, I believe that governments and politicians have to be honest about their policies and about what they stand for. Just as was the case under the former Conservative government, just as our leader says, just as all of my common-sense Conservative colleagues say, I believe that emissions reductions should be achieved through technology and not taxes, and through Canadians workers, Canadian ingenuity and the Canadian private sector.

I want to appreciate and acknowledge the Bloc's participation on the bill. Several times, its members supported provincial jurisdiction and in that way would tell the federal government to back off from its top-down, central planning, micromanagement embodied in Bill C-50. I certainly appreciate the Bloc's support on those principles.

I would also note that Bloc members themselves tried to make amendments to have Bill C-50 include language about preserving existing jobs in all these sectors that will be hurt by the just transition. Also, the Bloc tried to insert, in substantive ways, the concepts of fairness, transparency and equity within Bill C-50, but all those amendments that the Bloc proposed were rejected by the NDP-Liberals, too.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I did not hear the member talk about the climate emergency we are facing. The member comes from the province of Alberta, where forest fires are already burning. We have been told to expect a potentially worse wildfire season this year.

Like her, I come from western Canada where some of our provinces are facing potentially severe droughts. Workers in the resource sector in our province tell me that they are concerned about the future of their children. They understand we need to find a way to transition to sustainable work for a livable future.

Does the member not think we need to support workers in the face of climate change, which means bold action in terms of supporting the kind of work they can do on a livable planet?

• (1300)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, after nine years, I hope that Canadians can judge me by my words and actions in the same way as the actions and words of all my common-sense Conservative colleagues.

To the exclusion of almost all else from time to time, it feels that for nine years I have championed supporting workers in the oil and gas industry, in clean tech and in all facets of energy development and technology production in Canada. I recognize the reality that the vast majority of private sector investment in renewable and alternative energy, including in clean tech, comes from traditional oil and gas companies, from oil sands and pipeline companies.

That is why right now, as has been the case for decades, Alberta, for example, is the leader in renewable energy and clean tech investment. In fact, there was a lot to be said about the premier's pause to ensure certainty and clarity in conditions for renewable development in Alberta. What her opponents will not mention is that the dollar value of investment in renewable energy in Canada,

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which dwarfs the investments in other provinces, doubled since she took the time to be clear and certain about those conditions.

Alberta is the leader in the country on renewable and clean tech. Common-sense Conservatives have always fought for those workers and will continue to do so.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the work she is doing in defending the jobs of energy workers and families and indigenous communities right across the country. She has been a steadfast advocate of the energy sector.

One of the things that she understands is the global demand for LNG and the impact and role Canada can play in meeting that demand. We have seen others with less environmental standards, less labour and less human rights standards fill that void, like Qatar.

The hon. member and I met with a European Union official. His sole purpose is to source energy, nuclear and LNG around the world. They prefer to do business with like-minded countries like Canada, with similar rules of law that are environmentally sustainable as well.

Could she talk about the role Canada can play in supplying the world with clean energy?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Ontario, who has also been a reliable, steadfast and passionate supporter of energy workers. He knows, for the sector and for individuals, it benefits the entire country.

Ontario has a lot at stake with Bill C-50, given the negative impacts on manufacturing, construction and transportation that would come from it. He is exactly right; it has been a travesty. I do not know if the word "treason" is too much when we watch our Prime Minister say that there is no business case for Canadian LNG. He is apparently the only world leader who thinks there is no business case for Canadian LNG, since our allies and world leaders everywhere are literally begging for us to provide it to them.

Of course he is also a person who says that there is no business case for the development of those projects, even though 15 private sector proponents tried to get LNG projects built in Canada in the last nine years since he has been in government. They have all been blocked.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I am sure my hon. friend from Lakeland was asking rhetorically if the word "treason" was too strong. Let me just put on the record that the word "treason" is far too strong.

For my dear friend from Lakeland, I do not think anyone would ever imagine the MP for Lakeland was cowering. We are friends but we do not agree on this.

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Let me just point out the many ways in which I found her speech varied. From my understanding, there is a global shift away from fossil fuels. The recent report from the International Energy Agency verifies that of energy spending globally, renewables are increasing the pace at which they are a greater investment globally, and this is an investment for people who want to make money on their investments, than investments in fossil fuels. Germany reached the lowest level of coal use in its history, while having renewables over 50% last year. Sweden brought in a climate carbon tax in 1991 and has expanded it.

Let us try to agree on shared facts and movement about climate action.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, last summer, Sweden paused all efforts of its official government policy toward net-zero and is ramping up the production of fossil fuels. Last year, Germany brought more coal online than ever before in history.

We can quote the International Energy Agency. We can look at the examples of individual countries that have gone way further down the road in this policy agenda and see what is happening now. They now are facing the consequences of high expensive bills, of expensive essentials, of expensive and unreliable power, of collapsing agricultural communities and rural areas, and of collapsing secondary and tertiary job creation in the private sectors dependent on oil and gas.

I think the member is sort of making a false dichotomy that is not coming from the Conservatives. The Conservatives are recognizing the fact that oil and gas development, as private sector investments, are the biggest investors in alternative energy and in clean tech and fuels of the future. We are saying not to cut that off at the knees to the detriment and peril of Canadian workers, the Canadian economy, Canadian security, Canadian self-sufficiency and Canadian energy independence in order to force, not something that is just happening, the economy into the exact same situation these other countries are already in, which is the citizens protesting and governments rolling back those bad agendas.

• (1305)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, earlier I heard my colleague from Lakeland answer my question by stating that politicians have to be honest. It seems to me that Bill C-50 may in part address this issue of honesty. If we want to be honest with the people of Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Maritime provinces, whose economy depends mainly on oil, we must tackle climate change and find solutions. That is what I originally thought a bill on the just transition would do. I thought it would help us find solutions to figure out a way to minimize the impact of a necessary transition on workers.

Everyone recognizes that fossil fuels are largely responsible for climate warming and climate disruption. Everyone recognizes that, except maybe certain Conservatives. Everyone recognizes it, but the way to prove that is by taking action. When my colleague says that politicians should be honest, that applies to everyone. I suspect some of our colleagues in the Conservative Party are going to wake up 10 years from now with a pretty bad headache after blowing up the endless balloon of an oil- and gas-based economy.

As far as I am concerned, Bill C-50 is a textbook example of what is wrong with Canadian politics. I mentioned honesty earlier because I feel that political processes are powerless in the face of the oil and gas sector, which is kind of steering the Canadian economy. As a dispassionate observer, I see the oil and gas sector as a symbol of Canada's identity, such a strong symbol that it makes dialogue on the energy transition impossible. These positions are irreconcilable.

I saw this at the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, where I witnessed blatant filibustering, incivility, and tactics that I believe are totally unworthy of parliamentarians. That is why the Liberals responded in a way that may have been less than optimal—perhaps one of the worst ways possible, in fact—when they took the undemocratic step of shutting down debate. Did they have any other choice? History will not tell us, but this is how the Liberals responded.

The Liberals are not without their faults, either. The Minister of Energy and Natural Resources is a good minister. He does not seem too partisan to me, and he is open to dialogue. However, he too is in the stranglehold of the oil sector, so there is only so much he will do to move ahead with the necessary transition.

The minister found another dance partner, the NDP. It was only natural. The NDP even swallowed several bitter pills. I saw members go along with certain things on the energy transition at committee. That kind of undercuts their claim that standing up for the fight against climate change is part of their values. I may come back to this later when I talk about the difference between a just transition and sustainable jobs.

I was saying that Bill C-50 is a textbook example of what is wrong with Canadian politics. With this bill, we saw the full scope of what I call the Carleton method, the member for Carleton's method, which has been in place for a while now. This method can be summed up in one word: intimidation.

We witnessed some fairly major intimidation at the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. Sometimes, when the Conservative members heckled others during the proceedings, it seemed to me that they were acting like influencers rather than lawmakers. Their goal was to wreak havoc in committee. Then some members recorded themselves on video to show viewers what a great job they were doing defending the public's interests. What an utterly pointless exercise. That is the way things went at the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. Why am I saying this? It is because it feels like Bill C-50 was never really debated in committee.

• (1310)

Our chance to have a debate by presenting our amendments and getting to discuss them was stolen from us by the Conservatives' attitude. I will repeat this ad nauseam: This attitude of the Conservatives can be explained by what I see as an all-consuming passion for the oil and gas sector.

At the Standing Committee of Natural Resources, I learned that the member for Provencher's argument against Bill C-50 boiled down to the fact that he likes muscle cars and would rather drink his milkshake through a plastic straw. When I learned that, I thought to myself: Our future is guaranteed, this is the way to go, in other words, more muscle cars—I see my colleague nodding his approval—and plastic straws. Is there anything worse than drinking a milkshake through a paper straw? I mean, really.

I also learned from the member for Red Deer—Mountain View that oil could be used to create peace in the world. In my former life, I taught political science, and I used to talk to my students about colonialism. Now I have learned a new concept: eco-colonialism. Apparently, it is eco-colonialist to stop indigenous peoples from developing oil. That is pretty shocking. Can there be a more pernicious reasoning than that? They are basically trying to secure social licence by saying that refusing to develop new oil projects that are affiliated with indigenous communities is a new form of colonialism. Rarely have I seen such twisted logic. My colleague from Red Deer—Mountain View also suggested that oil can bring peace to the world. Supposedly, Canadian oil and gas could stop the conflict in Ukraine and maybe even the conflict in Israel. Apparently, the answer to all the world's problems is oil.

All that is nothing, though. The Standing Committee on Natural Resources, which includes the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who is a world champion at making us go around in circles, spent almost a month arguing over whose turn it was to speak. As members know, each committee is made up of one member of the Bloc Québécois, one member of the NDP and four members of the Conservative Party, and the others are all Liberals. However, five or six Conservatives showed up, all demanding to speak. They started causing a ruckus, saying that their parliamentary privilege was being breached because they were not being allowed to speak. We spent a month on that. If that is not wasting time, I do not know what is.

The worst part was when we did the clause-by-clause study. The member for Brantford—Brant flew into such a rage that I feared for my whip's safety. I had never seen anything like it. He snapped. He just lost it and started yelling. He really loves the oil and gas industry. In my view, he simply lost it. At one point, I was afraid for my whip's safety. All that happened at the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

In my opinion, a legislator's job is to calmly study bills in order to improve the society in which we live, to change the direction in which society is heading. How can we do that in an atmosphere like that? How can we do that when some people's prime objective is to derail the process and make dialogue impossible? In politics, the watchword is “dialogue”, meaning a discussion among people who have different visions but who are able to reach a consensus. It was absolutely impossible to reach a consensus on Bill C-50.

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The Conservatives' all-consuming passion for the oil industry was only confirmed by Bill C-49. They invited Ches Crosbie, an eccentric character who does not believe in climate change and who thinks that all the investments in fighting climate change are bogus. We have it on video. He was invited to testify by the Conservatives, who thought he might contribute something important to the debate by spewing absurdities. Maybe one day we will hear testimony from someone trying to convince us that the Earth is flat.

• (1315)

The Conservatives' all-consuming passion came to the fore in committee. I see that as the member for Carleton's method. The Conservatives' decision to reject everything that has to do with the fight against climate change can be seen in their never-ending attack on carbon pricing. We have actually started saying that the Conservatives are obsessed with the “carbun” tax, because they are acting like bums. Anything goes. They can say one thing, then contradict themselves. They can say for weeks that a tax applies to Quebec when it does not. They can say for weeks that carbon pricing is responsible for skyrocketing food prices. We saw them say that many times. The worst is what I saw them do in recent weeks, when they exploited the increase in the cost of living and the misfortune of the most vulnerable to help big oil push its agenda.

What the Leader of the Opposition wants to do is keep the economy stuck in the 20th century. He certainly does not want to end our dependence on oil and gas. We see the proof here every day. When someone asks a question about the oil and gas industry, they get a huge round of applause. No, that is not true. There are two things the Conservatives applaud. The first is the oath to the King. They perk right up when that subject comes up. The second is anything having to do with oil. That makes the Conservatives really happy. That is their bread and butter.

There is nothing more ironic than to hear them say we need to deal with inflation and help low-income people, while at the same time defending the agenda of the most wealthy. I have never seen a Conservative stand up and say that giving \$82 billion in tax credits to the oil industry between now and 2034 is ridiculous and that we should use that money to help people in need. I have never heard a Conservative say that. I have never seen a Conservative stand up and say that investing \$34 billion in an oil pipeline is absolutely ridiculous. These are the issues that should get their blood boiling, not a potential tax on the greedy oil and gas industry. I would just like to remind the House that, in 2022, this greedy industry raked in \$200 billion in profits.

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Far be it from me to remind my Conservative colleagues that their former leader, Mr. O'Toole, believed carbon pricing was one of the best ways to fight climate change. I will not do that. Rather, I will focus on the reasons the Bloc Québécois will be voting against Bill C-50.

The first reason is that, in my opinion, the bill is not actually about a just transition. Just transition is a concept. Everyone in the western world uses the term “just transition” to describe the efforts we should be making to plan a carbon-free economy while mitigating the negative impact on workers as much as possible. Everyone agrees, except Canada.

Why is Canada the only country that does not want to adopt the concept of a just transition? Some less charitable souls told me that one possibility is that we could make a pun with the Prime Minister's name. In fact, our Conservative friends made a not-so-clever pun with the Prime Minister's name and inflation. If that is why, it is pretty childish. I hope that is not it. The other possible reason why Canada uses “sustainable jobs” instead of “just transition” is apparently because the Premier of Alberta cannot stand the thought of talking about a just transition. For that reason, Canada chose to talk about sustainable jobs rather than just transition.

I figure that if we do not call a spade a spade, that makes it difficult to take the bold measures that need to be taken immediately if we want to deal with climate change. How bold can we be if we cannot call a spade a spade? That made it difficult for us to support the bill on just transition.

• (1320)

What made it impossible to support the bill is the federal government's calculated abandonment of the asymmetrical agreement on workforce management between Quebec and Ottawa. Quebec has the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail, which allows Quebec society to hold debates between the government, the major unions and employers. We thought that, in Quebec, the concept of a just transition should be debated by these partners and abide by the asymmetrical agreements reached between the governments of Canada and Quebec.

Unfortunately, I have had many discussions with the minister. I thought that at some point we could get there. I had a lot of discussions, I met several times with unions to discuss the bill on a just transition. I will admit that some unions were on board. I have friends in the unions who were prepared to put water in their wine and go for sustainable jobs, as a gesture of compromise. Unfortunately, at the end of the day, the federal government did not accede to their demands that the asymmetrical agreements between Canada and Quebec be respected and that the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail be given a more important role. That is why the Bloc Québécois will unfortunately not be supporting the bill.

However, there are some necessary steps that could have been taken. As I said at the beginning of my speech, Canada is in the oil and gas industry's economic stranglehold. What can we do to make a just transition? What action can we take?

First, the government needs to do away with the strategies that it is currently proposing. When I hear talk of a low-carbon economy in Canada, it is immediately clear to me that the government's and

even the opposition's proposals are flawed. Among other things, I am talking about blue hydrogen, which uses carbon capture and storage. That is a key piece of the government's plan to fight climate change.

Many witnesses came and told the Standing Committee on Natural Resources that, from a technical standpoint, it is unfeasible to use carbon capture and storage technologies for the volumes that the government is talking about. Many witnesses also told us that it is unfeasible to produce blue hydrogen, or hydrogen from gas, because it is so expensive, and yet the government is investing massive amounts in tax credits and research support for the oil and gas industry's pipe dream.

In Canada, there is talk of developing low-carbon oil. The majority of experts we talk to say that is impossible. However, the Canadian strategy, as I was saying earlier, with its big tax credits, is focused on the pipe dream of producing low-carbon oil. I always tell the same joke: low-carbon oil is like diet poutine. It does not exist. If we want to fight climate change, then we simply cannot insist on economically supporting the oil companies. If we want to go on a diet then we cannot eat poutine. It amounts to the same thing.

I will close with an anecdote. I joined the minister in Berlin where we attended a meeting with people from Siemens. The minister asked them whether Siemens would be interested in producing the technology for blue hydrogen. The people from Siemens answered rather honestly, saying that the production cost would be so high that they would need government support. In addition to that, the technological costs are so high that it is practically impossible. Yet the government's entire strategy is based on a similar pipe dream.

I see that my time is up. Basically, the Canadian oil and gas sector's stranglehold has led us to a dead end. Unfortunately, we will not be able to produce legislation consistent with our goals and a just transition.

• (1325)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect to the member's last comment, poutine is something I really enjoy. If I were on a diet, I might limit the amount I eat, but it is something we all love.

The member expressed some reluctance at the beginning of his comments, regarding the idea of the government's using time allocation and so forth. If one looks at the process we have gone through to get the bill to the stage it is at today, we have seen the opposition using artificial intelligence to come up with 20,000-plus amendments. Yet again we heard misinformation from the opposition critic moments ago, which is on the record, and now she has moved an amendment to the legislation. The Conservatives have absolutely no desire whatsoever to ever allow the legislation to see the light of day.

Would the member not recognize that there is value in using the tool of time allocation in order to get the bill passed?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I am not sure whether my colleague listened to my entire speech, but I had a lot to say about the Conservatives' bad faith. I experienced the Conservatives' bad faith in committee, and I do not consider it the right approach.

The government could also have done things differently. The just transition is a political project that I support. Amendments could have been put forward to seek a strong consensus within civil society. I had many meetings with environmental groups and members of the labour movement. We could have reached a broader consensus and maybe then have pressured our Conservative colleagues to make them listen to reason. I think we could have done a better job on many levels.

I do not believe that invoking closure is ever a good thing.

[English]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member and I disagree on nearly everything when it comes to energy policy, but I enjoy very much working with him on committee.

I want to acknowledge both the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party for actually being honest about what Bill C-50, the just transition, is, which is a plan to end oil and gas, kill Canadian oil and gas jobs and, as the member pointed out, create a government committee to create a government committee to implement economic restructuring plans from the top down.

I would note for the member that the leading driver of the creation of new union jobs in Canada is the oil and gas expansions by major multinationals in Alberta and other provinces where they operate, yet on the other hand, 93% of Canadian oil and gas businesses have fewer than 100 employees; they are small businesses. Since he is interested in engaging what is in the legislation, I appreciate that he will oppose the just transition in order to protect provincial jurisdiction and because he can see that the bill would not do anything that its proponents claim it would in terms of jobs training, new jobs or skills training.

What does the member think about the fact that what Bill C-50 would do is end oil and gas, the leading creator of new union jobs and big multinationals right now, yet would not contemplate at all the 90% of Canadian oil and gas companies that have fewer than 100 employees?

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• (1330)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I am tempted to give my colleague the same answer she gave me earlier when she said that politicians have to be honest. Every politician has to be honest. The future of the world does not lie in fossil fuels.

The country that is currently investing the most to get off oil is China. The same is happening in the United States. Countries are investing to get off oil, to transition to a low-carbon economy. Why should we be the only ones left in the oil and gas business, waiting to be dealt the death blow in 20 years' time? That would be completely stupid. We need to get moving. We need to move towards renewable energies and, above all, we need to pass legislation that supports people who are at risk of losing their jobs.

If they do not want to do that, there is obviously something there that they do not understand.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech, although I was a little surprised by the conclusion. He talked about a consensus within civil society. The current bill may not be ambitious enough and may not be perfect, but we think it is a step in the right direction. It is supported by the Canadian Labour Congress, Environmental Defence, Climate Action Network, 350 Canada, Équiterre, the Pembina Institute, Ecojustice, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Council of Canadians and the David Suzuki Foundation. That is a lot of people, a lot of environmental groups. I know that some Quebec unions support it as well.

I have attended various COPs, and people from both the FTQ and the CSN have talked about wanting a just transition. I think we are heading in that direction, with room for the labour movement at the table. This was an essential demand from these groups, and Bill C-50 came through on that. I wonder if the Bloc Québécois might be open to reconsidering its position.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, as for reconsidering our position, the answer is definitely no. As I told my colleague, we had numerous meetings with people from the environmental and labour communities. People from the environmental community have mixed feelings about the bill. For them, the fact that the notion of a just transition has been squeezed out is a defeat. Still, they would rather have legislation than nothing at all, and I do not blame them.

My goal was to improve the bill. As I was saying earlier, if the government had been open, we might have been able to improve the bill. The main reason we will be voting against this bill is that the government does not recognize the asymmetrical agreements it has with Quebec. I have spoken to all the unions about this, and they have even written letters to the minister, urging him to acknowledge the asymmetry that exists in workforce training. Unfortunately, that has not happened.

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Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by really acknowledging, in solidarity, my colleague the member for Jonquière for what he has been through on this committee. It is quite incredible. I doubt that the people we represent are aware of all the grandstanding around this bill, which has been reduced to its principle and nothing more.

I am also of the opinion that we, as politicians, elected representatives and legislators, have experienced a totally undemocratic exercise. I am talking about the 64 votes we had to endure that got us nowhere. That is what my question to my colleague is about.

As it now stands and going beyond the principle, which is not about just transition and is ostensibly meant to promote social dialogue, is this bill simply smoke and mirrors?

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, it has indeed become a bit like smoke and mirrors.

I want to add to what my colleague said. As parliamentarians, we have to realize that some things are not permitted. We can have different ideas and different points of view, but resorting to strategies to intimidate or wear down parliamentarians, to muzzle dialogue or shut down debate on a bill is, in my opinion, unparliamentary.

I have seen this transformation in my Conservative colleagues since the member for Carleton took over as leader. For everyone's sake, I hope they will change their tone in the coming months and weeks.

• (1335)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, finally we are at the point of moving forward with actually a very simple and what should be non-controversial bill. It is a bill that would ensure that workers, environmental groups and indigenous people have a seat at the table as we talk about moving forward with the biggest economic transition since the industrial revolution.

It is a transition that will happen whether Canada decides it is going to participate or not, yet what we have seen in the House is, in my 20 years here, the most deplorable, degrading undermining of democracy, which I could not have imagined would ever happen: the abusive harassment that took place in our committee from the Conservatives' trying to shut down witnesses who came forward; 20,000 bogus amendments brought forward through AI, none of which had anything to do with improving the bill; and two days of absolutely useless voting as another attempt to slow down.

What was being slowed down? It was a bill that had been pushed forward by the labour unions of Canada, which said the transition is happening, their jobs are changing, they want a seat at the table and they have a right to have it because it is their expertise that the government needs to understand if it is going to talk about sustainable jobs and because it is their communities that would be impacted.

Coming from mining country, where I have seen transitions, I can say there is nothing just about them. I have seen them in too many communities, such as Elliot Lake in my region when we lost all the uranium jobs, and my hometown of Cobalt when the iron industry and the silver industry collapsed. It was a calamity, and not

just for the workers but also for the businesses, for families and for marriages.

However, this is a different kind of transition. This is a lesson I learned many times in trips to Alberta when meeting with energy workers who were saying, "We are ready to move ahead." This is the first time we have had an opportunity, when we are seeing something come at us, to put in place the steps needed to draw on the incredible expertise of our workers to create a new energy economy. As I said, this is happening whether the Conservatives admit that the world is round or not. The International Energy Agency, hardly known as a left-wing think tank, in its most recent report said we are witnessing the end of the fossil fuel era and we have to prepare ourselves for the next era. That is the message it has been giving in warning governments to take the steps necessary to prepare.

We can look at China, which has made over \$890 billion in clean tech. In a single year, China had more clean tech projects than the rest of the world combined. The result was \$1.6 trillion in its economy, which went up 30% in a single year. If we do not act, China will be taking the market. It will take the market in critical minerals, in EV, in solar, geothermal and any other technologies that Canada can be a lead on, but not according to the Conservatives. The Conservatives do not want us to be a lead on that; they want us to sit at the back of the pack.

The transition is going to happen whether we want it or not, while in Biden's government, \$500 billion since 2021 has been invested in new projects because the Americans have opened the doors and are working on the principle of good-paying union jobs.

When workers came to our committee to talk about what they believed and knew and about how they could participate and lead the way, the Conservatives would not let them speak. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers representatives were at committee; the Conservatives shut them down. They shut down the carpenters and members of the Canadian Labour Congress. Union representatives were there, representing not only the workers of the oil patch in western Canada but also the workers who are going to be running the EV lines. The Conservatives shut them down. The Conservatives did not want to hear from the Alberta Federation of Labour.

The reason is very simple: Climate deniers are not trolls on Twitter; they are in the House of Commons. Just like the toxic bots, the only way they can get away with what they are doing is by attacking and by trying to silence the facts, so we have seen relentless attacks on facts and on the witnesses who could speak. The Conservatives did not want the witnesses to speak, even though they were the very workers whose lives would be impacted. They could not allow them to speak, because if they did it would blow apart the bogus arguments being made by the member for Carleton.

● (1340)

Energy workers are not the only ones being affected by the Conservatives' lack of action. We are now in a full on climate disaster. This catastrophe is having a massive impact on all manner of industries, such as the B.C. wine industry this winter, and in my region, the maple syrup industry, which is so crucial to Abitibi, Quebec, and northern Ontario. They have been hammered by the dramatic climate changes. There were 200,000-plus people forced out of their homes from climate fires, while the member who lives in Stornoway was running around and trying to go into communities. As people were being evacuated by catastrophic climate fires, he was saying that he would make burning pollution free.

Let us talk about the effect of what is happening to Canada's agricultural sector. I really encourage people to read the reflection from rancher Bob Tolman from Rumsey, Alberta. His family built up a ranch for 120 years. These are people who know how to live on the land. They have had to give up their farm and cattle because of the ongoing climate disaster that is unfolding in Alberta. However, members will never, ever hear a single Alberta Conservative stand up and talk about the disaster that is affecting Alberta farmers.

Mr. Tolman said that the 2021 drought was the worst drought Alberta had seen since the dirty thirties, but they had enough carry-over in feed and hay from 2020 to get through 2021. Then 2022 came, and it was even worse. Then, in 2023, they had under 40 millilitres of rain. He said that, in a normal year, his farm produced 700 bales of hay. In 2023, it produced just one bale. Members have not heard a single Alberta Conservative stand up and talk about the crisis facing farmers, because they would rather let the planet burn so Rich Kruger could make more profits than make a sustainable agriculture in Canada that is going to affect us in our bottom line.

Mr. Tolman pointed out that, if he was going to keep his cattle herd, it meant he would have to buy feed; of course, because of the drought, the price of cattle feed has risen dramatically. Members have never heard a single Conservative talk about the price of feed; it is all about the carbon tax. He had to pay \$300 a tonne. That would have been \$200,000 to feed his cattle this year. This is why there is a sell-off of cattle and bison happening in the west. Farmers cannot feed their animals.

We see backbench Conservatives get up and talk about the carbon price and how potatoes in Calgary are being done in by the carbon tax. They get their potatoes from Idaho, which does not pay a carbon tax. Yes, the price went up in the grocery stores for potatoes from Idaho. Why is that? It is because Idaho is being hit by the climate disaster as well. Members never hear a single Conservative speak truths about the impacts of what is happening.

It is fire season in Alberta right now. There are 60 burning wildfires in Alberta and 100 in B.C. Members will never hear a single one of the Conservatives stand up and say that their communities are being done in. Why is that? It is because they do not want to undermine, in any manner at all, the profits being made by big oil. Therefore, we are going to have what we saw with Bill C-50, this campaign of disinformation, rage politics and saying it is some kind of globalist woke agenda. This is the language of Alex Jones and of conspiracy haters, but Conservatives need it, because they cannot

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tell their supporters that the planet is on fire, that agriculture is being hammered hard and that, last summer, there were so many businesses in northern Ontario that lost out; people would not come up because of the smoke.

They do not want people to deal with that; they want them to get all riled up. People got so riled up that they threw an axe through the window of one of my colleagues to teach him a lesson. That is the mob. This is pitchfork politics. I know of another colleague where they slashed his tires and burned a garage. This is the politics of intimidation. That is what happens when one cranks people up with disinformation.

Therefore, are we going to expect—

● (1345)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am not sure what the member is talking about specifically, but in good faith, he may want to clarify that no Conservative MP threw an axe through—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate, and I just want to remind members that, when they rise, they are to bring up the standing order that is being brought forward. Also, even if they are trying to cheer the member on, members should not be doing that while we are in the House, until they have a chance for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, it is very telling that no Conservative would stand up on a point of order and say that they had actually defended Alberta farmers during the catastrophic drought, because they have not, so they have to change the subject.

The reason I bring this up is—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask members to hold off and write their comments down so they do not forget them.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, when I was 17, I was playing in biker bars, so getting tackled by a Conservative from Alberta is not something that I lose much sleep over. Hopefully, they will not start throwing bottles.

Right now, I am going back to the issue that disinformation, rage politics and relentless falsehoods are being promoted by climate deniers in the midst of a climate catastrophe. The question for me is the issue of climate denial, not only by bots, but also by a government in its belief that, if it just does a little bit here and a little bit there, everything will be fine. That is another form of climate denialism. It is not good enough, not at this time in our history.

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The belief on the government's side is that corporations must do their part and that it has Pathways Alliance, with a 2050 plan for net zero. We have seen that Pathways Alliance has met none of its objectives. It has spent millions on disinformation campaigns, but Canada is the only G7 country where emissions continue to rise. If it continues on this path, our emissions will be much higher.

There is a great peer-reviewed study on Pathways Alliance. I encourage everyone to read it, because it shows the greenwashing, disinformation and fundamental lack of honesty that are evident. In the review, it said there was no credible proof of Pathways Alliance's carbon capture claims making any difference, yet it wants us to give them billions in carbon capture. What it is doing with carbon capture is not lowering emissions; it is using carbon capture to pump out more oil and gas and to burn more, while telling us that we have to pay for it.

This shows how they all worked together on this disinformation campaign. This is a peer-reviewed study. I am not just making this up. I read peer-review studies once in a while. It reads, "the degree of strategic coordination shown by the main producers of the oil sands sector reflects a troubling concentration of corporate power for the purposes of political and public influence." I see my colleagues over there and my colleagues here. It continues by saying that "regulators...should actively consider how to equip themselves to detect and address sector-scale greenwashing." They say this becomes a really important issue "as liability claims mount regarding the role of fossil fuels organizations in their 'failure to warn' of impending harms due to their products."

This issue of a "failure to warn" leads us to where this is going to go: to lawsuits. Those are the decisions where we will see some action. We know that Shell has recently been found guilty by a Dutch court of failing to mitigate against climate disaster and constant disinformation. Shell has been ordered to reduce emissions by 45% by 2030. That is what courts are doing. The European Court of Human Rights has just moved against big oil.

We have groundbreaking lawsuits. I really like the one in Colorado. I encourage people to check it out, because it names the Canadian giant Suncor and Exxon.

Since 2017, five states, the District of Columbia and 20 municipalities in the U.S. have taken major climate polluters to court for knowingly spreading disinformation. I certainly encourage people to read the California statement. This is the big tobacco moment. This is where the people are able to get back, and there is some great stuff in it. It talks about how Exxon and Shell purposely directed tortuous conduct toward California by distributing, marketing, advertising, promoting and supplying fossil fuels with the knowledge that the intended use of those products for combustion has caused and will continue to cause climate change-related harms, including to the state's industries. It is a campaign of deception and denial of climate change.

That right there is the entire platform of the Conservative opposition, which does everything on bumper stickers. I think we could put its entire environmental strategy, denialism of what the crisis is, on a bumper sticker. It would even fit on a little Austin Mini.

I want to go through some of these issues here, because it is really important that people understand what they knew and the importance of having stuff in place to take them on. Since at least 1988, the American Petroleum Institute participated and led several coalitions to promote disinformation. It has had front groups including the Global Climate Coalition; the Partnership for a Better Energy Future; the Coalition for American Jobs; and I love this one, the Alliance for Climate Strategies. They knew in the late 1960s that they were in a situation where the ice caps would actually start to melt by the year 2000. They knew that in 1968, so they lied. That was the American Petroleum Institute.

● (1350)

In 1980, Esso, a good Canadian company, told its managers of the danger of CO₂ buildup in the atmosphere and that it could have catastrophic effects. Then they said that there were measures to lower emissions. In 1980, they could have lowered emissions, but it would have cost money. What did Esso do? Esso spent the money on disinformation, on greenwashing and on bogus studies.

In 1982, Exxon had much better science than anyone, and it is right here in the State of California versus the big oil giants. Exxon was warning, from their scientific studies, that climate catastrophe would become evident by the year 2000. That was when we would first start to notice its effects. However, by then it might be too late. All through the nineties, they knew, but what did they do? They decided to pay for bogus studies and disinformation, the kind of stuff that is still being spouted from the front benches of the Conservative Party today. They knew that the results would be catastrophic for the planet.

The other one that is very telling in the California indictment is that, in 1988, Shell did a study of scientific reports that said that, again, the crisis in climate would be noticeable to the public beginning in around the year 2000, which I think most of us agree is when most of began to wonder and worry, and by then, it would possibly be too late. What did Shell do? Shell raised their oil drilling platforms in the ocean by six feet, so that, as the ice caps collapsed, coastal cities were wiped out and South Pacific islands were destroyed, it would be to hell with them; Shell was going to make money.

That is what they did. That is in the indictment. This is like Philip Morris telling kids, "Not only is smoking good, but you have to smoke if you're going to grow up and be healthy." They knew they were burning the planet.

How does this relate back to Bill C-50? It relates back to this constant pattern of the Conservatives to promote disinformation, bogus claims and hysterical talk about the hundreds of thousands of jobs that are going to somehow be destroyed if we do anything to support—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I am not sure whether members remember that they should be respectful while they are in the House of Commons. It is not time for questions and comments yet. I would ask members to please hold off. If they are just coming in and preparing for question period, again, I would ask members to please be respectful and keep their voices down.

The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay has two and a half minutes left.

• (1355)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that you talked about being respectful. We are dealing with the back bench. Sometimes I feel like they are trying to stone me to death with spitballs. Meanwhile, we are talking about a climate catastrophe, and they laugh, snicker and giggle.

That member from Calgary, I have never seen him stand up once to talk about the climate drought facing Albertans. They do not care. The Conservatives do not care that Alberta is on fire right now. They did not care when Alberta was on fire last year. They never spoke about it once. They want to get people revved up on the bogus, “We are going to get the carbon tax axed.” They are going to go into these communities, as they are burning and residents have to escape. As Kelowna was facing a catastrophic explosion of fire, the member for Kelowna—Lake Country was saying, “Do not worry. We are going to make burning fuel free. We are going to take the tax off.”

The Conservative leader was asked about the industrial carbon tax. By the way, Suncor and those companies that made \$78 billion last year paid one-fourteenth in comparison to what an ordinary person would pay. When the leader who lives in Stornoway was asked about the industrial carbon tax, he claimed it did not exist.

Not only are the Conservatives promoting disinformation and bogus conspiracies, but either he does not know his facts or he is just being mendacious. I know he has never had a job, but this is deeply concerning from a man claiming he is going to be leader of a country facing an unprecedented climate crisis.

Where are we right now? We are finally moving forward with the most minor, simple bill to put in place steps to have voices heard. That is all we are doing, yet we see the total rage machine of the Conservatives cranked up to an 11, with all cylinders firing on gong show idiocy to try to derail basic steps to involve workers, like the energy workers from Unifor and the workers from the construction unions, who are a part and want to be part of a new energy economy.

What they have done, while working for Danielle Smith, is that they have chased \$33 billion out of Alberta for clean energy, because they do not want clean energy projects. They want to have

Statements by Members

our workers dependent on an industry that the International Energy Agency has said very clearly is now having to change. We either change with it, or we get left behind and the planet burns.

The New Democrats will be supporting Bill C-50. We have stood up. We will stand up again. We will always stand up for workers, for jobs—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has a very brief time for one question and an answer.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member for Timmins—James Bay say that the Leader of the Opposition has never had a job. Can the member explain to us what he meant by that exactly?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, when I was a teenager, I worked in a milk store. There is nothing wrong with starting out in a milk store. I delivered products door-to-door when I was a teenager. I was even a pretty lousy babysitter, but I do not put that on my résumé, because I went on to be a carpenter. I was a broadcaster. I was a professional musician, and I ran a small business.

However, for the poor member who lives in Stornoway, his résumé is, wow, talk about skint. It is also vague. Either he did work for a summer at Dairy Queen or he did not. We have not been able to get an answer. Either he did have a paper route or he did not. I knew friends who had paper routes, but none of them puts that on their résumé; I mean, come on. This man has never had a job. He has been a political attack dog since he was a kid.

Again, I do not want anyone who works at Dairy Queen to feel we are disrespecting them, because at least they show up for work and know how to put the nuts on the banana split. We know that the member who lives in Stornoway never bothered to do any of that.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CANADA CARBON REBATE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every three months, Canadians receive the carbon rebate. Today is one of those days. In Winnipeg North alone, a family of four is looking at \$1,200 a year. That is four payments, with one every three months.

I look at how Conservatives like to spread misinformation and mislead Canadians. I want to let every Conservative member know I am going to ensure the people of Winnipeg North and in the province of Manitoba are very much aware that they cannot trust the Conservative Party members because they consistently mislead.

Statements by Members

By axing the tax, they would be taking disposable income out of the pockets of Canadians, and in particular, over 80% of the residents of Winnipeg North. Shame on the Conservatives for thinking Canadians can be fooled.

* * *

● (1400)

[Translation]

TRANSFER OF WENDAT ARTEFACTS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps saying that nothing is more important than the relationship with first nations. After eight years, nothing could be further from the truth, to say the least.

Here we have another example involving Wendake, that I have the honour of representing in the House of Commons. Parks Canada is preparing to transfer to Gatineau Wendat artefacts that are currently on the traditional territory. The decision was made without properly consulting the first nation. As Grand Chief Vincent told the Journal de Québec, “if the government does not follow consultation protocols, then we will see what action we will take. ...To us, what is happening right now is unacceptable.”

This is nothing new. Seven years ago I sounded the alarm, but the Liberal government did nothing. It is an unacceptable situation, especially considering that Wendake runs a magnificent hotel-museum that preserves and exhibits the artefacts. The hotel-museum was built and inaugurated in March 2008 with the Conservative government.

It is time for the government to stop saying one thing and doing the opposite and start respecting the will of the Wendat people.

* * *

[English]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I knocked on doors this past summer, there were many days that saw smoke-filled air that prevented kids from going outside, far above normal temperatures that posed life-threatening conditions for vulnerable seniors, droughts that caused cracks in home foundations and anxiety about the future as the realities of climate change confront us in new and undeniable ways.

Canadians want to do their part to fight climate change, but they also need to take care of their families' needs. That is the advantage of our climate plan. It lets them do both, by providing rebates that offset added costs for eight out of 10 Canadians while at the same time being proven to effectively reduce pollution.

The Canadian Climate Institute released a study recently that detailed that all of the government's current policies will prevent the equivalent of Quebec and Ontario's emissions combined by 2030.

The world is moving away from heavily polluting fuels. If Canada does not do its part, we will be on the outside looking in, with international trading partners and allies shutting us out of deals and taxing our imports. We are going to continue to advocate for environmental policies that protect our future.

[Translation]

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, they are there. We see them everywhere, but we do not take enough notice of them.

They are in our hospitals, schools, hockey rinks, libraries, parks, community kitchens and everywhere. They are there helping young people, seniors, people with disabilities and newcomers with everything that they need. I am talking about volunteers. They are there to run errands for a senior living at home alone, to teach French to a new immigrant who is discovering Quebec, to help a child with their homework and to serve a hot meal to people in need. We see them everywhere, but we do not take enough notice of them. However, God knows that they are remarkable people. Their outstanding contribution makes Quebec a great place to live.

I want to wish all volunteers a happy National Volunteer Week. This is a great opportunity to thank them for their time, their generosity and especially their kind hearts.

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CANADA CARBON REBATE

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever, we are on track to meet our 2026 climate target.

Most importantly, Ontario families, including those in Ottawa—Vanier, will receive \$1,120 this year through the Canada carbon rebate, starting today. That means an extra \$255 in their pockets. If the Conservatives stop their delay tactics, rural Ontario families can expect an extra 20% with the passage of Bill C-59.

In 2015, Canada was clearly off track when it came to greenhouse gas emissions. The Conservatives had no plan, polluting was free and emissions kept rising. Today, thanks to the efforts of Canadians and our government, Canada's emissions have dropped by 8%.

The Conservatives refuse to fight climate. They prefer to chant slogans rather than help Canadians. On this side of the House, we are reducing emissions while making life better for eight out of 10 Canadians.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is powered by tourism. That is the theme of this year's National Tourism Week. In my riding, the communities of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie are definitely powered by tourism.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

Niagara Falls alone is Canada's top leisure tourism destination, and the overall visitor experience is enhanced by the beautiful vineyards and wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake and the rich cultural history, shopping experiences and trail systems found throughout all three communities.

However, Canadian tourism has not fully recovered. Tourism workers and operators can blame the Liberal government's high taxes and out-of-control spending for driving up inflation and the cost of travelling throughout Canada. As a result, recovery is slow and uneven, and Canada is losing its competitive edge.

Canada is powered by tourism, but tourism can be further powered by axing the tax so our tourism workers can once again bring home powerful paycheques and our tourism operators can once again thrive by welcoming the world to our magnificent destinations. Let us bring it home.

* * *

CANADA CARBON REBATE

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, Canada was on the wrong track. The Canadian government at the time had no climate plan. It was free to pollute and emissions kept going up. Now, because of work done in Nova Scotia and across the country, our emissions have declined by 8%.

For the first time ever, we are on track to meet our 2026 climate target, thanks in no small part to pollution pricing and the Canada carbon rebate.

Starting today, a Nova Scotia family of four will receive the first instalment of their \$824 rebate. For the average family in my province, that is \$157 more than they will pay out over the year. For rural families, they will get more when Conservatives finally stop blocking the 20% top-up in Bill C-59.

While the other side tries to ruin the rebate, hurting lower-income Canadians, we will continue our work to help Canadians leave a healthier planet for our grandkids.

* * *

*[Translation]***CANADA CARBON REBATE**

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today New Brunswickers can look forward to receiving a Canada carbon rebate payment in their bank account.

For example, this year, a family of four in New Brunswick will receive \$760 through the Canada carbon rebate. That is \$183 more than they received last year. If the Conservatives stop obstructing Bill C-59, families in rural communities will receive an additional 20% of the amounts I just mentioned.

Our plan is making Canadians better off. Our carbon pricing system is putting more money back in the pockets of eight out of 10 Canadians through the Canada carbon rebates, while building a better future for our children and grandchildren.

The future of our planet and coming generations is more important than the official opposition's slogans.

FINANCE

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight long years of the Prime Minister, residents in my community are struggling. I have received countless emails, phone calls and letters from residents, and the message I am receiving is clear and consistent, life is unaffordable.

Under the Liberal government, people are losing their homes, they are struggling to feed their families and they cannot afford to heat their homes or drive their vehicles. While life has gotten worse for Canadians, the Liberals are spending more than ever. This year, Canada will spend over \$52 billion to service the Prime Minister's debt. This is more money than the government is sending the provinces for health care.

In response to the Liberal-made affordability crisis, my common-sense Conservative colleagues and I have three simple demands for this year's budget. Number one is to axe the tax; number two is to build the homes; and number three is to fix the budget. The Conservatives will not support tomorrow's budget unless it provides relief to struggling Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to axe the tax in tomorrow's budget?

* * *

CANADA CARBON REBATE

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, Canadians who filed their taxes electronically on March 15 or before will receive the new Canada carbon rebate amounts. In the provinces where it applies, the Canada carbon rebate will put even more money back into the pockets of most Canadians than they pay into fighting climate change.

Affordability is front and centre in everything we do as a government and in this system, we are literally putting money into the hands of Canadian families. Families are counting on these cheques. They work them into their monthly budgets, and that is especially the case for low to middle-income Canadians who benefit the most from fighting climate change.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives want to cut these rebates that Canadians rely on, but we will not let them ruin the rebates. Canadian families need them more than ever.

Statements by Members

● (1410)

HOUSING

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is as if the Prime Minister has forgotten that he has been in power for almost nine years and that he and his policies, all of them, are the direct cause of the housing and mortgage crisis Canadians are facing.

The way he has been parading around the country, blaming everyone else but himself for the housing hell reminds me of that old Shaggy song, *It Wasn't Me*. Well, it was he who was caught red-handed promising to lower the price of housing, rents and mortgages in Canada that have doubled in nine years, pushing middle-class Canadians to live in tent cities in nearly every city.

Last week, CMHC confirmed that it has been him causing less affordable housing and higher rents because fewer homes are being built than we did in the 1970s. Worst of all, it is he who has dealt a devastating blow to young Canadians hoping to enter the housing market, young people who feel like they have been lied to and let down by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has a chance to axe the tax in tomorrow's budget to make life more affordable for Canadians. The question is this: Will he, or will he continue to blame others for the problems he has caused and say, "It wasn't me"? Canadians know it is the Prime Minister.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians are going hungry.

Feed Nova Scotia reports that food bank usage is up 26%, with increased visits as high as 50% in Cape Breton. In Sydney, food banks are experiencing record-breaking increases in the number of new clients, with new visits up 80%. The Souls Harbour Rescue Mission kitchen is up 280%.

Instead of providing relief to Canadians, the government has hiked its costly carbon tax on Nova Scotians by 23%. The Liberals do not understand that if we tax the farmer who grows the food, the trucker who trucks the food and the retailer who sells the food, we tax all those who buy the food. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

The Conservatives have a solution, and that is to axe the tax on farmers and food by immediately passing Bill C-234 in its original form. To be clear, the Conservatives want the entire carbon tax axed, but in the meantime let us at least provide some relief to Canadians by immediately passing Bill C-234.

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*[Translation]***CANADA CARBON REBATE**

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, Canada was obviously on the wrong track with respect to carbon

emissions. The Conservatives did not have a climate plan, pollution was free and emissions continued to rise.

Today, thanks to the work accomplished across the country, including the north, Canada's emissions have dropped by 8%. For the very first time, we are on the right track to meet our 2026 climate target.

[English]

My constituents in Yukon expect commitment on climate action. The price on pollution encourages us to find greener alternatives in our day-to-day lives while we benefit from the rebate, and the plan is working. A family of four in Whitehorse will receive over \$1,200 through the Yukon carbon rebate this year, while a family of four living in rural Yukon gets \$1,488 in automatic quarterly payments.

If there is one thing going up, it is the temperature. On this side of the House, we are reducing emissions while making life better for Canadians.

* * *

HOCKEY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to be from northern Ontario is to live and breathe hockey.

Whether at local arenas, frozen ponds or in the streets, we love our national hockey game. However, it has been a difficult year for hockey in Elliot Lake.

The Centennial Arena was forced to shut its doors in September due to structural damage. The communities of Blind River and Massey stepped up to give our youth a place to play in the short term, but these youth deserve an arena in their own hometown. Organizers rallied through voting campaigns, and I rise to thank all of those across the country who helped Elliot Lake be crowned Kraft Hockeyville 2024, giving them \$250,000 toward arena repairs and a pre-season NHL game.

However, that is not all. Last week, former Elliot Lake residents Jamie and Jo-Ann Armstrong donated \$300,000, which kicked off a campaign to raise another \$200,000 for repairs to the arena so that next year the Elliot Lake Vikings and the Elliot Lake minor hockey leagues can be back on home ice.

Now that is a hat trick of which to be proud.

• (1415)

[Translation]

OATH TO THE KING

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I want to begin by commending the member for Madawaska—Restigouche for his courage and determination in fighting to ensure that members who do not wish to do so no longer have to swear an oath to the king when they are sworn in.

The history of Acadia is the history of a people who were persecuted by the British Crown. Thousands of Acadians died when they were deported during the Great Upheaval. The Liberal ministers are saying that that is not important, that there are things that matter more than Acadians' pride and honour and that talking about the monarchy is a waste of time.

Quite frankly, that is embarrassing coming from a party that claims to be democratic and anti-colonial. However, it is not as embarrassing as seeing the Conservatives behave like rowdy bar patrons at 3 a.m. shouting "God save the King". They are proud of the fact that they are governed by a foreign monarch, a king by right of birth. I call that voluntary servitude.

The member for Madawaska—Restigouche deserved better than the sorry spectacle that exposed some members' lack of sensitivity toward Acadians. It is shameful.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, both the Bank of Canada and a former Liberal finance minister told the Prime Minister that he was pressing on the inflationary gas pedal with his spending that ballooned interest rates, but he did not listen. As a result, the Bank of Canada went on the most aggressive interest rate hike campaign in Canadian history.

The Prime Minister is leaving behind a legacy like no other. Under his regime, rent, mortgage payments and down payments have doubled; record deficits have driven interest rates sky-high; and food bank usage is at a record high. On April 1, he increased the carbon tax by 23%, which is causing even more pain in the pocket-books of Canadians.

Common-sense Conservatives will not agree to support the budget unless the Prime Minister axes the carbon tax on food, builds homes not bureaucracy and caps the spending. The Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

* * *

CANADA CARBON REBATE

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I watched a video from a proud Albertan, who did her family's taxes and got over \$800 back through the Canada carbon rebate. Her family even got a little bump. They lived in a rural environment. She said that she probably ended up better off with that transfer. Who said this? It was Premier Danielle Smith.

Oral Questions

While she should be supporting Albertans, the Conservative premier of my province is now playing politics, and since April 1 has even reinstated her 13¢-per-litre gas tax.

Our government instead is doubling down on protecting the environment, slashing emissions and putting more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians.

The Canada carbon rebate gives eight out of 10 families more money than they pay in carbon pricing. Canada is also on track to meet its climate target for the first time ever. The carbon pricing alone will account for a third of our emission reductions by 2030. Carbon pricing is not just a feel-good measure; it is something that works.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FINANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. This Prime Minister is not worth the cost of interest rates after eight years. The government is going to spend more on interest on our national debt than on health. That is more money for bankers and less money for nurses.

When will the Prime Minister accept my common-sense plan to fix the budget by finding a dollar in savings for every dollar of new spending to lower the interest rates for Canadians?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, is that common sense? That is more like nonsense. He wants to make cuts to programs that support the middle class. He wants to make cuts to the program that helps build housing. He wants to make cuts to the program seeking to protect our environment. That is not common sense. It is incompetence.

* * *

• (1420)

HOUSING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about incompetence, yet he is the one who has lost a million Canadians and is the worst immigration minister in our country's history. His own Prime Minister even admitted that his management of the immigration system has been out of control. They say that is why the cost of housing has doubled. Now they are inflating costs even more. Inflationary deficits have added two percentage points to interest rates, which works out to \$6,000 for a family with a \$300,000 mortgage.

Will the government reduce the deficit and cut interest rates so Canadians can keep their homes?

Oral Questions

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, six is the number Canadians at home need to remember. The man we just heard, the Conservative leader, the one who wants to advise Canada on what plans to make, managed to build six units of affordable housing when he was the minister responsible for housing. I have said it before and I will say it again: We will not take any lessons from the Conservatives. On this side, we have a plan to build homes, create jobs and create prosperity. Canadians know that slogans do not build homes, they do not build prosperity and they will not help Canadians.

Every day is a good day to fight for Canadians. That is what we are going to do.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. This Prime Minister is not worth the cost of interest.

According to Scotiabank, the Prime Minister's deficits are adding two full percentage points extra in interest costs for the average family. That works out to about \$6,000 for a modest mortgage of \$300,000. That is six grand in extra mortgage payments from these deficits alone. Will they finally wake up to the fact that this NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition seems to know the cost of everything but the value of absolutely nothing. Does he not see value in the measures that are building more homes in this country? Does he not see value in programs that are going to put food on the table for hungry kids through a school food program? He continues to oppose measures that are helping students with the cost of their education and families with the cost of housing.

We will continue to put measures on the table to make life more affordable for middle-class Canadians and do right by a generation of young people who have been priced out of the housing market. It is a shame his policies would have the exact opposite effect.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we cannot see the value of homes and food that do not exist after eight years. The Liberals have a food program that, after eight years, has no food, and an affordable housing program that has doubled housing costs. They are not worth the cost, and now their deficits are driving up the interest obligations for the average family. For a family with a \$500,000 mortgage, deficits are adding 10 grand in additional interest payments per year. When will they realize that, after eight years, this NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about homes that do not exist, perhaps we should look at the 800,000 affordable housing units that were lost while he was housing minister. Perhaps we should examine the fact that, while he was minister, zero new apartments were supported by the federal government and a total of only six affordable housing units were built nationwide.

Now, he likes to talk a big game, but let us look at the plan he is putting on the table. He wants to raise taxes on home construction and cut funding for the cities that are making it easier to build homes.

We have advanced programs that are going not just to build more homes but to allow people to save up more money for their down payment and reduce their monthly mortgage costs when they go to enter the housing market for the first time.

[Translation]

The Speaker: As there was a problem with the French interpretation, I am going to ask the minister to repeat his answer because a fair number of members did not understand him.

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member wants to talk about homes that do not exist. Let us talk about the 800,000 affordable housing units that were lost when he was last in government. Let us talk about the fact that when he was actually housing minister, he got zero apartments built with the support of the federal government. Let us look at the fact that across the entire country, he was able to get a total of only six affordable housing units built.

He talks a big game, but he does literally nothing for people who need to get into the housing market. We have new measures that help people who are renting now and measures that will make it easier for people to save up for a down payment and reduce their monthly mortgage costs if they want to own a home in this country.

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more proof the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost is that he picked the most incompetent immigration minister in Canadian history and put him in charge of housing. This is the guy who lost track of a million people, who is blamed by his fellow cabinet colleagues for causing the housing crisis and who presides over the most expensive housing market in Canadian history.

When I was minister, the average rent was \$950, and we built hundreds of thousands of units at that affordable price, so why will he not learn from our smashing success in 2015 in keeping costs low, by axing the tax and building the homes?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the time, they expressed opposition to our plan to welcome 40,000 Afghan refugees who fought alongside the Canadian Armed Forces. They seem still to have problems with the fact that we opened our door to vulnerable Ukrainians.

However, let us actually focus on the housing issue right now. The member talks a big game about housing, but he plans to raise tax—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

I ask members on all sides of the House to please come to order.

The hon. minister has the floor.

Hon. Sean Fraser: Mr. Speaker, they get antsy when they are confronted with their actual record. Let us take a look at what he got done: only six affordable units across the entire country; he lost 800,000 more; he built zero new apartments. Now he wants to raise taxes on homebuilding and cut funding for the communities that are getting them built.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have an urgent message for anyone who still believes that we should ignore jurisdictions and let the federal government decide everything.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has proven that when the federal government interferes in housing, an exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec, Quebecers receive only 14% of the funding, although we make up 22% of the population. The situation is even worse when the federal government chooses its own projects, such as affordable housing. In that case, we get only 6% of the money, even though we represent 22% of the population.

When the feds interfere, Quebecers do not get their fair share, starting with the less fortunate.

Who would agree to be ripped off like that?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone has their own priorities.

We are talking about investing in housing, but the Bloc members are saying no, they need a referendum. We are talking about investing in our young people and our seniors. The Bloc says they need a referendum. We are talking about ensuring that kids no longer go to school hungry. The Bloc says no, and that the solution to everything is a referendum.

While they are preparing for a referendum, we are preparing for the future.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense.

When the federal government meddles in Quebec's jurisdictions, Quebecers always get shortchanged. Housing is a perfect example. We represent 22% of the population, yet we got 14% of the funds and only 6% of affordable housing.

Not only do we never receive our fair share, but the last budget is going to add insult to injury. The feds are going to impose new conditions on the additional \$6 billion of our money that they are promising for housing.

Why not simply hand over Quebecers' fair share of the housing money, no conditions attached? Can he answer that question?

• (1430)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working with Quebec to ensure that it receives its fair share of the housing funds.

For example, we have reached an agreement with Quebec on the housing accelerator program. We are providing \$900 million in fed-

eral funds and Quebec is investing \$900 million. That adds up to \$1.8 billion and 8,000 affordable housing units.

We are moving forward with programs to ensure that Quebec receives support, like everywhere else in the country.

* * *

[English]

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people are getting gouged at the grocery stores, and CEOs are making record profits, all because the Prime Minister kept the Conservatives' \$60-billion corporate handout, and Canadians are paying the price. Loblaw's made \$1.2 billion because of this corporate Conservative handout. Therefore, will the Prime Minister—

The Speaker: I will ask hon. members, especially the hon. member for Miramichi—Grand Lake, to please take the floor only when they are recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. member for Burnaby South could start from the top, please.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, you can tell Conservatives get really touchy when we talk about corporate Conservative handouts. People are getting gouged at the grocery stores, and CEOs are making record profits. The Conservatives are again making noise because they are upset. They want to give more corporate handouts to companies like Loblaw's that are gouging Canadians and ripping people off. The Conservatives want that to happen. That is who they work for. The Conservatives' chief strategist is a Conservative lobbyist for the biggest corporation that sells groceries. Will the Prime Minister reverse these Conservative corporate handouts? Yes or no.

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the leader of the NDP for bringing a very important question on this file, but it seems that he is missing a part. He was with us in order to make the largest reform on competition in this country. In fact, thanks to this work and the help of the NDP and our government, we have brought in the largest reform on competition in our nation's history.

There is one thing, if he wants to help consumers. Why does he not work with us to make sure that we have a grocery code of conduct across the nation, to help consumers, to help families and to help young kids? The New Democrats can do something. We are waiting for it.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we need to be clear that we have to take on the corporate greed that is driving up the price of groceries.

[Translation]

Galen Weston is still delighted about the last time the Conservatives were in power. Thanks to them, Loblaw's paid \$1.2 billion less in taxes.

This week, the Prime Minister has the opportunity to implement a tax on the grocery giants' excess profits. Will he do it, yes or no?

Oral Questions

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the leader of the NDP for supporting us when we launched the biggest competition reform the country has ever seen. Canadians watching us at home know that the best way to stabilize prices in Canada is to have more competition across the country. That is exactly what we have done.

If he wants to help Canadians, families and young people, why not join us in supporting a nationwide code of conduct? On this side of the House, we will continue to work for young families, Canadians and consumers across the country.

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[English]

HOUSING

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the finance minister is off buying new budget shoes today, she should drop by a Toronto food bank, where one in 10 Torontonians are having to use their services after eight years of her government. Tomorrow's expensive photo op budget will only confirm why interest rates are staying higher for longer and why Canadians cannot afford to eat, heat and house themselves. After eight years of the current Liberal-NDP government, it is not worth the cost of housing. Will the Liberal-NDP government listen to Conservatives, cap spending and bring in a dollar-for-dollar law to bring down inflation and interest rates so Canadians do not lose their homes?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. member opposite needs to take a look at what was announced earlier this month and the month before, which is that inflation in Canada is below 3% for the second month in a row. We have a AAA debt rating for this country, one of the very few countries in the world to have that, and the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio.

Now while that party is all doom and gloom, we are here, working every day for Canadians on a school food program, on the Canada child benefit and on making sure that we have \$10-a-day child care across the country. We are working for Canadians each and every day.

• (1435)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with answers like that, he will make a great high-priced Liberal consultant after the next election. He is not worth the cost.

Why does he not understand this, when two million Canadians are going to a food bank in a single month and a million more projected this year, when young people cannot see the dream of home ownership and when rents and mortgages have doubled after the failed policies of the Liberal-NDP government? Why does he not get with the program, before he gets kicked out of his position, and listen to Canadians? Why do the Liberals not implement a dollar-for-dollar law and cap the spending, so Canadians do not lose their homes?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that party and that member not only have no plan for housing, but

the meagre plan they have actually wants to make it more expensive to build houses in this country. The Conservatives are against every single measure that we have done to make home ownership affordable for Canadians again.

That Alberta MP voted against the Air Products \$1.6-billion hydrogen plant in our province and voted against the first carbon capture, use and storage net-zero cement plant in our province. Conservatives are voting against Alberta jobs. They are voting against Canadians. We are here for Albertans and Canadians each and every day.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the NDP-Liberal government's Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Emily Wheedon is a single mom who lost her home because she did not qualify for her mortgage renewal. Why? It was because of the Liberal-NDP inflationary spending, which has driven up interest rates. Now she is forced to rent. She is paying nearly \$4,000 for a 600-square-foot apartment. In tomorrow's budget, we are asking for the Prime Minister to show compassion and sanity and find a dollar in savings for every new dollar spent, so Canadians can afford to keep their homes.

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians will see in tomorrow's budget is support for renters and homeowners, alike.

We will do that all while being fiscally prudent, with the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7 and with a AAA credit rating from an independent objective observer, as well as traditionally low unemployment. We will do that at the same time as working for the most vulnerable in this country, something that the Conservatives vote against every single time.

We expect all members of the House to support Canadians across the board.

Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians do not believe is anything the Liberals say.

They have had eight years to prove a record, and more homes were built in the 1970s than have been built today. Tent cities across this country are normal. Do not tell people they have never had it so good when we have record-high usage of food banks, when we have young people who will never own a home and when interest rates have gone up 2%, costing \$10,000 a year in interest payments alone. Shame.

Let us do a dollar-for-dollar, let us show some sanity and let us allow Canadians to keep their homes.

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians need to know is what the Conservative response is to the affordability challenges that Canadians are facing. It is cuts to the programs that they need and that are supporting them in a time of need. It is abandoning them when they most need it.

On this side of the House, we have put forward a national school food program, \$10-a-day child care and the Canada child benefit, supports that are helping Canadians put food on the table and support their families, in contrast to everything that they oppose.

* * *

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for three weeks now, the ministers and this Liberal Prime Minister have been flaunting all of this government's failures over the past eight years. Inflation, interest rates, rent, mortgage payments: Everything is going up. That trend will continue under the Liberals.

Tomorrow is budget day. Will the Prime Minister, who is not worth the cost, at least agree to our demands to axe the tax on farmers and food; build homes, not bureaucracy; apply the dollar-for-dollar rule; and, most importantly, put an end to his parade of inflationary spending to the tune of billions of dollars so that Canadians can put food on the table and a roof over their heads?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one, two, three, four, five, six affordable housing units. That is what the Conservative leader built when he was housing minister. Compare that to the 8,000 housing units that we are building with the partnership and leadership of the Government of Quebec and the municipalities.

In my colleague's riding of Mégantic—L'Érable, just one project in Thetford Mines will result in the construction of 24 affordable housing units. That is four times more units than his Conservative leader, his insulting leader, built during his entire term as minister responsible for housing.

* * *

● (1440)

HOUSING

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not 24 units, it is 48 units. Even worse, CMHC is dragging its feet on approving this project.

I am so surprised to hear this minister brag about results. He is bragging about tens of thousands of affordable housing units that he wants to build to fix a crisis created by this Liberal government. That is the truth.

Will they come to their senses tomorrow and build homes, not bureaucracy, so that Canadians can have a roof over their heads? Will they fix the crisis they themselves created?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see that my colleague knows that we are indeed doing much more than his Conservative leader, his insulting leader, did during his term as minister responsible for housing.

I would like to highlight another project in his riding, in addition to the one he mentioned: the Envole-toi project. It will provide 13 affordable housing units for people in need, people who would otherwise be homeless. Thirteen is twice as many as six. It is twice as many total units as his housing minister, the Conservative leader, the insulting leader, built across the country during his entire term.

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JUSTICE

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal spoke at the Quebec National Assembly on Thursday. A worthy representative of the land of the Enlightenment, he delivered a spirited defence of state secularism, which both the French and Quebecers hold in high esteem.

France, like Quebec, prohibits government employees in positions of authority from wearing religious symbols. France's legislation goes even further than Quebec's Bill 21, which this Prime Minister wants to take to the Supreme Court on the pretext that it is discriminatory.

Did the Prime Minister tell France that he finds it discriminatory, or does he reserve his contempt for Quebecers?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a secular country. Quebec is a secular province. No one disputes that.

The Bloc Québécois is trying to stir the pot, to pit one government against another, saying that since we are proud Quebecers, we should separate because we are different from others.

I say no. I can be a proud Quebecer and a proud Canadian at the same time. There is no need to choose between the two. The Bloc Québécois members only talk about referendums. While they are talking about referendums, we are talking about building a fairer, more open, more inclusive society. That is what a strong Quebec in a united Canada looks like.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let me quote Prime Minister Attal:

To those who pretend not to understand what secularism is, who try to distort it, to make people think it is a weapon against religion...to make people think it is a form of discrimination, we respond that secularism is a condition for freedom...equality [and]...fraternity.

Our Liberal, Conservative and NDP colleagues are among those who pretend not to understand. Can they at least refrain from filing a Supreme Court challenge against something they do not understand?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my answer is the same answer I have given here in the House before. It is the same as the Prime Minister's answer.

Oral Questions

If Bill 21 reaches the Supreme Court, we will be there, as the Government of Canada, to defend the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That said, freedom of speech, freedom of equality and gender equality are important issues. It is important to defend the Canadian charter.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister Attal told Quebecers that they are not alone in their efforts to defend secularism. France has banned religious symbols for people in positions of authority since 1905. Belgium, Norway, Denmark and several German states are doing the same.

I would like to quote the Court of Justice of the European Union: “In order to put in place an entirely neutral...environment, a public administration may prohibit the visible wearing...of any sign revealing...religious beliefs”.

Is the European Union discriminatory too, or is it just Quebecers?

• (1445)

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the context of Bill 21, as I mentioned, and I will say it again, when this decision is made by the Supreme Court, if the appeal goes that far, we will be there. The Government of Canada will always be there to protect the people of Canada and their rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That said, the charter protects equality, freedom of expression and gender equality. We will be there if this goes to the Supreme Court.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Farmers have reached a breaking point. The carbon tax has driven costs sky-high. They are drowning in a sea of red tape, and worst of all they are constantly derided and demonized by the Liberal government.

Will the Prime Minister finally give farmers a break and axe the tax to make food cheaper for everyone by passing Bill C-234 in its original form?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, being a farmer, I am fully aware that farmers are on the front line of climate change. They see the devastating impacts of climate change in this country and the destruction of barns, killing cattle. Also, we have a price on pollution, and along with the price on pollution, we have a Canada carbon rebate, which puts more money back in the pockets of Canadians.

Why does the Conservative Party of Canada want to take that money away from Canadians?

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was clear from the PBO that six out of 10 Canadian families are worse off. They are worse off because of that carbon tax and so-called rebate. It is clear that the Liberals

will not lift a finger to provide farmers and Canadians with relief from their cruel carbon tax.

If the Prime Minister will not commit to passing Bill C-234 or having a carbon tax election, what does he have to say to the families of Otonabee-South Monaghan, who have doubled their use of the food banks in the last six months?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would respond to the hon. member that he should just advance a couple of rows up here. I could introduce him, if he would like to speak to the opposition House leader. Bill C-234 is completely in their hands. If they would like to bring it to the floor for a vote, we could deal with it.

While I am on my feet and we are talking about doubling, Bill C-59 is something he could also do something about. It would bring the carbon rebate to double what it is today. Let us pass that today, have a positive impact for the constituents he serves and bring a better carbon rebate to rural Canada.

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on April 1, the Prime Minister hiked the already crippling carbon tax by 23%. Jake from Vermeer's Dairy near Camrose calculated that by 2030 he will be paying nearly \$1,500 a month in additional carbon tax for the daily milk pickup alone. That is higher costs that consumers are forced to pay because of those Liberal policies.

After eight years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost.

My question for the Liberals is this: Will they pass Bill C-234 in its unamended original form so that Canadians can afford to eat?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that people are not talking nonsense in the chamber. The Parliamentary Budget Officer actually said that he was extremely troubled by the opposition's selective use of the facts and their spin. Now 300 Canadian economists from across the country have said that the price on pollution is the best way to reduce carbon emissions in a manner that actually addresses affordability.

It is a true shame in the House that we have a climate-denying opposition, one that does not care about affordability. It is truly a shame.

* * *

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while grocery CEOs make record profits, students are having to turn to campus food banks to eat. When I spoke with Carleton University students, they told me that food bank usage is on the rise by 140% on campuses across the country. Students should be focused on studying for exams, not on starving.

In this year's budget, will the Liberals finally put a stop to the grocery CEO price gouging that is forcing students to turn to food banks?

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems like my colleague has been missing out on some of the great announcements we have been doing for the last two weeks, explaining to Canadians how we are going to help them. We just announced a national school food program. It will help more than 400,000 kids in this country. We understand something that the Conservatives can never understand; they have repeated the same thing for eight years.

Confident nations invest in their people. Confident nations invest in their kids. Confident nations invest in their workers. On this side of the House, we know that every day is a good day to fight for Canadians. That is what we are going to be doing.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for years, people in Attawapiskat have lived in mould-filled homes, in sheds and even in tents on a tiny plot of land. This is because the feds and Doug Ford refuse to transfer land so they can build the homes they need. The Liberals would rather protect the land interests of the mining giant De Beers, a corporation that made \$21 million from the sale of a single diamond in Attawapiskat. They are putting the interest of De Beers ahead of people who desperately need safe homes.

When will the Liberals stop stalling and give the land back to the Cree of Attawapiskat?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his years of advocacy for the rights of indigenous people, including for the people of Attawapiskat.

As the member notes, Attawapiskat is currently landlocked. Indeed it is looking for more land to build the necessary houses to help the community grow. I have been communicating with the Province of Ontario, which is currently the owner of the land. We will continue to ensure that Ontario understands the urgency of this work.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Danielle from Alberta knows that she gets back more in the Canada carbon rebate than she pays through the federal backstop on pricing pollution. Premier Smith, I mean Danielle, actually did the math herself and came to this conclusion: “I would say that I probably ended up better off with that transfer.”

Can the Minister of Environment and Climate Change please inform Danielle and other Canadians what they should expect to see in their bank accounts today as a result of the Canada carbon rebate? How much is the policy helping Canadians with the cost of living while at the same time protecting the environment for generations to come?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Danielle for her testimony. With the next quarterly carbon rebate payment starting to arrive in Canadian bank accounts and mailboxes as of today, in Danielle's province of Alberta a family of four will receive up to \$450 four times this year.

Over 300 economists, which was 200 economists last week, from coast to coast agree that the evidence shows not only that carbon pricing reduces pollution in Canada but also that it does so at a lower cost than any other approach. Pricing pollution works. It can support Canadians and fight against climate change.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on April 1, the Prime Minister hiked the carbon tax by 23%. Every single week, I hear from dozens of constituents in my area who tell me they are struggling to be able just to buy food, groceries and other necessities. Use of a food bank in my area has more than doubled in recent months. After eight years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, he is just not worth the cost; that is clear to Canadians.

Conservatives have put forward a common-sense solution called Bill C-234. The government decided to gut it by bullying senators. Will the Prime Minister choose to rescind, and allow the bill to go forward in order to save Canadians a whole lot of money by scrapping the tax on farmers?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the risk of putting holes in what the Conservatives think is a good Tory story, let us look at some of the facts; 97% of farm liquids are exempt from the price on pollution. At committee, Tyler McCann from The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute indicated there is no data to support carbon pricing's relationship to any increase on the price of food in Canada, full stop.

Our Canada carbon rebate gives money back to more than eight out of 10 Canadians. If the Conservatives want the bill back, they should bring it back to the House. They can do it.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I will ask the hon. member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie to please wait his turn. He is a very experienced member of the House.

The hon. member for Lethbridge.

● (1455)

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no matter what the government does to try to distract, the facts remain the same. Canadians are struggling. They cannot make ends meet. Of course, it starts with groceries, fuel at the pumps and being able to heat their homes.

Oral Questions

After eight years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister just is not worth the cost, certainly not the cost of the punitive carbon tax. Conservatives put forward a very common-sense bill, Bill C-234, which would axe the tax from farmers and save Canadians a whole lot of money. The Prime Minister and the environment minister put pressure on senators, bullying them into gutting the bill.

Will the Prime Minister agree today to allow the bill to go forward in its unamended, original form?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may have missed my earlier answer, but I could repeat it if she would like. The bill in question, Bill C-234, is a bill the Conservatives could call any time and we could deal with and debate in the House.

While I am on my feet, once again I would like to add, and perhaps correct something I said a little earlier to the other hon. member: This member could help a lot of Albertans out if she would just get out of the way of the fall economic statement legislation, which doubles the top-up on the rural rebate, 20% instead of 10%, making it the—

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Let us do it right now. We are calling it right now.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: For the last time, I would like to remind the very experienced members, including the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, that they should take the floor only when they are recognized by the Speaker.

The hon. member for Beauce.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years, this Liberal-Bloc Prime Minister is not worth the cost of the carbon tax.

Quebec farmers are in revolt against the Prime Minister because they are facing mountains of paperwork, a blatant lack of financial support and the carbon tax, which is crushing the agricultural industry across Canada.

Axing this tax on farmers is the fastest way to make food more affordable and to keep our farmers in business. However, the Bloc Québécois wants to drastically increase the carbon tax.

Will the Prime Minister commit to passing Bill C-234 in its original, unamended form in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, if the Conservatives had even the slightest bit of intellectual integrity, then they would admit to Canadians that 97% of the fuels used on farms in backstop provinces are not taxed by the federal government.

Second, do members know what I have been doing over the past few weeks? I have been meeting with farmers from Quebec, Nova Scotia and Alberta and with cattle and grain farmers. They are not talking to me about the carbon tax. They are talking to me about how the impacts of climate change are costing the agricultural industry hundreds of millions of dollars across the country.

The Speaker: Once again, it pains me to have to remind very experienced members, like the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, to wait their turn before speaking in the House.

The hon. member for Beauce.

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest to my colleague that he visit Beauce on Friday. Farmers will be protesting.

After eight years, this Liberal-Bloc Prime Minister is not worth the cost of the carbon tax. The next generation dreams of getting started in business, but it is suffocating under all the paperwork that keeps piling up, not to mention the skyrocketing interest rates and risk management programs that no longer meet today's challenges.

The Bloc-Liberal coalition is blocking the passage of Bill C-234, proving that these people are out of touch.

I will repeat my earlier question: Will the Prime Minister commit to passing Bill C-234 in its original, unamended form in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is a shame that my colleagues from Quebec still do not understand that the price on pollution does not apply the same way in Quebec. Quebec has had a carbon exchange since 2013, so it is not affected.

At the federal level, our approach is to offer incentives to improve practices, to develop and acquire more energy-efficient equipment.

We are there to support the farmers.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, instead of acting like the sorcerer's apprentice in Quebec's jurisdictions with the budget, the federal government should look after the asylum seekers it is responsible for, the people who are not allowed to work because it takes two years to get a work permit from this government, the people lining up at food banks, the growing number of people experiencing homelessness, the people being exploited in the underground economy and in human trafficking, and so on.

Will the minister finally convince his buddies to issue those work permits, do their jobs and mind their own business?

● (1500)

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are indeed in the process of expediting the permits that will be granted to asylum seekers.

Oral Questions

I have a question for the member for Lac-Saint-Jean. Does he agree with his party leader, in other words, the leader of the Parti Québécois, who wants to freeze immigration? Does he realize what that means in rural ridings like Lac-Saint-Jean? It means no more fishing, no more Quebec agriculture, nothing, not even wind turbines.

It takes responsible people in power. We need to have a responsible discussion about reducing the number of immigrants temporarily, but let us do it responsibly.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I just told him to stick to his jurisdiction. He really does not get it.

He must ensure that work permits are granted. The federal government is facing a humanitarian crisis. It must do its duty. That also means distributing the intake of people who come to Canada among the provinces. It is not right that there are homeless asylum seekers in Quebec and Ontario, that these people cannot even eat at food banks as a last resort, when other provinces are doing absolutely nothing.

Will the government finally have the compassion to distribute the intake of asylum seekers among the provinces that are still able to provide services?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we should not even try to understand. One minute he wants interference, the next he does not.

The member did not answer my question. I wonder if he stands with his party leader, the Bloc Québécois leader, who is irresponsibly calling for a freeze on temporary immigration to Quebec. That is totally irresponsible.

They should talk to the farmers and those who work in the fisheries in their own rural ridings. They will see what is really going on. They will hear what people really think, and they do not want a freeze on immigration to Quebec.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, life has gotten worse for Canadians, with higher taxes and higher mortgage payments. The Liberals' wasteful deficit spending left interest rates at 5%, hurting families with mortgages coming up for renewal, and banks are putting more money away for possible mortgage defaults. Now, this means people losing their homes—

Some hon members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I will ask the hon. member to start again.

I ask all members to please take their conversations outside the room.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country can ask her question.

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, after eight years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, life has gotten worse for Canadians, with higher taxes and higher mortgage payments. The Liberals' wasteful deficit spending left interest rates at 5%, hurting families with mortgages coming up for renewal. The banks are putting more money away for possible mortgage defaults, and this means more people losing their homes. We are hearing of people no longer meeting mortgage stress tests and having to sell their home, forcing them to rent and to pay rent that is more than their actual mortgage payments.

Will the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister reverse his eight years of deficit spending and implement a one-for-one rule so that people can keep their homes?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be more prudent for the members on the other side of the aisle to actually vote in favour of supports for Canadians if they truly cared about their well-being. They voted against the Canada child benefit. They voted against dental care. They voted against \$10-a-day child care. They also did not focus on poverty when they were in power. We have brought poverty down to 7.4%, while under the Conservatives it was 14.5%.

On this side of the House, we will always support the most vulnerable in our country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, through eight years of NDP-Liberal deficit spending, the Liberals caused the higher interest rates, which are causing people's mortgages to go up. Families are slashing their budgets just to be able to afford their mortgages in order to hang on to their homes.

This year, Canada will spend \$54 billion servicing Liberal debt. This is more money than the government sends to the provinces for health care. A dollar-for-dollar rule would fix the budget and bring down interest rates. The NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister reverse eight years of deficit spending and implement a dollar-for-dollar rule?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we know how to ensure that we have a prudent fiscal situation as well as to support Canadians, especially in their time of need. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, with historically low unemployment, and we also have a AAA credit rating. Our upcoming budget will build on that work by putting forward new funding for housing and by ensuring that we have a national school food program for 400,000 children. We ask everybody in the House to vote with us.

Oral Questions

● (1505)

*[Translation]***HOUSING**

Mr. Bernard Génereux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after eight years under this Liberal government, access to home ownership has become extremely difficult. With mortgage rates rising by 52% to 95.2% in some regions of Quebec, it has become almost impossible for young people to take out a mortgage.

This Prime Minister is far too costly and is definitely not worth the cost of mortgage payments.

Will the Prime Minister listen to the millions of Canadians who are struggling and rein in his inflationary policies once and for all?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one, two, three, four, five, six. That is the number of affordable housing units built by the insulting Conservative leader when he was the minister responsible for housing.

There are several projects in my colleague's riding of Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup alone, but a couple that spring to mind are Habitations au Fil du Fleuve and Villa Rose des vents. Forty-one affordable housing units have been built in recent weeks, thanks to the leadership of the municipalities, which the Conservative leader calls incompetent, by the way. They have a leader who has built six units; the municipality in my colleague's riding has built 41. Who is more incompetent?

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CARBON PRICING

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal carbon pricing system was designed to keep the cost of living affordable for families by putting money back in their pockets. The next quarterly payments will be deposited in Canadians' bank accounts and delivered to their mailboxes starting today.

Can the Treasury Board minister tell the House how these rebates reduce emissions while making life more affordable for families across the country?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives deny climate change, they also deny science. Through the Canada carbon rebate, we make heavy polluters pay and we put more money back in the pockets of Canadian families. Eight out of 10 Canadians, including those in my riding of Oakville, will have more money in their pockets.

On this side of the House, we will continue to make our economy greener. The environment and the economy go hand in hand. Unlike the Conservatives, we believe in science.

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*[English]***PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT**

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the procurement ombud confirmed what we already expected and that is, Dominic Barton and McKinsey & Company received

preferential treatment in contracting. The Liberal-NDP government has given over \$100 million in contracts to McKinsey & Company.

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost of consulting, so why is it that Liberals take care of themselves, friends and insiders when they should be taking care of Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, taking care of Canadians is exactly what we need to do, on this side of the House, certainly, through proper management of procurement exercises with the types of things and measures that we have announced in the last few weeks and months but also looking after the needs of Canadians with important investments in housing that we have made. We may be making even more with announcements tomorrow: 8,000 affordable homes, just in the province of Quebec, and hundreds of thousands across Canada.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a Liberal minister personally signed a contract for McKinsey & Company for \$5.7 million. No wonder the Liberals did not want to give us the documents. They were trying to protect their ministers. Department officials were trying to push back. They told the minister not to sign the document. The minister went ahead and personally signed the document.

Why is it that Liberals take care of themselves, when they should be taking out the trash and taking care of Canadians?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered this question in English. I can provide a similar answer in French.

Taking care of Canadians is exactly what we are doing, while ensuring that the Canadian government's procurement system is efficient, fair and transparent, based on the new rules we have put in place over the past few months, for one. Taking care of Canadians also means recognizing that too many Canadians are facing a housing crisis. That is why, over the past few days, we have been proud to announce many measures that Canadians will be reminded of again in tomorrow's budget.

● (1510)

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the cost of a less stable world. Six years ago, Parliament voted for my motion to recognize that the IRGC, from the regime in Iran, is a terrorist organization and to shut down their operations in Canada. After six years, the NDP-Liberal government has failed to act. Liberals even blocked my common-sense bill, Bill C-350 to shut down the IRGC.

With the IRGC spreading terror across the Middle East and around the world, why did the Prime Minister choose to allow the IRGC to continue to recruit, to fundraise and to promote its ideology here in Canada?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have said many times in the House that Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism. My colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has repeated that. We have taken a series of severe measures to restrict members of the regime, including the revolutionary guard corps, from coming to Canada.

With respect to listing a terrorist entity, it is national security agencies that do these reviews and, from time to time, that provide advice to the government.

Obviously, all options are on the table. I have asked the national security community to quickly provide the government with that advice.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Ms. Joanne Thompson (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, putting a price on carbon pollution is one of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce pollution that is causing climate change. Just as importantly, the federal carbon pricing system is designed to keep life affordable by putting money back into families' pockets.

Can the Minister of Rural Economic Development share with Canadians how much they will get back in payments, starting today, April 15?

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the next Canada rebate cheques start being put in people's bank accounts and in their mailboxes. Families in the member's riding in St. John's are going to receive up to \$298, and those everywhere else in Newfoundland and Labrador are going to get \$327 for their April quarterly deposit. However, unfortunately, the Conservatives are showing once again that they really do not care about rural Canadians. They are holding up the doubling of the rural top-up, keeping those rebates from being even bigger.

We know the price on pollution works, and we know we are putting money back in Canadians' pockets. I just wish the Conservatives did.

Oral Questions

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the school that I graduated from, the Ataguttaaluk Elementary School in Igloolik, is falling apart under the Liberals' watch. A recent report said that there are 127 issues that need fixing, including safety hazards like missing handrails and exposed electrical circuits. Children cannot learn when their school is crumbling.

In budget 2024, will the Liberals invest in fixing or replacing schools so Nunavut children can learn safely?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Northern Affairs and to the Minister of National Defence (Northern Defence), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we agree that every child in Canada should have the opportunity to go to school in a proper environment and also to go to school on a full belly. That is why we have implemented programs to support schools, to support students and to support the school food program, which we think is very important for kids all across Canada, including those in the Arctic and in Nunavut.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the Islamic regime in Iran, the official supplier of rockets to Hamas, has now fired its own weapons at Israel. Is the NDP-Liberal coalition still considering stopping arms exports to Israel and limiting that country's defence capacity? Has the launching of over 200 drones and cruise missiles been enough to silence the government's NDP masters? It must be difficult being with a partner who is so deaf, blind and quiet on Iran's and Hamas's crimes.

Has the Prime Minister at least learned something and will not be repeating his 2015 promise to normalize relations with Iran in the upcoming election?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada unequivocally condemns the attacks by Iran against Israel. This was unprecedented. We support Israel and its people. This attack only serves to destabilize the region and to further escalate in the region. It is completely unacceptable.

That is why I have been in contact with my Israeli counterpart. I have also been in contact with many actors in the region. We will continue to push proactively to make sure that, indeed, there is no further escalation and that we bring peace back to the region.

● (1515)

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to immediately adopt Bill C-234, as concurred in at third reading in the House.

Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

BILINGUAL DOCUMENTS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the question of privilege raised on March 20, 2024, by the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier concerning the presentation of an amendment in one language only during the debates of Monday, March 18, 2024.

In raising the question of privilege, the member alleged that the ability of francophone members to fully participate in the proceedings of the House had been impeded because the government House leader had proposed an amendment in one language only near the end of debate on an opposition motion. In the member's view, since the French version of the amendment was made available only a few moments before the vote, some members were unable to consider it properly, which amounted to obstructing the ability of francophone members to take part in House business. The member added that the use of either official language in the House is a constitutional right. He also cited Standing Order 65 in support of his assertions.

[English]

The deputy government House leader responded that the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, in bringing the matter to the House's attention two days later, did not meet the requirement that a question of privilege be raised at the first opportunity. He also pointed out that the French version of the amendment was available well before the vote, enabling members to understand the content of the amendment.

[Translation]

The Chair would like to start by reiterating the importance of protecting and upholding parliamentarians' right to speak in the official language of their choice. The Chair appreciates their support in achieving this goal. It also takes seriously any attempt to trample on or limit that right.

Let us now revisit the events of March 18. A few minutes before the end of debate on the opposition motion in the name of the member for Edmonton Strathcona, the government House leader put forward an amendment to it. The mover's consent was obtained so that the text of the amendment could be proposed to the House. The written version was shared with the Chair, who read it and found it procedurally in order. A procedural discussion and a suspension of the House ensued.

[English]

Pursuant to a motion adopted by unanimous consent on March 1, 2024, the vote on the supply motion that day could not be deferred, which would normally have been allowed under Standing Order 45. As a result, the amendment, and the amended main motion, were put to votes.

[Translation]

Amendments are proposed fairly regularly during our proceedings. Their purpose is to make a motion more acceptable or to provide new text to replace the proposal being considered. The rules of debate have long allowed amendments to substantive motions while the latter are being debated. Of note, for most motions, the rules do not restrict when an amendment can be proposed, as long as it is procedurally acceptable.

• (1520)

[English]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, states the following, on page 540:

A motion in amendment arises out of debate...requires no notice and is submitted in writing to the Chair. After an amendment has been moved, seconded and evaluated as to its procedural acceptability, the Chair proposes it to the House. ...Debate on the main motion is set aside and the amendment is debated until it has been decided....

The Chair can confirm that the sequence of events on March 18 was consistent with our rules and procedures.

[Translation]

Clearly, English or French may be used in the House, and members can move motions and amendments in the language of their choice. Official documents must, of course, be published in both official languages. This is a constitutional imperative. Language requirements are also set out in the Standing Orders, including in Standing Order 65, which provides that motions that are seconded must be read in English and in French.

However, since January 15, 1959, members have had access to simultaneous interpretation services. As the second edition of the *Annotated Standing Orders* states on page 227, and I quote:

The provision that all motions be read in both languages is...regularly relaxed, given the bilingual nature of the House and the existence of simultaneous interpretation.

The Chair was able to confirm that simultaneous interpretation was available when the amendment was moved and brought to a vote.

Moreover, the length and complexity of a motion or amendment have never been sufficient grounds for the Chair to rule a motion out of order or to deem that it could impede members' ability to carry out their duties.

Accordingly, in the circumstances, I cannot find a *prima facie* question of privilege in this case.

[English]

That said, the Chair would like to reiterate that while all parties have occasionally introduced amendments in one language only, it would be far better if they were prepared in both languages.

*Routine Proceedings**[Translation]*

In any case, the Chair will continue to ensure that simultaneous interpretation is available when amendments are moved in the House. It will also ensure that a translation is available for consultation at the Table and in the electronic voting application before a recorded division. If necessary, the Chair will suspend the sitting in order to obtain the translation before proceeding with a vote.

Finally, the Chair encourages members who wish to suggest changes to the Standing Orders regarding the introduction of amendments to submit their proposals to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for consideration.

I thank all members for their attention.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, presented to the House on Wednesday, December 6, 2023, be concurred in.

I rise once again to speak about the urgent need to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization, to shut down its operations in Canada, to protect our friends and allies around the world, but also to protect ourselves.

I am sharing my time, Mr. Speaker, with my friend and colleague, the member for Thornhill. I am very much looking forward to her remarks on this important motion to concur in a report from the justice committee that calls for, among other things, the designation of the IRGC as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code.

Canadians have been anxiously following the news from the Middle East this weekend. The regime in Tehran launched a massive attack on the State of Israel. This attack follows the October 7 attacks, in which the Tehran-backed Hamas terrorist group brutally tortured, raped and killed many Israelis. We again condemn these attacks and we call for the release of all hostages.

Many have correctly identified, then and since, the role that the regime in Iran has played, supporting and backing Hamas. These far-away cowards seek to use the pain of the Palestinian people to advance their violent ends. Like Hamas's own leaders safely away in Qatar, the regime in Iran wants to attack Israel through proxies and with the maximal use of civilian human shields, while minimizing the risk to themselves. In this context, therefore, it is legitimate for Israel to take the fight against terrorism directly to Hamas's IRGC guides and paymasters, wherever they live.

As I have said many times, the Conservatives seek a two-state solution, in which Israelis and Palestinians could each pursue security and economic development through democratic, responsive and pluralistic self-governing institutions.

Let us be very clear that Hamas and IRGC terrorists do not want a two-state solution. They want to perpetually use the Palestinian situation as their justification for pursuing their selfish ends. The negotiated final status agreement that we hope for would in reality be the worst nightmare of these extremists, because these extremists thrive only in the midst of conflict and violence.

In the course of this weekend's events, it is worth recognizing and celebrating the effectiveness of Israel's defences. Israel's defensive technology is what has allowed the world's only Jewish state to survive as a state, facing constant existential threats from hostile forces. If people believe in Israel's right to defend itself, then they obviously must also have to believe in Israel's ability to procure the weapons that are necessary to defend itself. If people oppose the sale of weapons to Israel, then it is hard to make the case that they also believe in Israel's right to defend itself.

While recognizing the effectiveness of those Israeli defences, it is very important to recognize the vital contributions and collaboration of some of Israel's Arab neighbours, neighbours who have disagreements with Israel on various subjects but who are collaborating in the pursuit of peace and of shared security interests. There is a fundamental alignment between Israel and many of its neighbours, who are moving toward greater co-operation in response to the aggressive and colonial agenda of the regime in Iran. I hope that this will provide the basis for continuing and growing collaboration, and enhanced dialogue on a range of issues.

We know how many Muslim-majority states in the region have been victimized as a result of the horrific violence coming from the regime in Tehran. We could speak about Lebanon, about Syria, about Afghanistan, about Yemen, about the civil wars that are unfolding because of proxies that are sponsored by the regime in Tehran. We could speak about the support that the Taliban have received from the terrorist regime in Tehran, the destabilizing effect of Hezbollah in Lebanon and many other examples; the general capricious disregard that the regime in Tehran has shown for the peoples of all nations in the region; the constant genocidal demonization of Israel but also violence against all peoples in the region and around the world.

Needless to say, the fact that this attack was largely thwarted does not mean that it should be shrugged off or dismissed as merely symbolic. Indeed, the regime in Iran intended to break through Israel's defences and intended to wreak havoc. It will try again. It will try in other ways, as it did on October 7.

● (1525)

The regime in Tehran will continue to try to acquire more sophisticated and dangerous technology, including nuclear weapons, with which to attack Israel, with which to attack other peoples in the region and with which to threaten the security of all freedom-loving peoples wherever they live.

Routine Proceedings

The events of this weekend underline why the Conservatives have been persistently calling on the government to recognize that the IRGC is a terrorist organization and therefore must not be allowed to operate in Canada. The call to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization means, quite simply, that we would use all our resources to shut down any possibility of this regime operating in Canada. If it is a listed terrorist organization, it is not able to recruit, fundraise or promote its ideology in Canada. This, especially after the events of this weekend, is the least we can do.

However, it did not take the events of this weekend for the Conservatives and for many other Canadians to realize that the IRGC must be listed as a terrorist organization. I put forward a motion in the House to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization six years ago, and this was before many of the events we have seen since, about which I will speak. The case was already clear six years ago and, at the time, the Liberals, including the Prime Minister, voted in favour of that motion. They voted in favour of it and said they were thinking about it. Six years later, they still say they are thinking about it, yet they have refused to act.

Since that vote in the House of Commons six years ago, we have had the shooting down of flight PS752, an event of great personal significance for many of my colleagues from the Edmonton area. We have had the opportunity to, year after year, go to memorials, meet with families and to hear the stories of pain and grief from these many Canadian families that have lost loved ones. Canadian citizens were murdered when the IRGC shot down a civilian aircraft leaving Tehran, flight PS752, yet that still was not enough for the government to recognize that the IRGC is a terrorist organization.

Since then, we have lived through the murder of Mahsa Amini and the “Women, Life, Freedom” protest movement. The Iranian people again, as they have in years and decades past, have taken to the streets, calling for change and seeking the same things we so often take for granted in Canada, the protection of their fundamental freedoms. The Iranian people are such heroes. They are such an inspiration to so many members. In spite of the sacrifice of those protesters and in spite of the murder and torture we have seen targeting the people of Iran, the people whom this regime supposedly governs, the Canadian government has refused to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization. It is utterly shameful.

How much more violence do we have to see and how much more has to be done by this terrorist regime before the Canadian government finally recognizes and lists it as a terrorist organization?

There are the civil wars in Yemen and Syria; terrorists operating systematically outside of the law in Lebanon and Iraq; the brutal suppression of the Iranian people; attacks on Israel; the murder of Canadians and foreign-backed extremism in Canada; intimidation of members of the heroic, patriotic Iranian diaspora community in Canada; yet the NDP-Liberal government persists in failing to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

We have actually put forward a private member's bill, Bill C-350, a bill that would list the IRGC as a terrorist organization and would take further steps to hold the regime accountable, yet the Liberals have blocked efforts to expedite that bill.

Therefore, we are putting this question before the House again with our efforts to concur in this motion, which calls for the designation of the IRGC as a terrorist organization and for additional steps to protect Canadians from foreign-state-backed interference and to protect victims of violent extremism. This motion passed unanimously at the justice committee, and I hope it will pass the House when it comes to a vote.

● (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am disappointed in the Conservatives, particularly this member, using a concurrence motion to prevent debate on Bill C-50, and I will expand on that in due course.

The issue that the member wants to talk about today could have been dealt with on an opposition day. Yet again, the members of the Conservative Party feel that their days are not to be used for the purposes he is talking about with his concurrence motion on the report. Instead, they are using concurrence on reports for the sole purpose of disrupting government legislation. Can he explain to Canadians why the Conservative Party wants to use these types of motions to prevent substantial pieces of legislation from being debated?

● (1535)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think it is fairly obvious to everybody, except this member, that this is a serious and substantial matter worthy of urgent debate in the House of Commons.

I want to assure all members that we have, at the earliest opportunity following this weekend's events, and in the most efficient way possible, put a motion before the House to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization. I hope the motion will pass as quickly as possible so that we can finally send a message that the IRGC should be listed as a terrorist organization. I hope that, after six years of delay, the government will finally do it. It has been six years, and on all of the events I have described over those six years, the government is out of excuses. It is time to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization and shut down its operations in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Iranian regime is despotic, and we have seen repeated human right violations. We have seen a regime that has undermined human rights and has undermined countries in the region repeatedly. There is no democratic ability for folks to speak out. In fact, the killing of political prisoners and the widespread use of torture is something that is a hallmark of this despotic regime.

There was discussion at committee, as the member points out, and I want him to talk about the positions of the various parties around the table. The NDP, of course, has been very supportive of listing the IRGC as a terrorist organization. We believe this should have happened, but it has not yet. What were the positions of the parties around the table when this report was produced?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I do want to mention, respectfully to the member, that in 2018, when I put forward this motion, every present member of the NDP voted against my motion to list the IRGC as a terrorist organization. At least they were more honest than the Liberals who voted in favour of the motion but then did not do it.

The member says that the NDP is supportive of listing the IRGC, which is news to me. It is the first time I have heard this. However, if that is the case, if that is the NDP position, I think it is great news. Let us pass this motion, and let us pressure the government to actually, finally, get this done.

As I mentioned during my remarks, this report was unanimous at the justice committee, and we have had unanimous reports on this matter before from other committees. The problem is just that the government never gets it done. We will continue to persistently push this issue until the government actually does it and takes action to shut down IRGC operations in Canada.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for bringing this urgent matter to the attention of the House.

It has been six years. The House passed the resolution, and yet the government has not acted. We have seen, over the years, the level of threats and intimidation that has gone on within the Iranian community because of the IRGC. Can the hon. member tell the House why he thinks the government is failing to act on designating the IRGC as a terrorist organization?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is hard to speculate what is in the minds of the members across. I have asked this question over and over again to successive foreign affairs ministers, at committee, in the House, at every opportunity. We never get a clear explanation.

I have put forward the bill that would allow the government to do it. I have asked if we could expedite that bill at least to committee. In fact, I will ask for that now.

I ask for unanimous consent for Bill C-350 to be deemed read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Let us send it there for further study. Is there consent?

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

[*English*]

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to this important motion because of what we witnessed this weekend.

There was the delay of the government to say anything at all on following our allies and at least condemning this in a reasonable amount of time. We did not see that.

I ask members to imagine being part of a government that six years ago voted in favour of listing the IRGC, to imagine seeing what happened this weekend with 300 projectiles being fired directly on a democratic ally, to imagine being part of a government when the Saudis were better allies to our friend and democratic partner than the Government of Canada has been, and to imagine getting up in the House to say that the motion today is not an important motion to debate after witnessing 300 projectiles directly fired on a friend and democratic ally. Members do not have to imagine it. It just happened.

There has been six years of foot-dragging. The question has been asked hundreds of times in the House as to what day and at what time the government is going to list and ban the IRGC terrorists, who are operating openly in our country. Today, in the House, the answer was exactly the same. The government is trying, consulting and working on it. This has been the answer for six years, yet the Prime Minister himself got up and voted to ban the IRGC.

Today the mullahs in Iran and their proxies are fighting wars that kill Canadians. They killed hostages with Canadian citizenship. They killed 55 Canadians in the downing of flight PS752, 30 of whom were permanent residents. Since 2015, the government has done nothing but appease the mullahs in Iran. The Prime Minister himself met with the foreign minister, bowing his head in respect, in 2016, not even a year after the flight went down. It was absolutely disgusting to watch.

There are communities all over the country that know that operatives of the regime openly spend money. They have blood money to buy homes and assets in this country. Their kids go to school at universities here. The flood gates are open. We know that they intimidate Canadians in every single neighbourhood. We know that the chief of police of Tehran worked out in at GoodLife Fitness in midtown Toronto. We know that senior members of the regime are eating steak dinners in fancy restaurants in Toronto openly, with impunity. This is after eight years of the government.

Routine Proceedings

The worst is what we saw in the streets of Toronto. At the very moment the projectile missiles fired on a democratic friend and ally, there was celebration and jubilation in the streets of our biggest cities. There was a failure to denounce that by a party that we know is capable of denouncing all kinds of protests in this country. If its members were at all concerned with the desecration of a statue in front of Parliament and said nothing about what has happening in our streets, the mobs of protesters with covered faces brandishing swastikas, I cannot help them.

However, what we can do today, as a country, is to ban the open operations, the ability to raise money and organize, of the IRGC terrorists who live among us, and there are at least 700 who we know about in this country, yet we get the same answers over and over again. The government has been asked no less than 100 times in the House, and the answer is always the same. They say that they take terrorism seriously, that they are working on it and that they are looking into it. It has been six years.

• (1545)

If this weekend and the events from this weekend have not changed that answer, then we have a really big problem with the government. We have a really big problem with how it treats terrorism, how it treats national security in this country and how it treats the very communities who elect its members to come here. We also have a problem with members of Parliament from the other side, particularly the member of Parliament for Richmond Hill, who meets with agents of the IRGC in his office. It is open, and it is known. I will say it inside of the House and outside of the House. His community knows that, and it is shameful. The fact that the answer is the same today, that they are working on it or they are looking at different ways to do it, is absolutely shameful.

The 700 IRGC agents we know about who we have living in this country, and there are potentially more, intimidate Canadians every single day. They intimidate Canadians in neighbourhoods right across the GTA and in North Vancouver. We hear them. Our own conversations with them happen sometimes with a blurred out background because they are so scared about making the call to somebody in government or their MP for help that they blur out the background. They sit in their car away from their home because they are terrified of the intimidation that they face here.

There are thousands of Iranian Canadians, freedom-loving Iranian Canadians, who fled that regime to find safety and a better life here in Canada. Their expectation from their government is that they will be kept safe and free of intimidation, be able to go to school and to work, and be able to talk to their MP from their home without being terrified of being watched by the regime. That is what we are dealing with in Canada. That is what the community is dealing with in Canada. Those people have said so, and they continue to call on the government, after six years of it doing nothing to at least list these operatives as the terrorists they are.

Today in Canada, they can raise money, have meetings and organize. This is the Islamic regime in Iran that has been fighting proxy wars against our ally until the direct attack on the weekend. This is the regime in Iran that has funded Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis. This is the most destabilizing force in all of the Middle East and one of the most destabilizing forces in the entire world.

The very fact that the government answers the question in the same way today as it has for the last six years, and for two years before that, is a darn shame because there are people in this country who want to see the government take national security and terrorism seriously. It is about time that it does that. It is about time that it does that for every single freedom-loving Canadian who sees what is going on in their streets, where the progressive left has been co-opted by the Iranian regime with things like Al-Quds Day, which is funded entirely by the mullahs in Iran to destabilize our own streets here.

It is unbelievable that the Liberals' answer after six years is exactly the same. They say, "We are working on it. We are going to do it. We have a tough sanctions regime on Iran." They do not even know how many operatives are here. They do not know how many people they are going to put on their list because they do not have a list. If they did have a list, they would produce that list. It is a government that does not take terrorism seriously. It is a government that does not take national security seriously. Soon there will be a government that does, but until then, the Liberals can do one thing. They can ban the IRGC from organizing, from fundraising and from living freely here and intimidating our own citizens. That is what this motion calls on, and I hope the Liberals vote in favour of it.

• (1550)

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Iranian regime has brought untold harm onto its own citizens and has caused chaos throughout the region and the world. There is no argument from me on that.

The United States has listed the IRGC as a terrorist entity, but doing so has actually had a profound effect on a number of Canadians. There are about 30,000 Canadians in Canada who were conscripted to be part of the IRGC. Through no fault of their own, they are not able to travel to the U.S. for vacations or for work opportunities. It includes their spouses and their children as well. This is already having a profound impact. I actually had an email today from a constituent who was asking about this.

How would my hon. colleague go about ensuring that, by listing the IRGC as a terrorist entity, it would not bring these types of issues onto our citizens? How might that be approached?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, it is dealt with in Bill C-350 and he could have passed it right now if the Liberals did not oppose it on the floor of the House of Commons.

The member is giving a bureaucratic answer for a regime that subjugates women, that kills members of the LGBTQ community, that kidnaps and tortures its own people, and that has brought that over into our country to intimidate people in his own riding, in my riding and in many of the ridings people here represent.

Routine Proceedings

That bureaucratic answer is what he is going to have to tell his members who are constantly being intimidated by a regime that is the most destabilizing regime in the entire world.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her speech this afternoon on this very important concurrence motion.

I would like her to comment on what the Minister of Foreign Affairs said just before question period when she stood in front of the microphone. She spoke to an Israeli counterpart and said, after the weekend attacks, they should just take the win and de-escalate the situation. Obviously, we would like to see a de-escalation of the situation in the Middle East, but she implied that Israel should somehow take the win because there were no deaths. Fortunately, Saudi Arabia and Jordan intervened and shot down many of the airborne missiles and weapons sent to Israel.

Can she comment on the comments of the Minister of Foreign Affairs?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, I cannot keep up with the multiple positions of the Minister of Foreign Affairs or her inability to ever talk about this issue without being naive.

I could not do that, but I do know one thing: The Prime Minister and the government have outsourced their foreign policy to the progressive left. It has resulted in Canada, following a motion that was just passed in the House, supporting the stopping of arms sales to Israel, while they are, out of the other side of their mouths, telling the Israelis that Canada stands with them. They cannot walk and chew gum at the same time; at least the foreign minister cannot.

It is unfortunate to see that a long-standing consensus of support for a democratic friend and ally has been left to languish on the floor of the House of Commons by the Liberals. There will be a time when we return to that long-standing consensus in this country, and that time cannot come soon enough.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, can the member tell us when she believes they should have received that designation? She often makes reference to six years ago. Is that when the Conservatives would have put it in? When would they have put in the designation?

Ms. Melissa Lantsman: Madam Speaker, this is a party that unanimously voted for it in June 2018. That was six years ago. They could have done it any single day in those six years. The fact that the answer is the same today after what happened this weekend is absolutely shameful, and that member should be ashamed of himself for even asking that question.

• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will tell members what the member opposite, the deputy leader of the Conservative Party, should feel. She should feel ashamed of the way the Conservative Party is manipulating an issue that is as serious as it is, all for the sake of playing a political game. Let there be no doubt that this is all this is for the Conservative Party of Canada.

I asked a legitimate question of the Conservative deputy leader. What kind of response did she give? She talked about shame. The Conservative Party has no concept or idea of what diplomacy or international foreign affairs is actually about. When we asked when the Conservatives would have brought it in, what did she say? That they brought in a motion and it was passed a few years ago. She completely avoided the question after condemning our government for the actions we have taken in regard to this particular issue.

Further to that, if someone listens to that member or the critic, they will see they are being critical of its being six years ago. When did Donald Trump make that declaration? The Conservatives say they do not wait for Donald Trump, yet they are asking why we were not there for the United States. When did Donald Trump do it? It was less than six years ago. There is a hint. Maybe they can do a bit of research on it. Then they talk about the European Union—

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member is talking about making the IRGC a terrorist organization, so I would call relevance on the member's comments and ask if you could—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member knows there is a lot of latitude on relevance. The hon. member has 20 minutes for his speech, and there is lots of time to get there.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is hard to believe the member would stand and ask a question on relevance when every aspect of everything I have said is absolutely relevant. It is a reflection on the Conservative Party of Canada's behaviour and how its members like to ensure there is dysfunction in the chamber. They play this political game of bringing up motions for concurrence of this nature in order to prevent debate.

At the same time, they will say this is such an important issue and that is the reason they want to debate it today. However, they did not have the political courage to bring it forward in the form of an emergency debate. They say how important it is and that they are not playing a game with this issue, but rather that it is a serious issue. Then they cite the United States and ask why it is taking Canada so long. When I start to explain it, they jump up like jelly beans and say what I am saying is not relevant. How stupid of a comment from the opposition—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I would ask the hon. member to be very prudent with his choice of words, please. I would be very grateful if the member could take that word back.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member opposite asked a very good question about why I am so exercised on this particular issue. Earlier today, the member posed that question to me while introducing her remarks on Bill C-50. Some members of the House, including the member who posed that question to me just now, came to the House believing that this was what we were going to be talking about today. All one needs to do is listen to her speech a couple of hours back.

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Members of the House knew full well what we were going to be debating today. That is why I talked about this being a charade and about the games being played by Conservative Party members. What they have really done is prevent, once again, debate on government legislation, the very same piece of legislation that the member opposite, who is heckling me, made an amendment to. Why? It is because they want to filibuster the legislation. That is the real motivation behind the motion today.

Members have stood up to say it is such an important issue. If it is so important, why did they not want to introduce an emergency debate on the issue?

An hon. member: Because it is not an emergency; it is just a distraction.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, as one of my colleagues said, it is really and truly not an emergency from the Conservatives' perspective, but rather it is a distraction. It is to take us away from the debate on the amendment that the Conservatives put forward on government legislation. Remember that this is the same bill, Bill C-50, that we voted on for hours and hours last week. It is the same bill for which the critic who is responsible for it utilized artificial intelligence to generate over 20,000 amendments. Let the games continue. That is what we are witnessing from across the way.

Why do I get so exercised about it? It is because I, unlike Conservatives, who choose to make games of serious issues of this nature, believe that it is an important issue. I only wish Conservative Party members would be more genuine in their comments on the issue. What do I mean by that? Why did they not bring in an emergency debate if they really felt that it was such an emergency? How many questions did they ask on the issue? By my count, it was one or two.

Allow me to provide this quote, if I may, of the minister's response to a Conservative member in question period. Here is what the minister indicated earlier today: "We have said many times in the House that Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism. My colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has repeated that."

That is a pretty strong statement. I believe that if we were to canvass the House, the entire House would agree with that particular statement. He continued, "We have taken a series of severe measures to restrict members of the regime, including the revolutionary guard corps, from coming to Canada. With respect to listing a terrorist entity, it is national security agencies", and I am going to pause there. Imagine a national government that wants to allow the professionals, the people who have their feet on the ground, to do what it is they are charged to do and to bring back recommendations and thoughts on the process to the government.

When they say six years, I say balderdash. They know nothing about what they are actually talking about. They want to out-trump Trump, quite frankly. Shame on them for the poor attitude that they display, day in and day out, on very important issues.

• (1600)

The minister responded that it is the national security agencies that do these reviews, not the Conservative Party of Canada; amen

to that. From time to time, they provide advice to the government. Obviously all options are on the table. I have asked the national security community to provide the government with that advice quickly.

The Conservative Party, as I have said, is all agitated. I would suggest that a lot of that comes out of drama school. At the end of the day, the Conservatives are agitated and ask why the government has not taken action. When did the European Union come to the table on the issue? I believe it was just last year.

An hon. member: Who cares? Just focus on Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member says "Who cares?" However, she likes to compare Canada's response to responses of other countries.

The Conservative Party tries to fit everything through a lens that has only one purpose. That is to play the role of a destructive force here on the floor of the House of Commons, to prevent important legislation from passing that would make a difference for Canadians.

Today in question period, the Conservatives stood up and asked a couple of questions about our farmers. They talked about giving our farmers a break. I should tell members that, when they play the types of games they are playing today, they should take a look at what is happening with the fall economic statement inside the committee.

Today the Conservatives are talking about a terrorist organization; they want more recognition from the government to that effect. The government is saying that it is going to look to its professionals, the individual security agencies that Canada has and those individuals who bring a great deal of experience to the table.

What else does the Conservative Party do, in terms of disrupting the House? It does not want to pass the fall economic statement, so it cries about the farmers and yet filibusters. If I were a gambling man, which I am not, I would suggest that even on the fall economic statement, the Conservatives probably brought in concurrence reports. I am sure I will be corrected if I am wrong on that. The point is that this particular bill is still in committee, being filibustered. That bill would actually double the top-up for the rebate for rural communities. Duh, that helps the farmers.

Again, at the end of the day, these are the types of things that the Conservatives exercise, day in and day out, in order to prevent legislative and budgetary measures from being passed through the House of Commons. Here they have come to a report, which I have made reference to. I could talk about some very specific points, in terms of recommendations, and I will go to that. However, before I do, I want to remind members across the way that, at the end of the day, there are many different opportunities for the Conservatives, if they genuinely believe this is something they really and truly want to talk about. They chose not to do that.

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I already referred to the emergency debate. For those who might be following this debate, an emergency debate would have taken place had the Conservatives taken the opportunity to stand in their place and articulate why the House of Commons should be designating a block of time in order to have an emergency debate on the issue. They could have done that instead of moving this particular motion for concurrence.

The problem is that, even if the Speaker had agreed to the emergency debate, it would have been deferred by a few hours. The Conservatives had absolutely no intention of bringing in an emergency debate. It is not as though the report and the recommendations are what they really want to talk about. However, that is one thing they could have done.

• (1605)

We know the official opposition has other opportunities to raise matters through opposition days. It has had 20-plus opposition days. It is important to look at everything its members have talked about. Today we are talking about the IRGC, a report and the timing of it. Why would they not bring this up in an opposition day? In an opposition day, they can be very specific, list every concern they have and have an entire day of debate on the issue. At the end of that debate, an actual vote takes place. If the Conservative Party members were genuinely concerned about the IRGC, why would they not have done it that way?

Instead, Conservatives have had the last 18 days or 20 days in row to talk about misleading information with respect to the carbon rebate versus the carbon tax and how they are going to fool Canadians with their bumper sticker slogans. This is what they have been debating, and this is the sad reality.

We have a very serious issue here that affects so many people; it affects them directly here in Canada, as well as abroad, both directly and indirectly. If Conservatives took the issue as seriously as they say they do, I would suggest that, at the very least, they could have had further dialogue or another opposition day designated to talk about it and define the points they really wanted to make.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in Iran is a great concern for all of us. I appreciate when there are opportunities, in the form of questions during question period, for members of whatever political party to raise important issues. I also would suggest that they take a look at the responses they are given to those questions. It needs to be put in the context of what is happening around the world and what other allied countries might be doing.

I am very much aware of what took place over the weekend. I thought it was great we actually had the leaders of the G7 come out with a joint statement on the issue. If I had the time, I would read the entire statement that they released. These were things they shared in common.

Unlike the imagery the Conservative Party tries to portray, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has been very effective at working with our allied nations, reflecting on Canadian values and taking them onto the international scene. There is absolutely no doubt, from my perspective, that this is the best way to deal with the issue at hand.

There is a great deal of media attention about what has taken place since October 7, what took place over the weekend and everything in between. I would like to think a vast majority of members, if not all, are following what is taking place in the Middle East very closely, because it has an impact on the communities we all represent.

• (1610)

For me, it is about Canadian values. It is about working with allied, like-minded countries and putting Canada in a position we can all, ultimately, feel comfortable with going forward. I am confident in the position we have actually taken.

In the comments from across the way, there was reference to flight 752, the impact that had on Canadians and the people who died. I have talked to individuals one-on-one and listened to the problems and issues that have been surrounding it. I am very much a big fan of Ralph Goodale, and I appreciate a lot of the fine work he has done, in terms of trying to help Canada get over that particular issue in a way in which we ensure that there is a higher sense of justice.

As do all members of the House, I see the IRGC and what is taking place as something that is completely unacceptable. At the end of the day, I believe that the Conservatives have used this issue as a part of the game of filibustering and preventing government legislation and budgetary issues from being debated. That is wrong. There is the problem.

The debate itself would have been a whole lot better, and the gamesmanship would have been put to the side, if this had taken the form of an opposition motion. Now the Conservatives are using what has taken place over the weekend for that sense of emergency. Having said that, they had the opportunity to do that, too. They intentionally chose not to.

That is the party that is trying to turn this into a game and then ramp up the emotions that Canadians are feeling. There is a lot of anxiety in our communities, and the Conservatives are contributing to it. They are a part of the problem, and that is what I see taking place today.

• (1615)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the problem is the Liberal government, which has dragged its feet for six long years. It has been four years since the IRGC shot down PS752, murdering 55 Canadians and 35 permanent residents in what the Ontario Superior Court has determined to be a terrorist attack. The families of PS752 victims have been pleading with the Liberals; for four years, their pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

The member's government, under the leadership of his Minister of Foreign Affairs, has literally trashed decades of Canadian foreign policy to buy out the anti-Israel NDP by supporting a motion that calls for an arms embargo on Israel; in other words, it strips Israel of its right to defend itself. Does the member support Israel's right to defend itself from attacks by Hamas and the IRGC? How does he square that with what his government has done?

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Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is posing two questions. The first is in regard to the timing issue, saying that we should have done this six years ago. That is what the Conservative Party is implying in the question, as the member nods his head, acknowledging that what I am saying is true. To that, I say that I am in no hurry to out-Trump Donald Trump, when he made the announcement in 2019, which is under six years ago. Is that the type of attitude we are going to see coming from the Conservative Party? The member continues to nod his head, saying “yes”.

I disagree. I do not think we should be dictated to by Donald Trump or individuals even further to the right than the MAGA Conservatives we see today.

In regard to the second question, he asks about Israel. I said in my comments that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who has been working diligently with our allied countries, has developed and put together a consensus, as we continue to move forward, based on Canadian values, and I fully—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give other members the opportunity to ask questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saint-Jean.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, one of the problems with the motion to designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist entity is the implementation of this measure. We know that the government generally has a hard time implementing its own proposals. Look at the sanctions. Sanctions against Iran were announced as early as 2022-23. As we have seen with sanctions relating to Ukraine, the government is completely incapable of following through with what is happening.

When the government announces something, would it not be a good first step for it to at least implement it? Maybe we would not always want to bring more things forward if the government followed through every time. Would it not be the first thing for the government to do, on its own, when it decides to impose sanctions against a regime, for example, to ensure that those sanctions are truly implemented?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I do believe that there are some sanctions that are already in place. I want to re-emphasize that the minister responsible indicated very clearly to the House just an hour or so ago that we have security agencies that are charged with the responsibility of doing the work that is necessary in order to provide the type of quality advice that Canadians expect of our security agencies. It would be pre-emptive to do something before that is actually provided. I appreciate the question and look forward, as no doubt the member opposite does, to what ultimately is decided on this.

I would go back to the European Union. From what I understand, it was not until maybe the summer of last year that the E.U. ultimately recognized the IRGC as a terrorist organization.

• (1620)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have an incredible community of Iranian Cana-

dians in Nanaimo—Ladysmith, so I want to first acknowledge all of those in my community. I think of Shirin, particularly, who is the owner of The Bees Knees in Nanaimo, who contributes in so many ways.

My question for the member is specifically around the point of designating the IRGC as a terrorist entity now. Many Iranian Canadians are speaking to me about the importance of holding to account those who are participating in human rights violations and committing terrorism, and of moving this forward.

Can the member also share his thoughts around the importance of, while holding terrorism to account, also considering those who are conscripted into the IRGC and how that plays into the decisions being made, moving forward, so that those who are forced into the IRGC are not being held to the same degree of responsibility as those who are voluntarily participating in terrorism?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question, and it is important. Again, the minister himself indicated earlier today, during question period, that Iran is a state sponsor of terrorism. We need to be very clear on that point. The government has security agencies that do outstanding work, and we look forward to whatever ultimately comes of that work.

My concern, more to the member's question, is the anxiety that is in our communities. There is a considerable amount of anxiety there from a number of different communities, let alone among most Canadians who have been following the news in any significant way. I do not appreciate that when we have that kind of anxiety in our communities, we get an opposition party choosing to make a game of it. It actually adds to the anxiety, and that does a disservice to Canadians.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to build upon some of the questions that have been asked, because all members in this place recognize that Hamas is a terrorist entity; all members have condemned the actions of Hamas, and all members agree that Israel has the right to defend itself. I too want to really commend the people within my communities, especially those of Iranian descent, who have taken the time to speak with me as their member of Parliament.

Constituents within the riding of Waterloo also came together to draft a petition. They had members within the community and surrounding area sign it, and I was able to present that petition on their behalf, because we do recognize the horrid situation in which Mahsa Amini was killed and the downing of flight PS752. It was absolutely horrible to find out what took place, and Canada was right there to make sure that for citizens and permanent residents on that plane, justice was served. We continue to take action on that.

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I would like to hear from the member. When it comes to this file and the importance of doing the work that we need to do, would the approach be to play, in a sense, dog-whistle politics with it, or should we recognize the harm that is being caused and find a way forward so that we can actually represent the diversity of Canadians in this country? What kind of role does the government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I need to give the hon. parliamentary secretary a few seconds to answer.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it goes to my earlier comment that the Conservative Party had an option. It did not have to use a concurrence motion. There are many different ways it could have dealt with this. I never even talked about the possibility of a take-note debate. Did Conservatives go to the Speaker and say they wanted an emergency debate? Have they had a caucus discussion to see if they would use it as an opposition day motion? Did they even approach the government in any fashion, saying they would like a take-note debate?

There are many different options, but, sadly, Conservatives chose to debate concurrence in a committee report, which I believe tells me and should tell Canadians that, ultimately, it is more of a game than it is an issue, and that is sad.

• (1625)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do not think it is really worth my time to respond to anything that the member for Winnipeg North said, but I do want to respond to some of the comments about conscription.

A couple of members asked an interesting question about how the listing of the IRGC impacts those who have been conscripted into it. Rather than just talking about the problem, Conservatives have actually put the solution to this problem in Bill C-350, and I invite members to read it. We proposed an amendment to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which would say that a person is deemed not to have been a member of an organization if certain conditions are met: if they were required to fulfill a mandatory service period within the organization, if they did not commit atrocities while they were part of the organization and if they did not extend their stay with that organization.

We have not just talked about the problem and said, “This is unsolvable, so we are not going to do it.” Conservatives have recognized the issue and proposed an amendment in Bill C-350 that would solve the conscription problem. Therefore, I encourage members who are serious about wanting to do this to support Bill C-350 and get it through second reading, so it can be studied and further refined at committee and we could actually get this done.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would reinforce my previous answer, that I believe the Conservative Party has lost sight of the genuine issue itself by choosing to use concurrence in a committee report or making a game of this in trying to be a destructive force on the floor of the House of Commons.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Jean.

Like many other matters that are brought before the House, what our Conservative colleagues are proposing today is something that I think is very important. It will certainly have serious consequences. We know that inclusion on the list of terrorist organizations means that Iranian citizens and members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps will no longer be allowed on Canadian soil. However, even if we think that perpetrators of terrorism must be prohibited from staying in the country or must at least be controlled, imprisoned or properly sanctioned, the fact remains that, according to the statistics that we have, 50% or more of IRGC soldiers are likely honest citizens who have been conscripted or forced to serve in the military. As a result, the decision that we are about to make could have a major impact on Iranians, regardless of whether people are guilty of any kind of terrorist, criminal or other act.

That said, even if we do not have the expertise or enough of the full story to make such an important decision, the fact remains that the world is changing and we are looking at a major situation to which Canada must respond. We know that in the late 1950s, Iran even developed a civil nuclear program with the help of the United States. At that time, the Iranian state was seen as an ally or friendly to the west. Things changed over time. In 1979, the infamous Islamic revolution happened, and that led to a radical change in the way Iranians live and in their position on western society. We had to consider that. Members will recall that in January 2002, in the wake of the attacks on the United States, President George W. Bush declared the existence of what was known at the time as the axis of evil, which included Iran. There was a change. Although in the 1950s Iran was an ally, a friendly country, things changed in 1979 with the Islamic revolution. I will refrain from calling it an enemy, but at the turn of the century, Iran became hostile to the west. The situation is deteriorating as the years go by.

That brings us to this weekend, with the notorious drone and ballistic missile attacks. We understand, or at least wonder about Iran's real intentions. Apparently, these missiles were largely destroyed at or near take-off. It was not as devastating an attack as some might have feared but, nevertheless, Iran launched an attack and, as we know, it is working on nuclear energies. Agreements have been signed. We know that there are no nuclear weapons in Iran, and Iran's nuclear power was regulated in 2015 or thereabouts. However, there are still questions. Hostile intentions are being demonstrated by a state that is a serious threat to Canada's allies in Europe and, in many ways, Canada itself.

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What happens next? I admit that it is not an easy choice, but I do not think we can just stand by. We have to react. As we know, the United States has taken steps to designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization.

● (1630)

We know that the European Union and other countries are seriously considering this option at the moment. I think we also need to give the matter careful thought and possibly impose such sanctions. They would have to be administered very carefully, tactfully and sparingly. I trust the Canadian government to administer the situation wisely and appropriately, but I think something has to be done. We do not have time to spend a year or two considering the matter. We have to act now.

I introduced a bill on that before. The Bloc Québécois has repeatedly argued for the creation of an organized crime registry in Canada. We based our work in that regard on the registry of terrorist organizations. Our belief in the usefulness of such a registry is therefore sincere. I believe it would be even more useful for organized crime. In time, I hope to bring my friends in the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and possibly in the NDP and the Green Party, and everyone in the House, around to the idea, so that we end up with what I think would be a highly appropriate tool for fighting terrorist organizations, a tool that should also allow us to fight organized crime effectively. It is important to remember that organized crime causes a lot more harm in Canada than terrorist organizations. Organized crime jeopardizes the quality of life and peace of mind of Quebecers and Canadians on a daily basis. I believed in a registry for organized crime, and the registry of terrorist organizations was the model I used. I still believe in it.

Given that we believe in the usefulness of a registry and we think that Iran has gone down a dangerous path that could, in the short or medium term, cause major harm to Canada and, in any case, is already causing serious harm to citizens around the world, I believe that Canada should set an example. The Government of Canada needs to deal with this issue right now. In that sense, I think our Conservative colleagues are right to ask us to take a stand on this matter.

I will stop there. I thank my colleagues for their attention.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to make a comment and ask the member a question. The first line of the report calls on the government to designate the group, called *Sepâh-e Pâsdârân* in Farsi, as a terrorist group. We have been trying to convince the government for six years now to designate it as a terrorist group under the Criminal Code.

Some members have asked the question about the people who have been forced to do their military service with this terrorist group. In fact, all those who work for the Quds Force are volunteers. They are soldiers who work for the Government of Tehran. It is a terrorist group that killed Kian Pirfalak, who was nine years old. Those people killed Mahsa Amini. They killed Nika Shahkarami, Sarina Esmailzadeh and Armita Garavand. Thousands of people have been sent to Iranian prisons just for defending their democratic and human rights.

Why does my colleague think that the government has been refusing for six years to add this group to our terrorist list in our Criminal Code so that its hundreds of agents, who are here in this country, can face justice?

● (1635)

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Madam Speaker, why has Canada dragged its feet for six years? I do not know. I suspect that I will never know.

That being said, we have taken issue many times with the Liberal government's pattern of complacency and we continue to do so. The Liberal government is complacent in carrying out its own responsibilities but overly active in interfering in provincial jurisdictions. It defies understanding. Obviously, there are government members who would rather be serving in the Quebec National Assembly or in the provincial parliaments than here in the federal Parliament. Right now, we are talking about something that clearly falls under federal jurisdiction: the fight against terrorism.

I have to agree with my colleague that we should have addressed this issue a long time ago. I, too, hope that the government will do so wisely and carefully without rushing things, but it needs to address this issue now.

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member may be aware that in May, the committee on foreign affairs is bringing forward an NDP motion that the committee study the federal government's refusal to list the IRGC as a terrorist entity, the connection between people or assets in Canada and the IRGC, and paths forward to support vulnerable Iranians. I am reflecting on the importance of the people who need to be there to testify at the committee, with the increased violence against women. We know of the horrific, violent murder of Mahsa Amini as one example.

Could the member speak to the violence against women that is happening in Iran, the importance of its being included in the study and how that connects to what we are talking about today?

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Madam Speaker, I think my colleague is right about violence against women in Iran. We all know that. We see it all the time. My other colleague was also right earlier about violence against young people, even children.

We know that these organizations are recruiting children to commit violent acts that would be completely prohibited and generally disapproved of if they happened in Canada. We have seen movies about what Iranian society was like before the Islamic revolution. We saw women who did not wear the veil and who had a life similar to that of men, that is to say they went to university and they were able to work and drive. However, since the Islamic revolution, there has been a tendency to prevent women from thriving in Iran. Not only is it appalling, but, in my opinion, it amounts to a crime against humanity, just like what they do to children.

Either way, we really need to crack down and take a serious look at this right away.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Public Services and Procurement; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Public Services and Procurement; and the hon. member for Yellowhead, Carbon Pricing.

I believe that the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader is riding on a point of order.

• (1640)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise to provide answers to a number of questions, and I need to have leave in the House in order to do so. I believe that there has already been consultation for it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the hon. member have leave to proceed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 2371, 2379 to 2382, 2384, 2392 to 2395, 2397, 2401, 2404 to 2408, 2416 and 2417.

[Text]

Question No. 2371—**Mr. Alistair MacGregor:**

With regard to federal funding for the Stornoway residence, since January 1, 2016: how much federal funding has been provided to pay for food expenses for the Leader of the Official Opposition, broken down by year and use of funding?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the link to the detailed hospitality expenditures report can be found at <https://www.ourcommons.ca/proactivedisclosure/en/house-officers/2024/3/hospitality>

The “Detailed Hospitality Expenditures Report for Presiding Officers and House Officers” includes all hospitality expenses paid with House funds, namely expenses for meals, beverages and refreshments, as well as other expenses related to hospitality extend-

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ed to guests at events that are necessary for the fulfillment of parliamentary functions. Expenses are subject to the policies of the Board of Internal Economy.

For further information pertaining to budget allocations and food expenses for the leader of the official opposition at Stornoway, contact House of Commons administration.

Question No. 2379—**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:**

With regard to federal labour standards: (a) did the Labour Program's Head of Compliance and Enforcement receive notice from Bell (BCE Inc.), in writing, at least 16 weeks before the group termination of employees was announced on February 8, 2024, and, if so, on what date was notice received; (b) did the government receive a request for a waiver from Bell regarding the 16-week notice for letting the government know about the group termination, and, if so, on what date was it received and what was the government's response; and (c) on what date was the minister responsible notified of Bell's group termination?

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the group termination of employment provisions under the Canada Labour Code, part III, pertaining to labour standards, and in answer to part (a) of the question, the head of compliance and enforcement received notices of group termination of employment from Bell Canada, Bell Media Inc. and Bell Mobility Inc. in accordance with the provisions of the Canada Labour Code on February 8, 2024.

With respect to part (b), upon receipt of a notice of group termination of employment, the Labour Program generally initiates an investigation. As such, the Labour Program has started investigations into the three notices of group termination to ensure that the obligations under the Canada Labour Code are being fulfilled. As the investigations are ongoing, the Labour Program is not able to address whether a request for waiver was requested and/or granted at this time.

Regarding part (c), the Minister of Labour and Seniors was informed of the notices of group termination of employment on February 8, 2024.

Question No. 2380—**Mrs. Rachael Thomas:**

With regard to the government of Canada's spending on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in 2023: what is the breakdown of spending allocated to CBC Radio, CBC News, CBC Radio One, CBC Music, Radio-Canada Première, ICI Musique, CBC television, Ici Radio-Canada Télé, CBC News Network, Ici RDI, Ici Explora, Documentary Channel, Ici ARTV, CBC North, Radio-Canada Nord, Radio Canada International, CBC.ca, Radio-Canada.ca, CBC Sports (English and French), CBC Radio 3 digital, CBC Music and Ici.mu digital, Ici.TOU.TV, the CBC advertising sales department, the Radio-Canada sales department, and the marketing and promotions budgets for CBC and Radio-Canada?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CBC/Radio-Canada is an arm's-length Crown corporation whose independence from government is protected in law in the Broadcasting Act. That independence includes protection from the provision of “any information the provision of which could reasonably be expected to compromise or constrain the journalistic, creative or programming independence of the Corporation”, according to the Broadcasting Act, section 52(2).

Routine Proceedings

The corporation already publishes much detail about its operations. In addition to its quarterly and annual reports, the corporation provides aggregate annual returns with the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, for its radio and television services. In the latest 2023 filing, reported totals for government grants and parliamentary appropriation are as follows, in \$000: Radio-Canada television: \$290,871; CBC television: \$376,356; Radio-Canada radio: \$122,057; and CBC radio: \$186,512.

With regard to the “CBC advertising sales department, the Radio-Canada sales department, and the marketing and promotions budgets for CBC and Radio-Canada”, those budgets are confidential competitive information protected under section 18 of the Access to Information Act. We do report our total operation expenses, not solely government spending, for sales and promotion for our conventional television and radio services to the CRTC. For 2023, they are, in \$000: Radio-Canada television: \$34,110; CBC television: \$40,370; Radio-Canada radio: \$2,929; and CBC radio: \$4,658.

Please note that the amount for advertising that we report to the CRTC is the total amount spent. We do not calculate how much of that number would come from the parliamentary appropriation, i.e., government funding. Advertising is an expense within our total overall budget.

Total operating budget includes parliamentary appropriation and commercially earned revenue, which includes advertising, subscription revenue and program sales. See p. 27 of the 2022-23 annual report at <https://cbc.radio-canada.ca/en/impact-and-accountability/finance/annual-reports>.

Question No. 2381—Mr. Chris Lewis:

With regard to the Canada Border Services Agency's hiring of 200 border officers for the Gordie Howe International Bridge location: (a) of the 200 positions, how many and what percentage were required to be filled by applicants who are members of a designated employment equity group; (b) of the 200 positions, how many were filled by members of designated employment equity groups, in total, and broken down by employment equity group; and (c) has the government received a legal opinion or legal advice to ensure the hiring requirements complied with applicable laws and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and if so, who provided the advice?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a) of the question, the CBSA is funded to fill approximately 250 positions at the Gordie Howe International Bridge, including border services officers, superintendents and chiefs. As the bridge is not yet operational, the CBSA aspires to fill positions in alignment with Canadian workforce availability data, as follows: women: 111, or 44.6%; members of visible minorities: 41, or 16.6%; indigenous people: 9, or 3.7%; and persons with disabilities: 23, or 9.4%.

In response to part (b), the CBSA will fill approximately 250 positions at the Gordie Howe International Bridge. As the bridge is not yet operational, none of the positions have been filled to date. Recruitment efforts are under way to ensure that once the bridge becomes operational, employment equity groups are represented within the workforce in alignment with Canadian workforce availability data, as follows: women: 111, or 44.6%; members of visible

minorities: 41, or 16.6%; indigenous people: 9, or 3.7%; and persons with disabilities: 23, or 9.4%.

Note that, given the intersectionality of employment equity groups, an employee may be represented in more than one equity-deserving group.

In response to part (c), the CBSA follows all applicable laws and policies as it relates to staffing within the federal public service. No legal opinion or advice was sought in the recruitment of officers for the Gordie Howe International Bridge.

Question No. 2382—Mr. Doug Shipley:

With regard to Correctional Service Canada (CSC), since 2016, in total, and broken down by year and correctional institution: (a) how many federally incarcerated inmates have been mistakenly released from a federal institution; (b) of the cases in (a), what was the reason for each mistaken release (e.g. human error, computing error, etc.); (c) of the cases in (a), how many mistaken releases led to CSC notifying the public of the improper release; and (d) of the cases in (a), how many of the inmates were (i) classified as Dangerous Offenders, (ii) classified as High-Profile Offenders, (iii) convicted of multiple murders at the time of their improper release?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CSC has strict safeguards in place to prevent such incidents.

The release of an offender begins with the pre-release process. This process begins well before an offender is set to be released. During this process, CSC confirms that the offender can be released, for example, that they have no outstanding warrants, are not subject to deportation, etc., and works with the offender to plan their release and ensure that the offender has the supports necessary for success. CSC will also complete a number of administrative tasks, such as ensuring that the offender has identification, updating their profile information, updating the inmate's photograph and preparing the release certificate.

On the day of the release, the offender will be taken to the admission and discharge area to complete the discharge process. This includes confirming the offender's identity, through multiple verifications by multiple staff members, to ensure that the correct offender is being released. The offender will be provided with a copy of their release certificate, an updated CSC identification card and other existing pieces of identification, funds in their trust account, a supply of medication if required, and their personal effects. The offender will also be given civilian clothing, and transportation will have been coordinated so that the offender reaches their release destination.

CSC is also obligated to provide certain information to local police within 24 hours: an up-to-date photograph of the offender, a copy of the release certificate, the standard profile, and the PBC decision sheet, if applicable.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 2384—Mr. Michael Kram:**

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) cap on international student visas: (a) why was Saskatchewan given an allocation of international student visa attestations that was disproportionately smaller than Saskatchewan's percentage of the national population; (b) was the University of Regina's surplus of on-campus housing considered as part of Saskatchewan's allocation, and if so, what impact did it have; and (c) what specific formula does IRCC use for determining each province's allocation of international student visa attestations?

Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's 2024 allocation allows for a total 15,054 study permit applications, which represents an increase from the initial allocation. This allocation is expected to result in approximately 7,200 approved study permits in 2024, which represents 10% growth of international students in the capped cohorts in Saskatchewan.

The national cap is based on a net-zero first-year growth model. This means the number of international students coming to Canada in 2024 should be equal to the number of students whose permit is expiring this year.

Some study permit applicants have been exempted from the cap as per the "Ministerial Instructions with respect to the processing of certain applications for a study permit made by a foreign national as a member of the student class", including primary and secondary school students, master's or doctoral degree students, in-Canada study and work permit holders, and in-Canada family members of study permit or work permit holders. IRCC estimated the volume of these groups for the coming year and deducted that number from the zero net growth calculation.

IRCC distributed that target number of spaces based on the population share in each province and territory. This resulted in different scenarios, in which some provinces would welcome more students in 2024 than in 2023, while others would see fewer new students. To mitigate the magnitude of the growth or reduction, IRCC adjusted allocations whereby growth would be no more than 10% over 2023. Similarly, IRCC limited reductions to support broader regional immigration objectives and to lessen the negative impact in the first year.

The allocations provided to provinces and territories apply to study permit applications for students subject to the national cap only, as set out in the ministerial instructions.

The University of Regina's surplus of on-campus housing was not considered as part of Saskatchewan's allocation.

Provinces and territories are responsible for distributing the allocation of study permits among the designated learning institutions that they regulate.

This measure is part of IRCC's goal to improve the integrity of Canada's international student program, better protect prospective students from fraud and preserve permanent residency pathways.

Question No. 2392—Mr. Chris Warkentin:

With regard to federal funding for the Stornoway residence, between January 1, 2011 and November 4, 2015: how much federal funding has been provided to pay for food expenses for the Leader of the Official Opposition, broken down by year and use of funding?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the link to the detailed hospitality expenditures report can be found at <https://www.ourcommons.ca/proactivedisclosure/en/house-officers/2024/3/hospitality>.

The "Detailed Hospitality Expenditures Report for Presiding Officers and House Officers" includes all hospitality expenses paid with House funds, namely expenses for meals, beverages, and refreshments, as well as other expenses related to hospitality extended to guests at events that are necessary for the fulfillment of parliamentary functions. Expenses are subject to the policies of the Board of Internal Economy.

For further information pertaining to budget allocations and food expenses for the leader of the official opposition at Stornoway, contact House of Commons administration.

Question No. 2393—Mr. Chris Warkentin:

With regard to federal funding for the Prime Minister's residences, since January 1, 2016: how much federal funding has been provided to pay for food expenses for the Prime Minister, his family and his guests, broken down by year and use of funding?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Special Advisor for Water, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as per a longstanding practice, in place since 1985, the Prime Minister reimburses amounts related to food based on Statistics Canada data on household spending, which is adjusted using the consumer price index to account for inflation.

Question No. 2394—Ms. Michelle Rempel Garner:

With regard to applications received by the government for federal judicial appointments, since 2016: (a) what is the number of applications received, broken down by year; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by demographic and by region; (c) how many applicants who have completed and passed the Judicial Advisory Committee's process are currently in the pool of eligible applicants; and (d) how many applications have been denied or deemed ineligible, in total, and broken down by reason for denial or ineligibility?

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, statistics on the number of applications received, the number of assessments by category and the number of appointments made, as well as demographic data on applicants and appointees, are published every year. These statistics are available on the website of the Office of the Commissioner for Judicial Affairs, at <https://www.fja.gc.ca/appointments-nominations/StatisticsCandidate-StatistiquesCandidat-2023-eng.html>.

In order to ensure and protect the privacy of candidates and the confidential nature of their application to become judges, statistics are provided on a national basis only. A provincial or regional breakdown could allow analysis of the data, which may lead to identifying individual candidates.

Routine Proceedings

All applications for federal judicial appointment are received by the judicial appointments secretariat in the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs. Applications that meet the statutory requirements for appointment, namely 10 years of call to a bar of a province or territory, undergo an assessment by a judicial advisory committee based on the established criteria and are categorized into three distinct categories: “highly recommended”, “recommended”, and “unable to recommend”, per the guidelines found at <https://www.fja.gc.ca/appointments-nominations/committees-comites/guidelines-lignes-eng.html#Assessments>. From these assessments, a pool of qualified candidates is created, comprised of all “highly recommended” and “recommended” candidates. The minister then selects appointees from that pool to fill vacant positions that may arise. Since August 1, 2023, judicial advisory committee assessments of judicial appointment candidates are valid for three rather than two years.

When making judicial appointments, a number of factors are considered, including the strength of the application, the needs of the court, and the candidate's areas of expertise. Whether someone is highly recommended or recommended is one factor that is taken into account, among many important considerations, in the exercise of the minister's prerogative to appoint the best candidates to the judiciary. That being said, there are no appointments made of candidates having been assessed as “unable to recommend” by a judicial advisory committee.

Question No. 2395—Mr. Rob Moore:

With regard to the government-issued vehicle of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada: (a) on what date were government assets reported stolen from the vehicle following the theft of the vehicle in question, reported on November 11, 2023; (b) what was the total value of the contents that were stolen from the vehicle, reported stolen on November 11, 2023; and (c) what is the itemized breakdown of the stolen assets?

Mr. James Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a) of the question, the government-issued vehicle of the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada was stolen and reported as such on November 22, 2023. The government assets were also reported stolen on November 22, 2023, and subsequently on November 28, 2023.

With respect to part (b), the total value of the contents that were stolen from the vehicle is approximately \$1200.

With respect to part (c), the itemized breakdown of the stolen government assets is as follows: employee security and entry passes, garage door fob, taxi-chit booklet, bags and office key.

All passes were deactivated as soon as the theft was reported. The department was advised that the bags were empty and kept on hand as back-ups in case they were needed.

Question No. 2397—Mr. Eric Melillo:

With regard to the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program and the decision to not fund the Municipality of Red Lake, Ontario: (a) why was the decision made to not fund the application from Red Lake; (b) what scoring system or evaluation grading system was used to judge applications; (c) what score or grade was given to Red Lake's application; and (d) were any applications which received a lower score than Red Lake approved for funding, and, if so, what are the details of each such project, including the (i) project name, (ii) location, (iii) description, (iv) reason that the project was funded instead of Red Lake?

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings, or GICB, Program and the decision to not fund the Municipality of Red Lake, Ontario, with regard to (a), the Corporation of the Municipality of Red Lake submitted an application to the GICB's second scheduled intake for the new build “Red Lake Multi-Purpose Community Recreation Centre - Regional Events Arts and Culture Hub (REACH)” project seeking over \$20 million in funding. The Municipality of Red Lake, Ontario received a regret letter on February 14, 2024.

The GICB program was very competitive and oversubscribed, with about 1900 applications requesting over \$15 billion in funding since its launch. Due to the high level of interest and limited funding available, many applicants received news that their project was not selected for funding.

With regard to (b), all newbuild projects are evaluated on a competitive basis, with projects being scored and ranked against one another. Newbuild projects that meet all mandatory eligibility criteria are evaluated based on the strength of the application and will receive a merit score in relation to the eligibility criteria.

Once the applicant is determined to meet the eligibility criteria, the project is evaluated against the merit criteria. Some merit criteria also have a pass score that applicants must meet to pass the overall section.

For more details on how applications in various streams are evaluated, including newbuilds, please refer to the GICB Applicant Guide, which can be found at <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/gicb-bcvi/applicant-guide-demandeur-eng.html>.

With regard to (c), we are unable to provide the scoring details for the Municipality of Red Lake's application in order to maintain the integrity and competitive nature of the assessment process. However, the “How will my application for funding for a new building project be evaluated?” section of the GICB Applicant Guide, which can be found at <https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/gicb-bcvi/applicant-guide-demandeur-eng.html#newbuildingevaluated>, contains details about the competitive basis on which applications were evaluated.

With regard to (d), since the GICB program was launched in April 2021, Infrastructure Canada has received an overwhelming response to the program from communities and organizations from coast to coast to coast. This high level of interest resulted in a significantly large volume of applications, which far exceeded the funding available for the program. In addition to the demand, the high quality of applications submitted made the selection process very difficult. As a result, despite a large volume of quality applications and a huge demand, not all projects could be selected for funding.

To ensure applicant confidentiality, Infrastructure Canada does not share specific details on individual funding applications.

Routine Proceedings

Note that all approved and announced projects by Infrastructure Canada, including under the GICB program, can also be found on the Open Government website at <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/beee0771-dab9-4be8-9b80-f8e8b3dfd9d>.

Question No. 2401—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With regard to the Department of Indigenous Services 2023-24 Departmental Plan: (a) what is the expected decrease in spending related to the sunset of funding of (i) Jordan's Principle, (ii) the Inuit Child First Initiative; (b) what will the total departmental spending for the continued implementation of Jordan's Principle be in (i) 2023-24, (ii) 2024-25, (iii) 2025-26; and (c) what will the total departmental spending to support the Inuit Child First Initiative be in (i) 2023-24, (ii) 2024-25, (iii) 2025-26?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a)(i), there is no expected decrease in spending. Further funding will be sought as required to ensure the Jordan's principle initiative is fully funded. Canada is committed to making sure that Indigenous children get the care they need, when they need it, by fully funding Jordan's Principle.

With regard to (a)(ii), there is no expected decrease in spending. Further funding will be sought as required to ensure the Inuit Child First Initiative is fully funded as per the continued commitment and work by Canada and its Inuit partners to co-develop and implement a new model.

With regard to (b)(i), at this time, the forecast for 2023-24 (up to January 31, 2024) spending is approximately \$1.46 billion.

With regard to (b)(ii) and (iii), at this time, due to the demand-driven nature of Jordan's principle and significant growth in request volume, future expenditures cannot be accurately estimated.

With regard to (c)(i), at this time, the forecast for 2023-24 spending is approximately \$1.46 billion.

With regard to (c)(ii) and (iii), at this time, due to the demand driven nature of Jordan's principle and significant growth in request volume, future expenditures cannot be accurately estimated.

Question No. 2404—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With regard to the Department of Indigenous Services 2023-24 Departmental Plan, broken down by fiscal year for 2023-24, 2024-25, and 2025-26: (a) what is the total number of full-time equivalents who will be removed due to the sunset of funding for the continued implementation of Jordan's Principle; (b) what is the total number of full-time equivalents who will be removed due to the sunset of funding for the Inuit Child First Initiative; (c) what indicators does the department use to demonstrate that the department will receive fewer requests for funding under Jordan's Principle or the Inuit Child First Initiative over the next three fiscal years; and (d) what indicators does the department use to demonstrate that the health care needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children will decrease in the next three fiscal years?

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) & (b), the Minister of Indigenous Services and the Government of Canada are fully committed to implementing Jordan's Principle. There are no full-time equivalent, or FTE, reductions forecasted.

Canada and its Inuit partners continue to work towards implementation of an Inuit-led co-developed model. There are no intentions to sunset the Inuit child first initiative and there are no full-time equivalent reductions forecasted.

In March 2024, the Indigenous Services Canada, or ISC, Departmental Plan was tabled. It reflects the planned spending and human resources as per the Main Estimates for the 2024-25 fiscal year, which includes spending for previous funding decisions, such as initiatives announced in prior federal budgets. It does not include supplementary funding decisions that occur throughout the fiscal year to ensure that previously planned government initiatives receive the necessary funding to move them forward. Supplementary Estimates are part of the normal parliamentary approval process and are published throughout the year.

With regard to (c), Jordan's principle and the Inuit child first initiative monitor the number of requests determined by group and individual service models as well as by type of services requested to ascertain demand. Based on utilization patterns to date, and the increasing delivery of services and products to requesters, Canada foresees that the demand will likely increase.

With regard to (d), ISC tracks and reports on results related to health and well-being at a population level, such as physical and mental health, and access to quality federally funded health services, to measure progress and inform the services provided to support first nations and Inuit children. This monitoring is regardless of the specific ISC services accessed by individuals.

As Jordan's principle and the Inuit child first initiatives are request driven, Canada does not monitor the health of those accessing these services, nor engage in the specific development and monitoring of indicators for tracking health care needs at the specific level. Canada does monitor the number of requests and type of services requested to ascertain demand. Based on utilization patterns to date, and the increasing delivery of services and products to requesters, Canada foresees that the demand will likely increase.

Canada ensures the necessary operational and policy resources to meet the growing requests for both initiatives and works with its many partners and stakeholders to understand the changing needs of the children to make any necessary adjustments.

Question No. 2405—**Mrs. Karen Vecchio:**

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the immediate and extended family or de facto dependant of a resettled Yazidi or survivor of Daesh temporary policy announced in November 2023: (a) how many applications (i) have been received, (ii) have been accepted, (iii) have been denied, (iv) are pending or under review; (b) what is the breakdown by sex (male or female) of the main applicants; (c) what is the breakdown by age of the main applicants; and (d) how many webform submissions with the keyword IRQ2023 were received?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in regard to (a) to (c), to date, 1,160 forms have been received from individuals in Canada requesting members of their family be resettled under this program. These forms are only the first step of the application process, and do not constitute the complete application for permanent residence. These forms also do not provide any demographic information (including sex and age). No complete applications have yet been received or accepted into processing.

With regard to (d), between December 1 and 7, 2023, over 1,160 online submissions were received.

Question No. 2406—**Mr. John Nater:**

With regard to the Canada Digital Adoption Program (CDAP): (a) how does the government reconcile the differences between the depiction in the February update note to stakeholders stating that demand for CDAP is unprecedented and demand for Boost Your Business Technology is almost fully subscribed, and the report in the *Globe and Mail* that demand for Boost Your Business Technology is far below target; (b) was the program at one-eighth of the program target, or was it fully subscribed; (c) how many businesses had (i) completed a Digital Needs Assessment, (ii) signed grant agreements, (iii) received grant payments; (d) how many loan applications has the Business Development Bank of Canada approved related to the program and what is the value of those loans; (e) how many work placements has CDAP provided to students through (i) Magnet, (ii) other mechanisms; and (f) how much has Magnet been paid by the government to date related to the program?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business and to the Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the program was announced in budget 2021, on April 19, 2021, with ambitious targets to support all small and medium sized businesses across Canada looking to adopt digital technologies. Although uptake was slower to ramp up in the first year, the Canada digital adoption program saw continued growth in the number of signed grant agreements month over month throughout 2023, and into early 2024. Increased demand combined with reductions under the refocusing government spending initiative announced in budget 2023 resulted in the program being fully subscribed to the end of the program.

With regard to (b), due to the overwhelming demand, combined with these budget reductions, the Boost Your Business Technology grant was fully subscribed on February 19, 2024, and the program subsequently closed intake for new applications.

With regard to (c)(i), since the program launched in March 2022, about 56,000 businesses have benefited from a digital needs assessment.

With regard to (c)(ii), over 36,500 businesses signed grant agreements since the program launched.

With regard to (c)(iii), since launch, the Boost Your Business Technology grant has disbursed over \$260 million in grants to over 18,000 businesses. Those grants remaining are either currently being processed by the program or the businesses are continuing to work with digital advisors on developing their digital adoption plans. As of February 19, 2024, The Boost Your Business Technology grant is no longer accepting new applications.

With regard to (d), as of January 31, 2024, the Business Development Bank of Canada has provided over \$314 million in loans to

over 5,500 businesses who have an approved Boost Your Business Technology grant.

Note that aggregate data from program intermediaries for the Grow Your Business Online funding stream, Magnet, and the Business Development Bank of Canada is reported to the Canada digital adoption program on a monthly basis.

As a result, aggregate data for Grow Your Business Online and Magnet is available as of February 21, 2024. Aggregate data for the Business Development Bank of Canada is available as of January 31, 2024.

Data for the Boost Your Business Technology funding stream is available daily, and is up to date as of the date the request was made.

With regard to (e)(i), as of February 21, 2024, under the Boost Your Business Technology stream, there have been a total of 1,094 work placements through Magnet.

With regard to (ii), as of February 21, 2024, service providers delivering the Grow Your Business Online grant have supported approximately 4,000 youth placements.

With regard to (f), approximately \$8 million has been provided to Magnet to date, covering wage subsidy payments to medium-sized enterprises, direct delivery costs such as providing training to youth to prepare them for their work placements, and administrative costs.

Question No. 2407—**Mr. Scot Davidson:**

With regard to taxation: how many taxpayers have ceased to be Canadian residents for tax purposes since 2015, in total, and broken down by year and income bracket?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to the question from my colleague, the following is the information provided by the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, for the time period of January 1, 2015 to February 28, 2024, that is, the date of the question.

While the data are available for extraction, the CRA has made several attempts to perform quality analysis of the data in question, but has not been able to establish an adequate methodology for accurately identifying filers that have ceased to be residents of Canada.

As a result, the data do not meet the CRA's quality standards for release. Completing the evaluation in order to provide the information requested would require an extensive effort that is not possible in the time allotted.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 2408—Mr. Robert Kitchen:**

With regard to advertising expenditures promoting the Canada Pension Plan, since 2016: (a) how much has been spent on such advertising, in total, and broken down by year; (b) what are the details of each such advertising campaign, including the (i) start and end dates, (ii) amount spent, (iii) purpose of the campaign, (iv) types of outlets that advertising was purchased in (television, newspaper, radio, social media, etc.); and (c) what are the details of all contracts awarded related to the advertising campaigns, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) amount, (iii) vendor, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) manner in which the contract was awarded (sole-sourced, competitive bid)?

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Employment and Social Development Canada, or ESDC, conducted a records search internally to determine whether the department had advertising expenditures promoting the Canada pension plan, since 2016. The search concluded that ESDC did not have any expenditures promoting specifically the Canada pension plan.

However, the department had a campaign from 2018 to 2023 called Services for Seniors, with generic messages that encourage seniors to visit the web page www.canada.ca/seniors to find information and resources that can benefit them. The web page included, among other things, information on the Canada pension plan and many other programs for seniors.

Question No. 2416—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to the Treasury Board Secretariat's monthly statistical reports on claims made related to the Phoenix pay system, broken down by each report issued since reporting began: (a) what is the total number of claims made for (i) out of pocket expenses, (ii) impacts on income taxes and government benefits, (iii) requests for advances on government benefits, (iv) reimbursements for tax advice, (v) compensation for severe impacts, (vi) general compensation for damages related to Phoenix; and (b) for each claim made in (a), how many of the claims were (i) received, (ii) accepted, (iii) rejected?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Board Secretariat, or TBS, claims office runs its monthly statistical report on the first working day of the month. The most recent report was run on March 1, 2024.

The TBS claims office uses a specially designed client relationship management, or CRM, system that is internal to TBS and has as its primary function the capability to manage and track the submission and processing of claims. As the CRM system has limited capability to gather and produce detailed statistical reports on a historical basis, the information provided is cumulative from the date of inception to the date of the report.

With regard to (a)(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi), as of March 1, 2024, the TBS claims office has received the following total number of claims for the following: out-of-pocket expenses: 2,701; impacts on income taxes and government benefits: 1,516; requests for advances on government benefits: 20; reimbursements for tax advice: 4,026; compensation for severe impacts: 1,272; and general compensation for damages related to Phoenix: 28,620.

Note that the total number of claims made per category does not include cancelled claims. Reporting errors (now corrected) had previously included cancelled claims in the overall total number of claims received.

Also note that the TBS claims office monthly statistical report only tracks the number of claims received and processed by the

TBS claims office. Claims for Phoenix-related damages processed and paid by other means are not captured in the TBS claims office reporting, rather are reported annually in the Public Accounts of Canada as payments of claims against the Crown. As such, a specific breakdown of the total number of general damages claims received since the signing of the Memoranda on Phoenix-related Damages is not possible.

With regard to (b)(i), (ii) and (iii), or each claim referred to in (a), the following is the number of claims received for out of pocket expenses: 2,701; impacts on income taxes and government benefits: 1,516; requests for advances on government benefits: 20; reimbursements for tax advice: 4,026; compensation for severe impacts: 1,272; and general compensation for damages related to Phoenix: 28,620. The following are the number of claims accepted for out of pocket expenses: 2,231; impacts on income taxes and government benefits: 1,011; requests for advances on government benefits: 17; reimbursements for tax advice: 3,928; compensation for severe impacts: 267; and general compensation for damages related to Phoenix: 23,753. The following are the number of claims rejected for out of pocket expenses: 427; impacts on income taxes and government benefits: 445; requests for advances on government benefits: 3; reimbursements for tax advice: 90; compensation for severe impacts: 637; and general compensation for damages related to Phoenix: 4,788.

The difference between the overall number of claims received and the number of claims reported as accepted and rejected is due to the number of claims currently in progress.

Question No. 2417—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to the Treasury Board Secretariat's monthly statistical reports on claims made related to the Phoenix pay system, broken down by report since reporting began: (a) what is the total number of severe impact claims filed each month, broken down by (i) compensation for individuals on maternity, parental or disability leave, (ii) discriminatory practice, (iii) lost occupational capacity, (iv) lost security clearance, (v) bankruptcy, (vi) significant credit rating impact, (vii) resignation from the public service, (viii) mental anguish, (ix) other personal and financial hardship; and (b) for each category in (a) what is the number of claims that were (i) accepted, (ii) rejected?

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Board Secretariat, or TBS, claims office runs its monthly statistical report on the first working day of the month. The most recent report was run on March 1, 2024.

The TBS claims office uses a specially designed client relationship management, or CRM, system that is internal to TBS and has as its primary function the capability to manage and track the submission and processing of claims. As the CRM system has limited capability to gather and produce detailed statistical reports on a historical basis, the information provided is cumulative from the date of inception to the date of the report.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (a)(i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), (vi), (vii), (viii) and (ix), as of March 1, 2023, the TBS claims office received a total number of claims broken down by the following categories: compensation for individuals on maternity, parental or disability leave: 75; discriminatory practice: 38; lost occupational capacity: 32; lost security clearance: 6; bankruptcy: 20; significant credit rating impact: 53; resignation from the public service: 23; mental anguish: 409; and other personal and financial hardship: 519.

Note that any claimants file under this general heading of damages, however upon further examination by the TBS claims office, and in consultation with the claimant, the claims are reassigned under the corresponding specific category of damages where they are best assessed. The CRM system does not have the capability to track the number of “Other personal and financial hardship” claims that have been reassigned and assessed under the more appropriate specific category of damages.

With regard to (b)(i) and (ii), the total number of claims that were accepted by category is as follows: compensation for individuals on maternity, parental or disability leave: 7; discriminatory practice: 0; lost occupational capacity: 0; lost security clearance: 0; bankruptcy: 0; significant credit rating impact: 3; resignation from the public service: 0; mental anguish: 138; and other personal and financial hardship: 4. The following is the total number of claims that were rejected by category: compensation for individuals on maternity, parental or disability leave: 68; discriminatory practice: 38; lost occupational capacity: 32; lost security clearance: 6; bankruptcy: 20; significant credit rating impact: 50; resignation from the public service: 23; mental anguish: 271; and other personal and financial hardship: 515.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 2372 to 2378, 2383, 2385 to 2391, 2396, 2398 to 2400, 2402, 2403 and 2409 to 2415 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled in an electronic format immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 2372—Ms. Kristina Michaud:

With regard to funding for the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary: (a) what is the government's annual spending per province since 2019; and (b) what is the government's annual spending per unit in Quebec since 2019?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2373—Mr. Eric Duncan:

With regard to government-owned buildings or land: (a) how many buildings or pieces of land are unoccupied or vacant, in total, and broken down by metropolitan area; and (b) what are the details of each building or piece of land in (a), including the (i) physical address, (ii) size of the land, (iii) square footage of vacant buildings, (iv) current use, if any?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2374—Mr. Eric Duncan:

With regard to land owned or leased by the government: how much land and how many buildings are leased from third-party landlords as a percentage of the total of all government land and buildings?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2375—Mr. Earl Dreeshen:

With regard to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC): (a) how many individuals currently have permanent residency status in Canada; (b) what is the breakdown of the individuals in (a) by place of residence (i.e. living in Canada versus overseas); (c) what is the breakdown of the individuals in (a) by stream (i.e. Express Entry, economic, family class, or refugee); (d) how many permanent residency applications are still outstanding or being processed by IRCC; (e) how many permanent residency applications have been rejected; (f) for each rejection in (e), what were the reasons for rejection under statute; and (g) how many permanent resident cards have expired in the last 90 days?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2376—Mr. Matt Jeneroux:

With regard to Privy Council Office (PCO) access to information requests A-2020-00583, A-2021-00266, A-2021-00272, A-2021-00490, A-2021-00495, A-2022-00163, A-2022-00176 and A-2022-00182: (a) on what date did PCO receive each request; (b) to what date did PCO extend the deadline for responding to each request; (c) has PCO responded to each request, and, if not, (i) why not, (ii) on what date does PCO expect to respond to each request; (d) why did PCO not correctly estimate the amount of time required to respond to each request; (e) what is the Prime Minister's position on PCO's delays in processing access to information requests, including whether the delays are acceptable; and (f) if the Prime Minister does not consider the delays to be acceptable, what specific actions has he directed to be done to ensure that similar delays do not occur in the future?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2377—Mr. Matt Jeneroux:

With regard to government-owned land or buildings being considered for sale for the purpose of housing: what are the details of each building or piece of land, including the (i) address and location, (ii) size of the land, (iii) square footage, (iv) current state of the building or land, including the type of current occupants, if applicable, (v) current state of sale or disposal, (vi) expected date of sale or disposal, (vii) number of housing units projected to be built at the site?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 2378—Mr. Matt Jeneroux:**

With regard to Department of Employment and Social Development (ESDC) access to information requests A-2019-01074 and A-2020-01070: (a) on what date did ESDC receive each request; (b) to what date did ESDC extend the deadline for responding to each request; (c) on what date did ESDC receive the Information Commissioner's orders to respond to each request; (d) on what date was ESDC required, by the Information Commissioner's orders, to respond to each request; (e) has ESDC responded to each request, and, if not, (i) why not, (ii) on what date does ESDC expect to respond to each request; (f) what is ESDC's reason for not correctly estimating the amount of time required to respond to each request; (g) why did ESDC not comply with the Information Commissioner's orders; (h) in lieu of compliance with the Information Commissioner's orders, why did ESDC fail to apply to the Federal Court for a review of the orders; (i) what is the position of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, as ESDC's department head, on (i) the acceptability of these delays in processing access to information requests, (ii) ESDC's disregard of the Information Commissioner's orders, including ESDC's decision not to apply for Federal Court review; (j) if the minister considers the actions in (i) to be unacceptable, what specific actions has he directed to be done to ensure that similar failures do not occur in the future; (k) what is the position of the Attorney General of Canada on ESDC's combined failure to respond to the requests and apply for Federal Court review, including whether it undermines the government's commitment to the rule of law in Canada; and (l) what specific actions has the Attorney General directed to be done to ensure that similar failures do not occur in the future?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2383—Mr. Jamie Schmale:

With regard to the Student Direct Stream at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, broken down by year for 2022 and 2023: how many applications (i) were received, (ii) were approved, (iii) were refused or rejected, (iv) are still being processed, in total, and broken down by each participating country, including Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil, People's Republic of China, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vietnam?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2385—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to contracts awarded by the government to TELUS since January 1, 2009: what is the total value of these contracts, broken down by (i) year, (ii) department, agency, Crown corporation or government entity?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2386—Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regard to the RCMP's response to the Final Report on the Implementation of the Merlo Davidson Settlement Agreement: (a) for each of the 16 recommendation categories, what steps has the RCMP taken to complete each recommendation; (b) for each recommendation in (a), what working groups, committees or other bodies have been created to oversee the completion of the recommendation; (c) what are the details of each group, organization or other body in (b), including the (i) number of staff, (ii) rank or job title of the individual responsible for that group, (iii) number of meetings held; (d) what is the total number of recommendations that the RCMP considers (i) completed, (ii) nearing completion, (iii) in progress, (iv) not started; and (e) by what date does the RCMP believe it will complete all recommendations of this report?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2387—Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regard to Veterans Affairs Canada and disability benefit decisions, broken down by fiscal year since 2015-16: (a) what is the total number of disability benefit claims received by the department; (b) how many of the claims in (a) were denied by the department; and (c) how many of the claims in (b) were denied due to (i) insufficient evidence being provided by the claimant, (ii) incomplete paperwork being submitted, (iii) incorrect paperwork being submitted, (iv) ineligibility of the claimant?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2388—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to expenditures made by the government for "Other professional services not elsewhere specified" (Treasury Board code 0499 or similar), broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity, since

January 1, 2020: (a) what were the total expenditures each year; and (b) what are the details of each contract for such services, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) amount, (iv) description of services provided, (v) manner in which the contract was awarded (sole-sourced versus competitive bid)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2389—Mr. Warren Steinley:

With regard to expenditures made by the government for "Non-professional personal service contracts not elsewhere specified" (Treasury Board code 0819 or similar), broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, or other government entity, since January 1, 2020: (a) what were the total expenditures each year; and (b) what are the details of each contract for such services, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) amount, (iv) description of services provided, (v) manner in which the contract was awarded (sole-sourced versus competitive bid)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2390—Mr. Tako Van Popta:

With regard to expenditures by the government to operate and maintain the Corporations Canada Business Registry, the NUANS Registry, the Multi-Jurisdictional Registry Access Service, and the Beneficial Ownership Registry, broken down by registry: (a) what were the total costs associated with each registry, broken down by year from 2017 to present; (b) what are the details of all contracts entered into by the government related to each registry, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) value or amount, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) manner in which the contract was awarded (sole-sourced, competitive bid), (vi) names of registries associated with the contracts; (c) when is each registry projected to reach "end of life"; (d) what are the security implications for these platforms; (e) what gaps, risks, and security exposures related to each registry platform has the government been made aware of; and (f) for each instance in (e), what corrective action was taken?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2391—Mr. Tako Van Popta:

With regard to the development and implementation of the Beneficial Ownership Registry: (a) what are the details of all contracts signed by the government to date related to the registry in any way, including, for each, the (i) date, (ii) vendor, (iii) value or amount, (iv) description of goods or services, (v) manner in which the contract was awarded (sole-sourced, competitive bid), (vi) duration; (b) what plans and milestones have been created for establishing modern interoperable systems for the Corporations Canada Business Registry, along with the Beneficial Ownership Registry, to work with the various provincial and territorial corporate registries; and (c) what funding has the government set aside to provide to provinces and territories for them to participate in data collection and sharing as part of the pan-Canadian beneficial ownership regime, in total, and broken down by province or territory?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2396—Mr. Robert Kitchen:

With regard to the government's National Summit on Combatting Auto Theft held on or around February 8, 2024: (a) what are the total expenses incurred by the government to date related to the summit; and (b) what is the breakdown of the expenses in (a) by line item and type of expense?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2398—Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:

With regard to the national inventory of wrecked, abandoned or hazardous vessels, broken down by fiscal year since 2011-12: (a) what is the total number of vessels added to the inventory located (i) on the Pacific coast, (ii) on the Arctic coast, (iii) on the Atlantic coast, (iv) in the Great Lakes, (v) in the St. Lawrence Seaway; and (b) what is the total number of vessels removed from the inventory located (i) on the Pacific coast, (ii) on the Arctic coast, (iii) on the Atlantic coast, (iv) in the Great Lakes, (v) in the St. Lawrence Seaway?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 2399—Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:**

With regard to government funding for the removal of wrecked, abandoned or hazardous vessels, broken down by fiscal year and department or agency since 2011-12: what are the details of all projects or initiatives led by First Nations, Inuit or Métis communities or organizations, including the (i) group receiving the funding, (ii) date on which the funding was received, (iii) total amount of funding committed, (iv) location of the vessel or vessels identified for removal, (v) current status of the vessel or vessels?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2400—Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:

With regard to the Treasury Board Secretariat's Directive on Term Employment, which took effect on April 1, 2020, broken down by department or agency since March 1, 2023: (a) what is the total number of term employees whom the department or agency converted to indeterminate status; (b) after reviewing the department's or agency's financial situation over the two- to three-year planning horizon, what is the total number of term employees whose conversion to indeterminate status would result in workforce adjustment; and (c) what is the total number of employees who were informed that their cumulative work periods would not count towards their conversion from term to indeterminate status?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2402—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the implementation and processing of claims under Jordan's Principle, broken down by fiscal year since its implementation: (a) broken down by regional focal point, what is the (i) number of urgent requests received, (ii) total number of requests received, (iii) number of urgent requests approved, (iv) total number of requests approved, (v) number of urgent requests denied, (vi) total number of requests denied, (vii) total amount of funding requested, (viii) total amount of funding approved; (b) broken down by regional focal point, what is the total number of staff available to process requests who are (i) full-time equivalent, (ii) part-time equivalent, (iii) on temporary contracts; (c) reflected as a number and a percentage, how many of the urgent requests in (a) were processed within 12 hours (i) after receiving first contact, (ii) after receiving all necessary information; and (d) reflected as a number and a percentage, how many of the non-urgent requests in (a) were processed within 48 hours (i) after receiving first contact, (ii) after receiving all necessary information?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2403—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the implementation and processing of claims under the Inuit Child First Initiative, broken down by fiscal year since its implementation: (a) broken down by regional focal point, what is the (i) number of urgent requests received, (ii) total number of requests received, (iii) number of urgent requests approved, (iv) total number of requests approved, (v) number of urgent requests denied, (vi) total number of requests denied, (vii) total amount of funding requested, (viii) total amount of funding approved; (b) broken down by regional focal point, what is the total number of staff available to process requests who are (i) full-time equivalent, (ii) part-time equivalent, (iii) on temporary contracts; (c) reflected as a number and a percentage, how many of the urgent requests in (a) were processed within 12 hours (i) after receiving first contact, (ii) after receiving all necessary information; and (d) reflected as a number and a percentage, how many of the non-urgent requests in (a) were processed within 48 hours (i) after receiving first contact, (ii) after receiving all necessary information?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2409—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF): (a) how many applications to become a member of the CAF were received, broken down by year since 2016; (b) of the applications in (a), how many (i) were accepted, (ii) were denied, (iii) are still being processed; (c) what is the breakdown of (a) and (b) by each demographic that is tracked by the CAF (e.g. age, ethnicity, etc.); and (d) for those applications which were denied, what is the breakdown by reason for denial, by year, and by demographic?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2410—Mr. Taylor Bachrach:

With regard to government funding in the federal electoral district of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, broken down by fiscal year since 2006-07: (a) what is the total amount of funding provided to rights-holding First Nations, Inuit and Métis peo-

ples; and (b) what is the total amount of funding provided to non-rights-holding First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2411—Mr. Matthew Green:

With regard to the Canada Dental Benefit, broken down by federal electoral district since the program's inception: (a) what is the total number of applications (i) received, (ii) approved; (b) what is the total dollar value of payments delivered to eligible applicants; and (c) how many children, in total, have been helped by the program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2412—Ms. Rachel Blaney:

With regard to government funding in the federal electoral district of North Island—Powell River, broken down by fiscal year since 2006-07: (a) what is the total amount of funding provided to rights-holding First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples; and (b) what is the total amount of funding provided to non-rights-holding First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2413—Ms. Lisa Marie Barron:

With regard to government funding in the federal electoral district of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, broken down by fiscal year since 2006-07: (a) what is the total amount of funding provided to rights-holding First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples; and (b) what is the total amount of funding provided to non-rights-holding First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2414—Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:

With regard to the importation of goods involving forced labour, prohibited under subsection 202(8) of Chapter 98 of the Customs Tariff: (a) since July 1, 2020, how many seizures have been made at Canadian ports of entry; (b) what are the details of each case, including (i) the dates, (ii) the country and region of origin of the goods, (iii) the description of these goods, including their respective quantities, (iv) their estimated value, (v) the delivery location in Canada, (vi) the intended recipients of the goods, (vii) what was done with the seized goods; and (c) if no goods originating from the Xinjiang region of China have been seized, why have no goods been seized within Canada, when the United States reports seizures of billions of dollars of goods from this region?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2415—Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:

With regard to the government's plan to refocus and cut government spending in budget 2023, broken down by department or agency: (a) has the department or agency instituted a hiring freeze; (b) what is the total number of staff who left the department or agency since budget 2023, represented as (i) retirements, (ii) secondments, (iii) temporary leave, (iv) firing for cause, (v) restructuring; and (c) what is the total amount of savings estimated as a result of the hiring freeze?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, the debate that we are having right now is a follow-up to a debate that took place at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in December, where a motion calling for various things was adopted. I would like to read that list of things.

The motion called for the government to create “an Anti-Hate Crime Task Force to coordinate the protection of faith communities”, to remove “red tape and speed up access to the Security Infrastructure Program to protect communities at risk” and to evaluate “Canada’s threat assessment in light of [the U.K.] travel advisory”, which is something that was in the news more at the time. The motion also called for the government to establish “a Foreign Influence Registry”. From what I understand, that task is being carried out under the guidance of the hon. member for Trois-Rivières. Let us hope that we will finally see, perhaps before the House recesses, the end of the tunnel on this issue, which is, unfortunately, long overdue. This would not just apply to the situation in Iran that we are discussing today, but to many other situations in which, for example, foreign agents are conducting legitimate activities on our soil.

Finally, and this is what we are primarily debating today, the motion called for the government to designate “the IRGC as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code and expel the estimated 700 Iranian agents operating in Canada”. Similar motions have been moved in various committees, including the committee on which I sit. The motion was brought back to the floor at the Standing Committee on National Defence and debated many times. It is still being debated today, but perhaps in a context dictated more by current events.

I understand that the Conservatives’ decision to bring this motion to the floor today has to do with the attack that happened this past weekend, on the night of April 13 to 14, when several ballistic missiles and drones were fired at Israel. In this context, I would like to quote what our leader, the member for Beloeil—Chambly, said. Coming on the heels of the attack, I think his tone was very measured. That is the tone I will use to address the House today. The leader of the Bloc Québécois said:

The Bloc Québécois and I join those in the United States, France, the entire international community and among Israel’s usual allies in calling on the State of Israel to refrain from launching a counteroffensive in retaliation for Iran’s attack on its territory and its facilities. Insofar as there is a troubling risk of escalation that could involve the entire region and, above all, Iran’s attack was a failure, suggesting that Israel remains capable of defending its civilian population, and while reiterating that Israel has the right to defend itself and that Iran must be denounced, we believe that it is appropriate for Israel to remain on alert, but not to provoke an escalation that will only hinder the peace process.

I think that is the appropriate tone we should be using. I hope that we use the same tone in this debate as well. It breaks my heart that Israel’s General Halevi said only an hour or two ago that Israel would retaliate for what happened the night of April 13 to 14. As the saying goes, an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.

The idea behind the Conservatives’ proposal to list Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist group is well meaning. However,

as is often the case with other issues, the problem lies in the implementation, in the execution of what is being proposed. That brings to mind what my colleague from Nanaimo—Ladysmith pointed out in her question to the member for Winnipeg North and subsequent remarks. If this is applied across the board, there is a risk that people who should not be on the list may sadly end up on it. Think of the conscripts, for example. In response to that, it was pointed out that most people currently in the IRGC volunteered to be in it. However, we do not know how this will be implemented in practice. We can think of situations in the past where Iranians were denied visas to come here simply because they had served in the military some 20 years earlier. That could happen again.

• (1645)

There is a possibility that we might end up targeting people who should not be targeted. Even people who should be protected could probably be caught in the net of an overly broad and insufficiently specific measure. This raises a question that needs to be studied, and that is the capacity to effectively implement this measure. So much the better if it is studied in committee in a few weeks’ time. That will allow us to understand the full implications of the request, which is legitimate in substance, but potentially problematic to enforce.

It also raises a question about the resources needed to enforce these measures. Enforcement under the Criminal Code would take place on Canadian territory. We would not be targeting members of the IRGC who are still on Iranian soil. We would be targeting people who are here in Canada. The motion talks about approximately 700 people. However, considering that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has lost track of some 1.5 million refugee claimants and does not know their whereabouts or whether they are still here or have left, I wonder whether the government is actually capable of successfully implementing this measure, or whether it will ultimately be just another purely symbolic threat that does not scare anyone, since it is never enforced. The question is worth asking, given the context.

Would it not be better to ensure that sanctions are properly implemented? The question of sanctions against Iran has also been discussed on numerous occasions in committee. Once again, I can think of two problems with sanctions. First, do sanctions not do more harm to the civilian population than to the people they are intended to target, in this case, the IRGC?

Routine Proceedings

There is essential work to be done in terms of the approach that is taken. For example, we might consider sanctions that will be aimed more at the media, those that deliberately spread disinformation abroad or that use satellites to rebroadcast certain television channels. As far as economic sanctions are concerned, should we be able to target specific individuals, rather than imposing sanctions that hurt the general population?

Second, as I mentioned a little earlier in a question to the member for Winnipeg North, once the decision has been made to introduce sanctions, is there any way to really prove that they are effective? Unfortunately, based on what happened with the sanctions against Russian oligarchs after Ukraine was invaded, for example, I get the impression that the government cannot walk the talk. It wants to impose sanctions, but it is unable to ensure that the right people have been targeted, that their bank accounts have been seized and their money frozen. Again, sanctions are probably a good idea, but the problem is enforcing them.

Perhaps we should start by focusing on more effective sanctions in the immediate term, even though this issue has been dragging on for a long time. Back in 2018, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights unanimously adopted a motion to put the IRGC on the list of terrorist entities. Should we not be taking advantage of the fact that, shortly, there will be substantive work done to ensure that such a measure does not cause collateral damage?

On the substance, I understand the idea. I agree with adding the IRGC to the list of terrorist entities. However, it would have to be done in a precise enough way to ensure that there are no people suffering as a result, when they certainly should not have to. It could end up targeting people we may have some obligation to protect. Again, the devil is in the details.

Is this currently the right forum to hastily discuss that? Unfortunately, I do not think so, especially when concurrence motions are being moved in the House at the last minute. However, I trust the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to do more substantive work after hearing from experts on the issue, so that we can come up with a measured and, above all, effective position. That is the most important thing when dealing with the kind of issue that is before us today.

• (1650)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are well aware that the situation in the Middle East is very dangerous. The higher the military tension, the greater the possibility of a regional and even international conflict.

Canada is known as a country of peace. It was Canada that created international peacekeeping forces.

What does my colleague think that the Canadian government can do to advance peace and stability in the region?

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I really love that question.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence, which today heard from the minister about the defence policy update. I asked questions specifically about the rapid reaction forces

that are there to keep the peace around the world. I asked when this rapid reaction force would be set up.

It was promised in 2017, when Canada wanted a seat on the United Nations Security Council. They said it would take five years to set it up. In 2022, the government said that finally it would set it up in 2026. Cuts were made to the defence budget in September. For the next two years at least, those cuts will not even be offset by the new announcements on military spending.

In this context, I get the impression that, once again, those are great words, but they are a far cry from what Canada was once able to do in terms of response forces for peacekeeping. Money is the sinews of war. Unfortunately, it feels like the government is not on board here.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about issues of implementation and specifically raised, again, concerns about conscription being an issue in designating a terrorist organization.

It is important to underline that it is not only with the IRGC that there is an issue with people being victims of conscription into a terrorist organization. This could well be an issue with many organizations that are currently, and have long been, on the list of designated terrorist organizations.

It is with reference not only to situations with the IRGC but also to other potential situations that we specifically proposed, in Bill C-350, an amendment that would ensure the provisions of IRPA, as it relates to terrorist organizations, do not apply to individuals who are victims of forced conscription into designated organizations.

We are proposing legislation that not only would designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization, but also would solve this problem for people who were conscripted into the IRGC and for others who may have been conscripted into other organizations.

It is important for members of the House to know that this problem has been solved by this proposal. Therefore, we have an opportunity to support Bill C-350 and to move this issue forward, listing the IRGC and addressing the conscription issue at the same time.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan raises a perfectly legitimate question, but why not debate it in the appropriate forum instead of raising it in the House at the last minute? We are debating it today without knowing all the ins and outs of it and without having had the opportunity to hear testimony from experts, for example, before speaking on the issue.

Routine Proceedings

It is the method, not the substance, that I find somewhat disappointing about today's debate. The substance is important. No one in the Bloc Québécois would argue the opposite. We cannot really vote against this type of motion, but perhaps we do not have all the tools we need to vote for the motion and then hammer home the point that we need to implement all the measures we just voted for. The problem lies in how to proceed. We understand that there is work to be done in committee. We can debate the bill once the experts have pointed out its flaws, with a view to improving it.

Today, however, we are proceeding at the last minute with a motion for concurrence in a report, and that is not the right way to approach such a complex problem.

• (1655)

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing my colleague spoke about was the use of concurrence debates to do this important work, and it is very important work that we undertake. In just a few weeks, in fact, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development will be looking at Iran, will be studying this and will be bringing forward the minister to talk about how we can do this in a way that protects those who are conscripted. That is where we should be having this debate. That is a meaningful way that we can ensure Canada is doing what needs to be done to make sure that Iran, the IRGC, who are very clearly terrorists, has its leadership punished, yet those who might be innocent are not. I wonder if she could comment on that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Normandin: Madam Speaker, I feel like taking my colleague's intervention, putting it in the present tense, removing the question mark and making it the answer. Every aspect of the answer was in the question as well as in my speech.

Indeed, this is not the right forum. This is an important issue and it deserves to be addressed properly in committee. With a bit of luck, we will stop having 72 motions moved by the Conservatives in committee and we will be able to do the work in this place like we should.

Instead of filibustering in the House, they should allow the committee to study this issue properly so that we can come up with real solutions.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to split my time with the member for Edmonton Strathcona, who I would also like to thank for her leadership, consistency and advocacy in advancing this debate, which she just mentioned will happen at committee regarding her very own motion. I am so glad the other parties have finally realized how important that work is.

There has been some discussion in the House today, and I really want to bring this close to home. I am standing here today not only on behalf of the residents of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra, but also on behalf of the residents of Port Coquitlam. We lost a beautiful family on flight PS752: Ardalan, Niloo and their son Kamyar from Port Coquitlam. This beautiful young family who

was lost in the downing of PS752 hit hard in our community that we call the Tri-Cities, and every new year, the Iranian and Persian families in my community, which has over 6,000 Iranians living in it, relive the PS752 incident.

I know that North Vancouver is looking at having a flight PS752 memorial. When I was at the memorial coming together this year, at the beginning of the year, it was discussed again by the B.C. government that it would be contributing to a memorial in North Vancouver. It is such a sad situation that Ardalan, Niloo and Kamyar were a family lost to a terrorist regime. However, it does not just stop with the downing of that flight or with the loss of this family; this is the lived experience of Iranians in the community of Port Moody—Coquitlam, in Anmore and Belcarra and in Port Coquitlam every single day when they go out and see people, who they know are associated with the regime, in the community.

The loss of Mahsa Amini was very difficult for the Persian community in B.C., whose members had to relive the experiences from which they fled to Canada. They have come to Canada for safety, yet when they go out shopping, when their kids go to school or when they are out in the community, they are being surveilled by a regime that has people here in Canada. People have come to my office over and over again. A young man was in my office with his two-year-old son recently, crying because he knows there are people from the regime here in Canada doing surveillance, and there is nowhere he can go to share that information.

As I see there are some people here from the Liberal Party, and one is standing up right now, who would have some influence, I would ask this: Let us have a safe space where Persian Canadians and where people from Iran can come and tell their stories safely, a place where they can come and say that they have seen someone they feel is dangerous and can say that there is surveillance going on because it is a safe space, because coming to my office and telling me is not a safe space for them, or they do not feel that it is. Therefore, I would ask for that.

Before I get into a bit more around the woman, life, freedom event and the woman, life, freedom movement, *Zan, zendegi, azadi*, I would say that there are so many courageous, brave women and men in Port Moody—Coquitlam, in Anmore and Belcarra and in Port Coquitlam who, every single weekend, come out to stand up against violence against women, to stand up for the human rights of women, to honour Mahsa Amini and all those beautiful people who have been lost. They come out every weekend in Vancouver to do this work.

I wanted to share how the Persian culture has flourished so deeply in my community. Recently, for Nowruz, there were thousands of people who came to Town Centre Park to celebrate the festival of fire, to jump the fire and to start the new year with fresh, new energy. I think this is an opportunity, as the member for Edmonton Strathcona leads the debate at the foreign affairs committee, for labelling the IRGC as a terrorist entity. I thank her so much for doing that work. This is the new energy we need in this country.

Routine Proceedings

● (1700)

We need to protect Persian Canadians, Iranian Canadians and Iranians who come to this country for safety, and we are benefiting from such rich cultures. That is kind of what I wanted to talk about. I wanted to just share what a beautiful culture comes together every year around Nowruz at the end of the year and at Yalda. Beautiful Persian culture gets shared with our community.

However, hanging over this is the regime that continues to show its head in B.C. and around the Lower Mainland, where I am. I hear about money laundering. I hear about the amount of real estate people who are associated with the regime have in my communities of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra. There is intimidation and fear. I was at a “women, life, freedom” event in Winnipeg not too long ago, and some of the people there were talking to me about the fact that they were wearing a mask because they need to hide their identity. They are not safe in Canada, and the government knows this.

I cannot go to an event in my community and not hear Persian community members telling me they have seen someone, at a bakery, out an event or purchasing a house locally in the community, who is associated with the regime. The government knows this, and not only is it not doing anything to stop it, but it is also making it very difficult for Iranians who live here who have had a baby. If they want their mother or grandmother to come see the baby, they cannot get a visa. In fact, in my office I feel like there is some prejudice happening from the government, from IRCC, disallowing people from getting a visa for a mother, a grandmother or a grandfather to come to see a family member, so I would ask the government to look at that too. There are many families here that would like to have their family members come to visit them.

I want to talk a bit about the LGBTQ+ community, because there are Iranian Canadians who come to my office who have family members, and sometimes it is a child, still in Iran who are members of the LGBTQ+ community. They are petrified and want to get their children out of Iran, yet they cannot even get an audience with IRCC on this. This is important work, and I would encourage the government to really understand that there are many Persian Canadians and Iranian Canadians who are still suffering at the hands of the regime here in Canada and who are being discriminated against by IRCC.

I think my main point is that it seems like we are talking about a regime that is far away. It is not far away if someone is not able to live their life freely in Canada, and we know that is happening. That is why I want to end my statement today by really talking about the work of the member for Edmonton Strathcona, who has been pushing to have a really thorough, important, deep debate on this discussion with witnesses who can come forward with testimony.

That is why I say that we are having some discussion today but we need to have deeper discussion, which is being led by the NDP member from Edmonton Strathcona. I thank her so much for her work, and I want her to know from the bottom of my heart and from the bottoms of the hearts of the residents of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore, Belcarra and Port Coquitlam, that we need this

debate to happen. We need to have protection for our citizens here in Canada.

● (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's drawing our attention to the humanity of the issue. I have a very good friend, Kourash, whose partner died on the flight, and it is important, when we take a look at the issue and the depth of it, that a standing committee have an opportunity in the calling of witnesses and have a great deal more time. I like to think that at times, in a very apolitical fashion, a committee can be very effective at coming up with recommendations.

When I look at how the matter was raised today, that is one of the biggest problems I have, because I do not want to see it turned into a political game. That is one of the reasons I suggested that, at the very least, what should have been considered was an emergency debate, and if not an emergency debate, then to leave it with the standing committee, where proper research and justice could be done for all those Canadians who have very real anxiety.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I know we are going to talk more about this, but what is important for the residents of Port Moody—Coquitlam, Anmore, Belcarra and Port Coquitlam, for whom I am going to speak today because I have the opportunity, is that the government consider and put on the terrorist list the IRGC, and for them to have a safe space where they can report what they are seeing. That is important to the residents of my community.

The third thing, which I will close on, is that it is important for my community that the government knows that real estate and assets are being bought up by people associated with the regime in my area, the Lower Mainland of B.C., and it needs to stop.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend the member on at least recognizing the fact that there are IRGC agents in Vancouver. I do spend quite a bit of time in the Persian community, but also with Kurds and Baloch, who are also all impacted. Many of them originate from Iran and are chased here by IRGC agents who continue to try to persecute them, whether it is with WhatsApp messages or telegram messages, telling them that their families will be found in Iran if they speak up or join one of the Jin, Jîyan or Azadi, to use the Sorani Kurdish dialect, if they join in Mahabad or Sanandaj or Saqqez. It is a regime that is more than happy to murder people both in Iran and all over the Middle East, then chase people to Europe and Canada and never leave them alone.

I want to bring up Kian Pirfalak because there was a tree-planting ceremony in Calgary in the name of this nine-year-old who was murdered by the IRGC.

I would like to hear from the member why she thinks it has been six years since Parliament passed a motion calling for the IRGC to be listed as a terrorist organization in our Criminal Code, and the government continues to refuse to do that.

• (1710)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, as a woman standing in Parliament, I can say that if there were more women in Parliament, if there were women in governments across the world, we would not be dealing with this. It was the Liberals who were lax, which I agree they are, and the Conservatives before them were also lax. Things that have to do with women and the human rights of women do not get the attention they deserve.

I raise my hands to all the brave and wonderful women who stood up for “women, life, freedom” and actually brought this to the table.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague gave an incredible speech, and she has raised the issues of her constituents.

New Democrats have tried for a very long time to expand the number of countries that we are looking at with regard to foreign interference, because we understand that it is an issue not just with China. It is an issue with many countries, like Russia and Iran, that have influence and political interference in our communities, in our neighbourhoods and our country from coast to coast to coast. We know there have been parties in the House that have not wanted us to look at that, have not wanted to expand that, but we are looking at political interference, and that is what we heard so clearly in the member's speech.

Can you explain why some parties did not want to include countries like Iran in looking at foreign interference?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I cannot explain anything, but the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam surely will.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, as my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona said, this has been important to the NDP. It has been important to our communities for a very long time.

I can only say that it is very unfortunate that the Liberal government and the Conservative government before it never put as high a priority on looking at foreign interference. Fortunately the NDP did. Fortunately New Democrats are the ones who have led the discussion that is happening now on foreign interference, and I am so looking forward to the study that is coming up from the foreign affairs committee, led by the member for Edmonton Strathcona.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

STATEMENTS BY MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE TO STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to quickly respond to a question of privilege raised by the member for St. Albert—Edmonton respecting the allegation that the Minister of National Defence misled the House and the procedure and House affairs committee. I respectfully submit that

Privilege

this was not the case and that the House has the testimony that proves the minister was truthful with the House and the committee.

The question raised by the member for St. Albert—Edmonton concerns whether an Issues Management Note, an IMU, that was sent by CSIS was read by the minister. It was not received by the minister. While the minister had made an assumption about why he did not receive the IMU, that does not obviate the fact that he did not receive the IMU. The director of CSIS confirmed to PROC that the process that was put in place to share secret information with the minister did not work.

On June 1, 2023, the minister appeared at PROC and was asked by the member for St. Albert—Edmonton about the IMU. In response to the question, the minister stated:

Allow me to clarify that the information was not shared with me. It was authorized by CSIS to be shown to me....I would leave that question as one that perhaps you might want to put to the director....I was never notified of the existence of that intelligence, nor was it ever shared with me.

Mr. Vigneault and Mr. Stewart both acknowledged that the system to send intelligence information via an IMU to the minister did not function. Mr. Vigneault confirmed this fact at least four times over the course of his testimony. On June 13, 2023, at PROC, Mr. Vigneault stated:

Here, in this specific case, the minister was very clear: He did not get the information. It means the process that was put in place...did not, in this case, work.

...it is incumbent upon us, ourselves, his office and the Department of Public Safety, to find the right tool to put in place to make sure that critical information is seen by the minister.

I think this is one of the key measures that we need to put in place, to have this ability to adapt our processes when they're not working.

On October 19, 2023, Mr. Stewart stated at PROC about the failure of the system to ensure that the minister received the IMU, “The first question I answered was about the situation that occurred in the spring or summer of 2021. I think we identified the problems with the system that the agencies used to share information.”

It is clear that the minister's statement that he did not receive the IMU is corroborated by Mr. Vigneault and Mr. Stewart. Moreover, Mr. Vigneault and Mr. Stewart both confirmed to PROC that neither of them had orally briefed the minister on the content of the IMU. On June 13, 2023, Mr. Vigneault stated, “Madam Chair, I did not have any specific discussions with [the minister] about that note.” On October 19, 2023, Mr. Stewart told the committee: “I did not brief [the minister] about the IMU.”

On October 24, 2023, the member for St. Albert—Edmonton asked the minister whether there was any contradiction between Mr. Vigneault and the minister's statements. Here is the exchange:

[The Member for St. Albert-Edmonton]: Minister, can you explain why your testimony was flatly contradicted by the director of CSIS?

Routine Proceedings

[The Minister]: With great respect, it was not contradicted. In fact, I sincerely believe it was the director's intent that the information be made available to me.

Unfortunately, the steps were not taken by CSIS or by the Department of Public Safety to make that information available to me. I had no way of knowing that they had a secret they wanted to tell me.

Under every other circumstance...the director of CSIS would advise my office they had information to brief me on. He would advise my office they had information they wished to share with me. I would then go to a secure room where that information was shared.

In some other circumstances, I was actually asked to attend the CSIS office in Toronto where that information would be briefed to me, but it did not take place in this circumstance.

• (1715)

On October 24, 2023, the member for Mégantic—L'Érable questioned the minister about an assumption he had made about why the information in the IMU was not provided to him. To which the minister stated:

All I can say with absolute certainty is that it was never shared with the minister—me—at the time.

Again, I don't question what Director Vigneault's intention was, but the execution was unsuccessful because the information was never shared with me.

At no time, either in committee or in the House, did the minister state anything other than he did not receive the IMU. The minister may have made an assumption as to why he did not receive the information, but there was never any doubt that the information did not get to him.

Finally, the member for St. Albert—Edmonton seems to be taking a creative approach to raise a question of privilege in the House in the context of a supplemental report to the 63rd report of the procedure and House affairs committee. Page 154 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states:

If, in the opinion of the Chair, the issue raised relates to privilege....the committee can proceed to the consideration of a report on the matter to the House.... It should clearly describe the situation, summarize the events, name any individuals involved, indicate that privilege may be involved or that a contempt may have occurred, and request the House to take some action.

This is clearly not the case with the 63rd report of the procedure and House affairs committee. A review of the proceedings on the matter at PROC do not reveal any evidence that clearly led members of the committee to conclude that a breach of privilege had occurred in respect of the minister's testimony. In fact, we can see no reference to a potential breach of privilege or that any contempt may have occurred in the committee's report. The only reference to such allegations is made in a supplemental report by the Conservative Party.

Page 995 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states in relation to supplemental reports:

Committees are not responsible for the content of these opinions. They are not, strictly speaking, part of the report. The authors of these opinions alone are responsible for their content.

If the matter the member was raising was, as he suggests, a clear contradiction of testimony that amounted to a breach of privilege, there would have been reference to this in the report. It is not in the report for the simple reason that there was no contradiction on the matter. The minister did not receive the information contained in the IMU in question, either in writing or orally, and that remains a clear fact of his statements in the committee and in the House.

There is no basis to find a prima facie question of privilege in this matter.

I thank the Speaker and the members of the House for their attention.

* * *

• (1720)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I look forward to participating in this debate this evening.

I want to just say very quickly that I do not think a concurrence debate is the appropriate place for this debate to be happening. As I mentioned earlier tonight, I moved, over a year ago, a motion at the foreign affairs committee to look at this exact issue. In fact, in just a number of weeks we will be undertaking that study within the foreign affairs committee to look at this in a fulsome way and have an opportunity to hear from experts, hear from witnesses and hear from Iranian Canadians who have been impacted in our communities across this country.

Today, I want to start by telling a bit of a story. When I was elected in 2019, we were all sworn in in November. We had very little time in December before the House rose. I went home for Christmas holidays, like all of my colleagues did. Then, on January 8, 2020, flight PS752 was shot out of the sky by the terrorist regime in Iran. There were 176 innocent people on that flight. Fifty-five of them were Canadian. We had 30 permanent residents. Many of those individuals were from Edmonton, and particularly from Edmonton Strathcona. The University of Alberta was deeply impacted. It was the first event as a parliamentarian that I needed to deal with. I cannot say how difficult it was and how much grief my community felt.

The difficulty I had while sitting in the university's biggest auditorium for the memorial service that we held for the victims from Edmonton made that probably one of the hardest days I have ever spent. I sat with members from all parties for that memorial. I cried with Liberal members and I cried with Conservative members because it was such a devastating day for our community and it continues to be. I gather with the Iranian Edmonton community every year to mark that terrible day and to remember the beautiful souls who we lost that day.

In addition, it has been one and a half years since the horrific killing of 22-year-old Mahsa Zhina Amini and since the start of the "women, life, freedom" uprising in Iran. Over the past year and a half, we have been witness to the immense bravery of Iranian women, who are fighting for their rights, for their human rights and for Iranians around the world who have raised their voices, and their allies who have marched with them in the streets and who have raised their voices for the people of Iran, so that Iranians do not have to live under the tyranny of the terrorist organization that is the IRGC.

Routine Proceedings

We are very clear that this is something that Canada must and can do more for. We have condemned, as New Democrats, the brutality against the Iranian people, including the hundreds of unlawful killings and executions, the tens of thousands of arbitrary arrests, widespread torture, including rape of detainees, and attacks on women and girls who defy the discriminatory compulsory veiling laws. In fact, as a country with a feminist foreign policy, we must do everything we can. I have talked about that policy often. We have never seen it, but we have been told that it exists.

I was so pleased last spring. I had put my name forward to sponsor a political prisoner in Iran. One of my dear friends from Edmonton, Mohammed, came to me. He asked if I would be willing to sponsor this Iranian prisoner, Armita Abbasi, a young, beautiful, vibrant woman who was in detention and had been tortured simply because she was trying to stand up for her own rights. I was delighted to be able to sponsor her. Imagine how happy I was when she was released from prison, when she was given back her freedom and was able to escape from the terrorists, the IRGC.

● (1725)

We need to make changes to the Canadian foreign policy. I will admit that it should have happened years ago and it is appalling that it has taken so long for the government to take action, particularly after PS752 and after the “women, life, freedom” movement began.

I will say we cannot make foreign policy based on concurrence debates. We need to do the work. That is part of what we do as parliamentarians. We need to look at this issue. We need to bring experts in. We need to examine it. We need to make sure we are making the right decision, because the worst thing we could do is make innocent people be punished by their own government, the IRGC, and then punished again if we are not careful in how we make sure those conscripted people are protected.

We, of course, want to see the IRGC, especially its leadership, declared as terrorists. We have been calling for it for some time, but we need to do the work. We need to do foreign policy carefully and thoughtfully, and make sure that no innocent people are caught up in the terrible things that have been done by the IRGC. There needs to be a robust commitment from the Canadian government to act on this, but it needs to be done thoughtfully and it needs to be done with the urgency this requires.

In remembrance of Mahsa Zhina Amini, of the countless innocent lives that have been taken and of those in prison, New Democrats express our profound solidarity and support for the Iranian people. I think we can all say that the events of the last several weeks have highlighted that we are at a dangerous moment in time in the Middle East. Certainly, we must impose stronger sanctions on the IRGC and Iranian regime. We must end Iran's support for terrorism in the region.

Time and time again, I have stood in this place and said that Hamas is a terrorist organization. That is very clear. Hansard is extraordinarily clear on this. Just like I have said, time and time again, that Canada has an obligation to adhere to international law. We also have an obligation as Canadians, and people expect us as Canadians, to do what we can to de-escalate war and to protect civilians and children. That is what people in our communities want from us. That is what our foreign policy should be doing.

What we are seeing in the Middle East right now is horrifying. There are more than 13,000 children who have lost their lives. We have to continue to call for a ceasefire. We have to continue to put pressure on all actors in the region, including Israel, to de-escalate tensions at a time when civilians are the ones paying the price. Let us be clear: The escalation of tensions in the Middle East will do nothing but cause increased pain for those who are most vulnerable right now.

Again, I would urge the government to come to the foreign affairs committee and the opposition parties to come to the foreign affairs committee. Let us sit down and do this important work. It has been over a year since my motion calling for the examination of Canada's, the Canadian government's, refusal for the listing of the IRGC as a terrorist entity; of the connections between people or assets in Canada and the IRGC; and of paths forward to support Iranian human rights activists, artists, journalists and other political refugees. The motion asked that the committee invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to testify, as well as additional witnesses submitted by members of the committee, and that the committee report its findings back to the House.

This is important work. Canada has an important role to play. Historically, we have been able to play that role and we have been missing in action. Iranian Canadians expect this from us. Iranian people around the world expect this from us. There is more that we can do. This is not the opportunity for that, but we will look at this in the foreign affairs committee and we will expect our government to act.

● (1730)

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her work on this file, as well as on many other issues that we both work on and agree on.

I had a volunteer who worked for me, named Arad Zarei. He was killed on that flight. At the remembrance for the victims of flight PS752, the Prime Minister was in our riding and reiterated our commitment to a responsible listing of the IRGC. We have also put very extensive measures in place under SEMA and IRPA.

I am just wondering if the member opposite would comment on how she feels the real issues facing the Iranian diaspora in Canada could be addressed while putting in place some of these measures.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague as well. We have worked very closely on issues around helping people in other parts of the world, and I appreciate her work.

Routine Proceedings

One of the things that I have heard from many members in my community and from the Iranian Canadian community around the country, is that they do not feel heard by the government. They do not feel that the government has listened to them and acted with urgency. After flight PS752, they wanted an independent investigation. They wanted more to be done, and we did not see that action from the government.

In terms even of listing the IRGC, of course we support this motion. We will support this. This is important work. What we are not seeing is that communities feel that their concerns about foreign interference and about interference within their communities are being heard. Even when we look at the potential for sports teams to come here, for people to be in our community who are clearly bad actors that the government knows about, there is very little action.

We need the community to feel like the government is listening and acting on their needs.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, six years ago, all parties in the House voted to designate the IRGC a terrorist organization.

Today, during the debate, I am hearing parties saying the same thing, except the government. Clearly, the comments today suggest that people do not want a terrorist organization fundraising and acting here on Canadian soil.

My question for the member is as follows. Why does she think the Liberals have taken so long to avoid designating the IRGC as a terrorist organization?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, the question is around why it has taken so long. Obviously I cannot answer that question, because I also do not understand why it has taken so long.

I will say that we are doing everything we can within our power to ensure that it is not done poorly, that it is done correctly, and that we are doing it adequately by looking at it fulsomely within the foreign affairs committee and making sure that the way we are debating this is with experts that we are hearing from and members of the community.

I will say that a concurrence debate that is sprung on opposition parties minutes before they are asked to speak is hardly a meaningful way to move that yardstick forward. Frankly, this is an issue that is very important, and we should be dealing with it in a more thoughtful and constructive way.

• (1735)

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the motion to adopt the report that we are studying today is very important and undoubtedly reveals some delays and mistakes by the government, including for certain visas. I am sure that my colleagues received the same emails that I did about the visa for the son of a high-ranking person in Iran who wants to come for a little tour of Canada. Pressure tactics should be applied, but they are not.

I would like my colleague's thoughts on this. What measures should be applied? What measures should we ensure are being properly applied immediately?

[English]

Ms. Heather McPherson: Mr. Speaker, I believe that question referred predominantly to the issue of allowing people to come here for their safety.

The one thing I will say is that it is extraordinarily complicated, because we do not have a diplomatic presence in Iran. That does make it very difficult. We do want to be thoughtful and make sure that those bad actors are also not able to come to Canada. The delays that Iranian citizens face are unbelievable, and we really need to come up with a better path so that people can come, so that they can work here, and so that they can come here for safety, for studying and to contribute so much to our communities.

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join this debate, but before going any further, I want to mention that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from the Standing Committee on Finance, the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

As this motion points out, recent events have brought renewed focus on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or the IRGC. Canada strongly condemns the blatant disregard for human rights and human life shown by the IRGC in recent acts against Iranians. We continue to listen to and join our voices with those who are demanding better in Iran.

Here in Canada, we are continuing to take decisive action against this regime. On November 14, 2022, the Government of Canada announced the designation of Iran as a regime that has engaged in terrorism and systemic and gross human rights violations under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

As a result, senior officials of the regime are now permanently inadmissible to Canada. This includes tens of thousands of Iranians, such as the head of state, senior IRGC members, intelligence operatives, senior government officials, diplomats and judges. The government also announced significantly expanded sanctions against those responsible for the Iranian regime's egregious human rights violations.

Those new sanctions would build on our existing sanctions. All told, these measures amount to the most robust and comprehensive set of sanctions in the world against Iran and the IRGC.

I would also like to point out that the Government of Canada announced its intention to pursue legislation intended to ensure that no sanctioned individual connected to the IRGC can enter Canada.

Routine Proceedings

Thanks to the passage of Bill S-8, the law now aligns the IRPA with the Special Economic Measures Act to ensure that all foreign nationals subject to sanctions under SEMA will also be inadmissible to Canada. This designation means thousands of members of the regime, including many members of the IRGC, intelligence operatives, government officials and judges, among others, are now inadmissible in Canada.

The government also announced it would invest \$76 million to strengthen Canada's capacity to implement sanctions and to ensure we can move more quickly to freeze and seize sanctioned individuals' assets. This includes a dedicated bureau at Global Affairs Canada. It also includes additional support to the RCMP to investigate and identify assets and gather evidence, building on authorities announced in budget 2022. It is a suite of measures that will help hold the Iranian regime to account for its egregious actions, and we are going to continue to pursue all the tools at our disposal.

I will highlight that we already have a strong foundation. That is a result of our previous actions, which were already some of the strongest in the world. They include designating the state of Iran as a state supporter of terrorism under Canada's State Immunity Act, and this allows civil actions to be taken against it under the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act.

We also announced additional sanctions against senior Iranian officials and prominent entities who directly implement repressive measures, violate human rights and spread the Iranian regime's propaganda. These sanctions effectively froze any assets these individuals may hold in Canada.

As I note, Canada continues to have in place a series of strong measures to hold both Iran and the IRGC accountable. In November 2022, the then minister of public safety implemented the designation of the Iranian regime, pursuant to paragraph 35(1)(b) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. This renders all senior officials in the service of the Iranian regime inadmissible to Canada from November 15, 2019, onward. This designation also acts as a prevention tool, as it ensures that prescribed senior officials will not be granted a Canadian visa in the first place. The fact that the regime has been designated also serves to discourage Iranian senior officials from attempting to travel to Canada.

Under this designation, as of November 20, 2023, approximately 17,800 visa applications had been reviewed for potential inadmissibility, and 78 individuals had been denied access to Canada. Dozens of Iranian regime officials have been denied entry to Canada, and Canada has deported several former Iranian officials, including Majid Iranmanesh, who is the first to face deportation under sanctions adopted in November 2022.

• (1740)

Further, based on referrals from IRCC and tips from the public, 141 cases are now being investigated by the CBSA and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. So far, 38 investigations were closed by the CBSA for individuals who were either out of the country or deemed not inadmissible to Canada.

In June 2019, Canada added three new Iran-backed groups to the terrorist list under the Criminal Code, including the Fatemiyoun Division, known to recruit soldiers from Afghanistan. Iran has provid-

ed these groups with substantial resources, including training and weapons to carry out terrorist acts that advance its goals in the region. Canada continues to list the IRGC Quds Force and a number of terrorist entities that have benefited from the force's patronage, including arms, funding and paramilitary training, and that help advance Iran's interests and foreign policy. These include Hezbollah, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Taliban.

As the motion before us today suggests, the listing regime is one important tool for countering terrorism in Canada and globally and is part of the government's commitment to keeping Canadians safe. The listing process is ongoing and vigorous, but it is of course just one of our many tools. We need to stay adaptable and change with the times. Global instability and the rapid changes we are seeing demonstrate, again and again, how we need to work every day to retain the democratic values we cherish.

Our collective efforts to counter terrorism reflect the fact that we must think and co-operate globally. For Canada, for example, one of the main terrorist threats stems from violent extremists inspired by terrorist groups. We must continue to take seriously the threat of those espousing extremist views who may be travelling or returning to our countries. Canada has a robust approach in place to address this issue as well. In fact, it is a Criminal Code offence for any Canadian citizen or permanent resident to travel abroad to support or engage in a terrorist activity or the activities of a terrorist group. Law enforcement conducts criminal investigations to the fullest extent they are able, with a view to supporting criminal charges and prosecutions of Canadian extremist travellers and returnees.

When charges cannot be laid, a number of other tools are considered, including surveillance and monitoring; terrorism peace bonds; no-fly listings; refusals, cancellations or revocations of passports; and other threat reduction measures. Canadians who involve themselves in terrorism and violent extremism can expect to be investigated, arrested, charged and prosecuted to the full extent of the law. That is the government's prime objective and priority.

Routine Proceedings

As with many other security issues, we continue our multilateral partnerships to improve coordination, information flow and capacity building. Our principles in countering terrorism affirm Canada's democratic values. They provide a clear articulation of how Canada conducts its work. Colleagues can be assured that Canada is looking at all possible options to constrain the activities of Iran that threaten national security.

From an operational perspective, the RCMP has investigated numerous areas in relation to Iran pertaining to its federally mandated activities. These include national security, transnational organized crime, money laundering, sanctions violations, threats of harm to individuals in Canada or elsewhere, instances of transnational repression and other national security offences.

This is a time of tension and uncertainty, but Canadians can rest assured their government is working for them on all fronts. As my colleagues will point to, we are actively getting funding to communities through programs like the security infrastructure program, funding mechanisms like the community resilience fund and anti-hate initiatives across the government.

I am sure they will also highlight that the Minister of Public Safety is committed to continuing to engage communities directly. He met with federal, provincial and territorial leaders to discuss this urgent matter. He has met with universities to discuss needs on campus as well. He met recently with the cross-cultural round table on security, or CCRS. The CCRS is an important mechanism for the minister to hear directly from diverse community members on the topics concerning their safety. Tensions in the Middle East, along with their impacts on our communities, were a key topic of discussion.

In sum, there is a remarkable amount of work being done across government to counter acts and words of hate and violence, and we need to continue to do more.

• (1745)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member cares about this particular issue quite a bit. We had a kind of round table on the Hill, what now feels like many months ago, regarding specifically the issue of conscripts in the IRGC, in Sepah-e Pasdaran. The way it works in Iran is that one enters a room where all the conscripts are and people are basically assigned in thirds to whatever service they are going to.

I wonder if the member would support an amendment to section 34 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act that would exclude those who had to serve mandatory military service in such an organization so that we can finally list the IRGC as a terrorist organization the way this Parliament demanded the government do six years ago.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for Calgary Shepard for the very good question on this; it is a really important part of this discussion.

We are talking about listing the IRGC as a terrorist organization under the Criminal Code. However, we need to think of the 30,000 Canadians and their families who were conscripted to be part of the IRGC, because there is a very significant impact that the American listing is already having on them. I was recently reading through

Bill C-350, which includes that exemption. I wonder if that would be better placed in the Criminal Code rather than in IRPA and what that would mean.

This is certainly an issue that requires a lot more investigation. I know that a study has been proposed in the foreign affairs committee, which might be an appropriate place to have that type of discussion. However, it is incredibly important that we think of the impact it will have on Canadians as part of an overall suite of how we hold the Iranian regime accountable for its actions.

[Translation]

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is not easy for Canada to have any credibility on the international stage when it comes to security. A major player in the government told us that “Canada is back”, but it is definitely not. Canada was eyeing a seat on the United Nations Security Council, but it lost the bid. When it comes to security, Canada has had problems, especially with the Winnipeg lab, a maximum-security facility.

When it comes to security, this report talks about recognizing a terrorist group and putting it on the list of terrorist entities, a targeted list, so that the group is identified by the government and its security agencies.

I would like my colleague to talk about sanctions. The government, along with other G7 countries, seems inclined to impose sanctions on the Iranian regime and the current Iranian government. The government is already having difficulty targeting, analyzing and monitoring the sanctions against Russia. I cannot see how it will manage to do the same for Iran.

I would like my colleague to enlighten me and to explain in practical terms how his government is trying to resolve the situation and act in an effective, meaningful way.

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, I think our sanctions program is an important part of our foreign policy.

I think we can do a lot more to strengthen it. There are sanctions against the Iranian regime and the Russian regime. The truth is, it is very difficult to figure out where people are who have money and other property in Canada. Very recently, we set up a beneficial ownership registry for corporations. I think tools like that are very important in order to find out what these people own in Canada when we are issuing sanctions. That helps make sanctions effective.

• (1750)

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that the Green Party also supports the vote to do more. I also want to associate myself with the comments of the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona, who said that this is not the right way to go about it. A concurrence debate does not give us the kind of full and detailed discussion that needs to be had.

Routine Proceedings

All I will ask my hon. colleague for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country is this: Will he support, and does he believe his party will support, the move within the foreign affairs committee toward holding hearings and listing the IRGC as a terrorist organization?

Mr. Patrick Weiler: Mr. Speaker, that is the appropriate forum to investigate this issue more fulsomely and to look at all the tools that we can utilize to protect Iranian Canadians and to hold the regime accountable. Likewise, I think it is difficult to do that in this setting, because we are talking about things that will likely require changing legislation.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to speak to this important motion. The motion we are dealing with is a concurrence motion that calls for a number of things, but the one I mainly want to talk about today is the first part of the motion, which calls on Canada to designate the IRGC as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code and expel the estimated 700 Iranian agents operating in Canada.

I wish I could say that to do this was obvious and that it had been done already. Many people watching this debate tonight may not realize that Parliament actually voted to do this exact thing six years ago. Sometimes I wonder what we are doing in this place. We are elected. We are spending billions of dollars renovating Centre Block. These places are supposed to mean something. They represent the will of the common people. When we vote as a Parliament to do something, it should be done. If there is a good reason for it not to be done, I am all ears.

I keep asking myself this: What will it take for the Prime Minister to actually list the IRGC as a terrorist entity? The Liberals are now using Liberal speak. They are saying they have to responsibly list. I have never heard those two words put together in my life, responsibly list, unless one is making a grocery list or something. What do they mean by that? What will it take for the Prime Minister to act responsibly?

The IRGC has been a bad actor in the region and throughout the world for decades. It is not a secret. The IRGC does not hide it either. We know that there are 700 agents wreaking havoc on Persian and Jewish communities. Who knows what else they have gotten into?

What if, for instance, the IRGC shot down an aircraft and killed Canadian citizens? If that were to happen, would the government register the IRGC as a terrorist entity? The answer is no, because it happened. That was done. It pains me to have to say it again. PS752 was shot down, killing 55 Canadians and 20 permanent residents. The call came after Parliament already voted and the democratic will of the Canadian people had been expressed. The call came again from the House to please ban the IRGC and list it as a terrorist entity. Apparently, it fell on deaf ears.

Would it take the IRGC murdering “woman, life, freedom” activists, such as Mahsa Amini, to finally bring in a ban on the IRGC? I always thought, because I heard the Prime Minister say this back in 2015, that the government had a feminist foreign policy. Where is it? The IRGC murdered activists in cold blood. The calls came out again from this democratic institution to ban the

IRGC and do the right thing. The government said we have to responsibly list, whatever that means.

What will it take for the Prime Minister to act responsibly? Would it take Iran and the IRGC orchestrating a terror attack in Israel in which 1,200 innocent Israeli civilians were killed and 250 others were kidnapped? Our friend, democratic ally Israel, gets attacked and its people slaughtered in their own homes. I know this because I walked among those homes.

• (1755)

When I was in Israel in November, I walked through the burned, shot-up and blackened homes of Kibbutz Kfar Aza and saw the devastation that Hamas, the Iranian IRGC proxy, wrought on the innocent civilians of Israel. Would it take something such as that for the Liberal government to finally decide to ban the IRGC? Apparently, it would not.

How about 700 IRGC agents across the country harassing Persian and Jewish communities? Mr. Speaker, imagine a circumstance in which Iran decided to send 170 armed drones from its territory directly to Israel. Such a scenario seems unimaginable. Would it make the government finally realize that it is time to ban the IRGC?

What if Iran sent 30 cruise missiles or 120 ballistic missiles? What if such an eventuality took place? What if it did something so heinous to our friend and ally Israel?

However, Iran did do it. It did it on Saturday night, on Shabbat in Israel, because it wants to kill Jews. It wants to do that directly and indirectly, through proxies such as Hezbollah, the Houthis and Hamas. That is Iran's goal, and Canada, as an ally of the only democratic state in the Middle East, has a moral obligation to stand up and do the right thing.

Again, what is this “responsibly list” business? Some will say there are some low-level IRGC conscripts who are living in Canada now; surely we should not do anything that would hurt them. What about the fact that our own citizens and our allies are being hurt? I have my doubts that this is the issue, because all they have really said in the last six years is that we need to look out for these poor conscripts who really had nothing to do with the conflict other than the fact they spent a year in the IRGC. However, if this is actually the reason, then let us find a solution to that problem, but not doing anything at this point is simply not an option.

Routine Proceedings

I also want to briefly talk about the horrendous motion the Liberals and the NDP in the House gave a standing ovation to themselves for a couple of weeks ago. It did not punish the IRGC. We can imagine punishing the IRGC, which would make sense. It did not punish Hamas. The motion punished Israel. There was a motion passed by the House that actually punished Israel and rewarded Hamas.

It punished Israel by reinstating funding to UNRWA, which is a subject of a whole other debate, but UNRWA employees were complicit and acted directly in the slaughter of Israeli citizens on that day. We should not be funding organizations that fund terror. What else did the motion do? It banned arms sales. What foresight. What a brilliant move that the House of Commons would vote to ban arms sales to our friend and ally Israel.

We ban arms sales to Israel and now Iran shoots cruise missiles, drones and ballistic missiles at Israel. The Prime Minister says that we stand with Israel and that it has a right to defend itself, but we are not going to sell it any arms. What a hypocrite. Such a level of hypocrisy has never before been seen in the House, and it cannot stand.

I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the following motion: “That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order, or usual practices of the House, the motion to concur—

Some hon. members: No.

• (1800)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts on the G7 leaders' statement on Iran's attack against Israel:

We, the Leaders of the G7, unequivocally condemn in the strongest terms Iran's direct and unprecedented attack against Israel. Iran fired hundreds of drones and missiles towards Israel. Israel, with the help of its partners, defeated the attack.

We express our full solidarity and support to Israel and its people and reaffirm our commitment towards its security.

With its actions, Iran has further stepped toward the destabilization of the region and risks provoking an uncontrollable regional escalation. This must be avoided. We will continue to work to stabilize the situation and avoid further escalation. In this spirit, we demand that Iran and its proxies cease their attacks, and we stand ready to take further measures now and in response to further destabilizing initiatives.

We will also strengthen our cooperation to end the crisis in Gaza, including by continuing to work towards an immediate and sustainable ceasefire and the release of hostages by Hamas, and deliver increased humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in need.

Does the member support what the G7 leaders have said?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to say one thing that I did not have the chance to say in my main speech.

It was published today that the foreign affairs minister was speaking with her counterpart in Israel. She said to him, “Take the win.” Imagine that.

I wonder what my friend from Winnipeg North would say if this happened in Canada, around Winnipeg. Should we de-escalate? Should we just take the win? We happen to have the technology to knock them down.

With friends like these Liberals, who needs enemies?

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague and friend from Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley for that great speech and for his unwavering commitment to stand with Israel.

The Jewish community here in Canada has unfortunately been feeling a lot of anti-Semitism coming from some members of the House. We are seeing anti-Semitic and anti-Israel motions being presented. We are witnessing it manifest on the streets across Canada.

Would my colleague and friend comment on how the arms embargo that the Liberals have now put upon selling Canadian-made weapons into the hands of Israel to defend its own citizens and its own borders is hurting not only Israel, but also Canadian businesses, in being able to push back against the terrorist regime in Tehran, the IRGC, and Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis, which are hell bent on destroying Israel?

• (1805)

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, the first words that come to mind when I think about what my colleague just expressed are these: It is Neville Chamberlain-level appeasement.

We cannot say that we stand with Israel or that Israel has a right to defend itself with credibility when we then say that we are not going to sell Israel weapons after it was attacked by Iran's proxy, Hamas, and after it got attacked directly by Iran. That decision cannot stand. It has to be reversed. It has to be reversed right now.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the better part of the afternoon, we have been talking about what has gone on over the last six years, and the fact that the House expressed its view in banning the IRGC as a terrorist organization six years ago. We have not seen any action by the government at all.

I am just wondering if my hon. colleague wants to speculate on or perhaps provide the real reason the Liberals are not deeming the IRGC a terrorist entity.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, it is because they are a bunch of weak appeasers. The Liberals want to make friends with our enemies and treat our friends as enemies. It is shameful.

This is a time for moral clarity. We need to be standing with Israel, one hundred per cent.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to support concurrence in the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, a report that touches on the human rights abuses in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is a report that draws the attention of the government to these abuses in the hope that the government would act. We are having this debate here in the House on this very issue in the aftermath of the Iranian regime's attack on the State of Israel this past weekend.

Routine Proceedings

I think it is a timely debate for us to have. I hope members of the House will support concurrence in this report. It also allows us to draw attention to the gross human rights abuses and the violations of international law that the Iranian regime has been perpetrating in recent years. In particular, we need to draw attention to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is a key part of the state apparatus of the leaders in Tehran. It permeates its security apparatus internally in Iran and its military. It is an entity that we believe should be listed as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code of Canada.

Six years ago, in June 2018, the House adopted a motion calling on the Government of Canada to immediately list the IRGC as a terrorist entity. It has been six long years since the House adopted that motion, since members of the ministry of the government, including the Prime Minister, voted for that motion. However, here we are, six years later, and in the intervening years, the IRGC has continued to promulgate its ruthless and vicious campaign persecuting Iranians in Iran, including people such as Nasrin Sotoudeh, an esteemed human rights advocate in Iran, and its campaign of destabilizing the region by attacking liberal democracies, such as the State of Israel. It also continues to attack Canadian interests here at home.

It was in January 2020, some four years ago, when the IRGC fired a missile at Ukrainian International Airlines flight 752, which killed dozens and dozens of Canadian citizens. Those families continue to mourn the loss of their loved ones to this day. They were people who held such promise in their future contributions to this country, whose lives will never be known and who will never be able to make a contribution to this country.

We have had these things happen over the last six years, yet the government continues to stubbornly refuse to take the leadership to list the organization as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code, despite the fact that the Prime Minister himself has called the IRGC a terrorist organization. Despite the fact that the government has labelled it as such, it still refuses to take the ministerial authority it is entrusted with under the Criminal Code to list the entity as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code.

The reason this is so very important is that it would allow FINTRAC and our other investigative bodies, such as the RCMP, our provincial police forces of jurisdiction, our CSIS intelligence analysts and operatives, who all work so hard to keep our country safe each and every day, to have another tool to prosecute the flows of money that are so often associated with the threats the IRGC presents, both to the people of Iran in that region and to Canadians here at home.

Iran is subject to vast sanctions regimes. That makes it very difficult for the Islamic Republic of Iran to get the cash it needs to operate. The flows of money that so often accompany the threats that we see, both here and in the region, are essential in cutting off the ability of the IRGC to function.

● (1810)

However, our security forces here in Canada, our intelligence agencies here in Canada and our police forces of jurisdiction have one hand tied behind their backs because they are not allowed to go after people in Canada who are helping the IRGC with flows of money, whether it is helping them clandestinely sell oil on the black

market to fund the projects they want to fund or whether it is going to proxy agents of the IRGC who are operating here on Canadian soil and threatening Canadian citizens, doing so with resources they have clandestinely been provided with.

These are the reasons we need to list the IRGC as a terrorist entity. We are calling on the government to do exactly that in the context of the shooting down of Ukrainian International Airlines flight 752, in the context of the attack this past weekend by the IRGC on the State of Israel and in light of its gross human rights abuses and imprisonment of people such as Nasrin Sotoudeh and so many other people in Iran.

We have a government that says it supports the motion that was adopted in the House some six years ago, a government that calls the IRGC a terrorist entity, yet a government that still refuses to list the entity as a terrorist organization under the Criminal Code of Canada.

In response to the government's reasons for not listing the IRGC, which is that it is worried about capturing innocent individuals who are compelled to join the IRGC while they are in Iran, its members forget the fact that there is prosecutorial discretion here in Canada. Crown prosecutors have the discretion about whether or not to pursue charges under a terrorist entity listing under the Criminal Code of Canada. Their explanations for why they continue to refuse to list this entity do not make any sense, and we are calling on them to support concurrence in this report and list the IRGC as a terrorist entity.

● (1815)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings on the motion at this time. Accordingly, the debate on the motion will be rescheduled for another sitting.

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADIAN SUSTAINABLE JOBS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-50, An Act respecting accountability, transparency and engagement to support the creation of sustainable jobs for workers and economic growth in a net-zero economy, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Monday, December 4, 2023, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of Bill C-50, and of the amendment.

[Translation]

The question is on the amendment.

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.

[English]

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives would ask for a recorded division.

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1900)

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

(Division No. 737)

YEAS

Members

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

Liepert	Lloyd
Lobb	Maguire
Majumdar	Martel
Mazier	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McLean	Melillo
Moore	Morantz
Morrison	Motz
Muys	Nater
Patzer	Paul-Hus
Perkins	Poillievre
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Scheer
Seebach	Shields
Shipley	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thomas
Tochor	Uppal
Van Popta	Vecchio
Vidal	Vien
Viersen	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer— 114

NAYS

Members

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

Government Orders

Hon. Andrew Scheer: I would like a recorded division, Mr. Speaker.

● (1910)

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

(Division No. 738)

YEAS**Members**

Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Johns	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Khalid
Khera	Koutrakis
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lemire
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	O'Regan
Pauzé	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Powlowski	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Rota	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Sousa	Ste-Marie
St-Onge	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thompson	Trudeau
Trudel	Turnbull
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vignola
Villemure	Virani
Weiler	Wilkinson
Yip	Zahid
Zarrillo	Zuberi— 198

PAIRED**Members**

Anandasangaree	Bergeron
Findlay	Hussen
Schmale	Sorbara— 6

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion.

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Aldag	Alhabra
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Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Hajdu
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lattanzio
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod
McPherson	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Miller	Morrice

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O'Regan
Powlowski
Rodriguez
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Sajjan
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The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

PANDEMIC DAY ACT

The House resumed from January 31 consideration of the motion that Bill S-209, An Act respecting Pandemic Observance Day, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, it is somewhat ironic that it is a Liberal member who wants us to be remembering what happened during the pandemic. Frankly, I would expect Liberal members to want us to forget what they did during the pandemic. I would not have expected this, but the Liberals should be offering a grovelling apology to the Canadian people for their disastrous record over the course of the pandemic and should be hoping that people forget afterward.

The reality of the government's approach to the pandemic was that it showed capricious disregard for the basic civil liberties of Canadians. It showed disregard for the law. It sought to demonize people who disagreed. It saw the pandemic as an opportunity to spend outrageous sums of money, and in many cases, it was on things completely unrelated to the pandemic. It aggressively demonized people who would disagree with it. That is the government's pandemic record. It shows a lack of respect for taxpayers' dollars and a lack of respect for constitutionally protected fundamental human rights.

Let us go back to the very beginning. Then finance minister Bill Morneau, of course with the full encouragement and co-operation of the Prime Minister, tried to use the pandemic as an excuse to bring in legislation that would have given the government the power to raise taxes without the permission of Parliament. That group of Canadians, when the pandemic hit, was immediately thinking how they could use it as an opportunity to raise taxes.

The Liberals have a one-track mind over there. There was a global health crisis, and they saw it as their opportunity to raise taxes, to take over more control from Canadians and to undermine fundamental rights. They did that during the pandemic. They wanted to be able to assume, within the executive, all the powers of Parliament. That was the government's attitude to the pandemic. It is unbelievable.

I do not support this legislation. I wish Liberal members of Parliament would have more ambition with their private member's bills than to just have more days for this and days for that. Actually, I do not. I am glad they do not have more ambition because I can only imagine what kind of terrible ideas they would come up with.

While we are talking about remembering what happened during the pandemic, I hope government members will take an opportunity to apologize for how they tried to abuse the circumstances of the pandemic to undermine the rights of Canadians, to attack taxpayers and to demonize people who disagreed with them.

The pandemic is behind us, but we should never forget what it revealed about the kind of Prime Minister and the kind of government we have.

• (1915)

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to inform you that I may not use all of my time to speak to this bill because it has been a while since it was introduced. The bill is landing here about three years later and, as I like to say in speeches where I am not the first to speak, I feel that everything has already been said, although I would not repeat what the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan said. On the contrary, I will offer my colleagues a much more conciliatory tone that is far more focused on those who have suffered as a result of the pandemic.

The purpose of Bill S-209, which we are currently studying, is to commemorate the pandemic and remind everyone that many people suffered during that period. This bill was introduced by Quebec senator Dr. Marie-Françoise Mégie, and it seeks to make March 11 a day of observance but not a statutory holiday. Perhaps it is a way

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to remember a time that took the entire world by surprise. It was the first time in history that such a surprising event took place, and it was something that everyone experienced both together and on their own.

I think that the important thing about this bill is that we remember the people who suffered and the people who helped us during the pandemic. We remember the good things taken away from us during the pandemic, which we too often took for granted. I like to compare it to the ice storm. I grew up in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. In 1998, we got caught in the triangle of darkness. Someone commented on the strong sense of unity that took hold at the time, which unfortunately vanished as soon as the power came back and the lights were turned on. If March 11 can serve as an occasional reminder of the sacrifices made by many, or keep alive a few reminders of that sense of unity, then it will not have been for nothing, at least in that regard.

Among those we wish to remember are, of course, all those who died from COVID-19. Sadly, I imagine everyone in the House knows someone who has succumbed to COVID-19, either directly or as a result of a comorbidity. One person in particular comes to mind, someone I have already paid tribute to in the House and who passed away as a result of COVID-19. This individual was really well liked among Bloc, PQ and separatist supporters across Quebec.

Just think of seniors, for example, who were the first to be confined and the last to come out of lockdown. These individuals, who unfortunately often struggle with isolation, were even more isolated during the pandemic. Just think of women, especially those who were self-employed in areas that were rapidly closing down. Think of women who worked as aestheticians, for example, and in other rather precarious jobs usually done by women. They lost significant sources of income and suffered disproportionately from the pandemic.

Take, for example, the guardian angels, all the people who saved our skins during the pandemic. If they had not been there, the situation would have been even worse in many health care facilities, such as hospitals, long-term care homes and so on. I am also thinking about frontline workers in general, all those who could not work from home during the pandemic because the nature of their job would not allow it and who had to go to work day after day in difficult conditions. We needed them and they were there for us.

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We can think of the young people, a generation sacrificed at a pivotal moment in their lives. We can think of all those who had to attend their prom remotely or who simply did not have one. That may seem a bit childish, but it is certainly a milestone in a person's life. High school prom is often a turning point before post-secondary studies. We can also think of the scientific community, the scientists who were unfortunately treated badly by disinformation agents, but who nevertheless tried to some insight and information to support our collective well-being during this rather dark chapter in history.

March 11 will be the day we remember the sacrifices made by some, the work accomplished by others, everything we lost during this period that we had taken for granted and that this period helped us realize was important. March 11 will be the day we reflect on how lucky we are to finally have gotten through it and, for the most part, to have regained the same quality of life we had before the pandemic but have only now learned to appreciate.

• (1920)

If it can serve that purpose, then it will be worth celebrating, in spite of everything. I hope we can celebrate it with a positive attitude, contrary to what I heard in some speeches earlier.

With that, I will conclude my remarks. As I said at the beginning, I do not intend to use all of my time, because others have spoken more eloquently than I have.

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I rise to speak in support of Bill S-209. I thank my colleague from Vancouver Centre for sponsoring this bill.

A pandemic observance day, if passed, would honour the loved ones we lost to COVID-19. It would recognize the countless sacrifices made by frontline workers in Canada and abroad. It would provide us with a chance to reflect on the ongoing impacts COVID-19 continues to have.

On behalf of Nunavut, I will reflect on our experiences during the pandemic. I thank Dr. Michael Patterson, who was the chief public health officer for Nunavut during the COVID-19 pandemic. While I was apprehensive at first, I gained great respect for him and his role. Because of his great leadership, it took much longer for COVID-19 to reach Nunavut compared with other provinces and territories.

I remind the House that all 25 of the communities I represent in Nunavut are fly-in only. That was part of the reason it was easier to isolate, quarantine and screen for infections. Starting on March 25, 2020, the territorial government restricted all travel into Nunavut. Only residents and essential medical workers were allowed to enter, and they were first required to quarantine for 14 days. The territory was essentially on a complete lockdown.

While cases surged in Canada and abroad, Nunavut remained without cases of COVID-19. For once, our isolated communities were protected. I thank the decisiveness of members of the territorial government, whose fast and aggressive actions kept Nunavummiut safe. I thank the former premier, Joe Savikataaq; the current premier, P.J. Akeagok; the minister of health, John Main; and the

chief medical officer, Dr. Michael Patterson, for their leadership in these difficult times.

For many months, Nunavut's pandemic measures were controversial. Many Nunavummiut struggled with being isolated in hotels, waiting to go home. Mental health supports were needed as people struggled in their journey home.

The following June, many restrictions were lifted. First, parks and day cares were reopened, and outdoor gatherings were allowed. By the end of the month, even bars and restaurants reopened, subject to social distancing.

Nunavut would not see a positive case until eight months after the pandemic officially began in Canada. On November 6, 2020, Nunavut's first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Sanikiluaq. In a week, this increased to eight confirmed cases. A week after that, cases exploded to 84. I am positive that this huge spike in cases is 100% related to the overcrowded housing situation that Nunavummiut are forced to endure.

While new lockdowns and social distancing measures sought to keep COVID-19 under control, the bubble had burst. Overall, Nunavut recorded 3,531 cases of COVID-19. I am very sad to say that 10 of my constituents died. These were people I knew, who were mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, parents, grandparents and friends. Extended family is important in my riding, and more than 10 families changed forever because of the pandemic. In a territory as small and tight-knit as Nunavut, these losses are amplified.

While the pandemic may be considered over, its effects persist. Many have spoken about the impacts of social isolation on mental health. The profound impacts on Nunavummiut of increased loneliness and two years without socialization remain; these include worsening anxiety and depression. With colonial policies, the mental health needs of Nunavummiut continue to be ignored. There are more completed suicides there than in any other jurisdiction, especially among youth, and this is extremely concerning.

Private Members' Business

• (1925)

While I have complete faith in Nunavummiut to support each other, they are given hurdles that make healing beyond their reach. The Liberals must invest in Nunavut. We need better access to culturally relevant and trauma-informed mental health care. The health care system in Nunavut is already extremely strained. COVID-19 highlighted many of the issues that my constituents must live with every day. Just last year, health services had to be reduced in six communities because of the lack of staff. More than two dozen key positions were unstaffed. Some are still operating on an emergency-only basis, meaning people cannot access primary health care.

The life expectancy in Nunavut is 71 years, while in Canada overall it is 82 years. Even when a doctor or nurse is available, for most basic and specialized services people must fly thousands of kilometres south to hospitals in Iqaluit, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Yellowknife or Edmonton. The federal government must do more to support, train, recruit and retain qualified health care workers in Nunavut. More must be invested in health infrastructure so that families are not separated just to get the care they need.

COVID-19 is not the only respiratory disease that people in Nunavut endure. The Nunavut Department of Health announced tuberculosis outbreaks in Pond Inlet last March, in Nauyasat last May and, more than two years ago, in Pangnirtung. Tuberculosis has been practically eradicated in the rest of Canada, but it persists in my communities. According to a 2018 report by the Public Health Agency of Canada, the average annual rate of TB among Inuit is 290 times higher than in Canadian-born, non-Indigenous people. This number is Canada's shame. It is evidence that the government does not meet its obligations to Inuit.

Hopes were high in 2018 when the Liberals announced a plan to end tuberculosis in Inuit communities by 2030. Six years have passed, and infection rates remain high as federal funding continues not to be enough. Five people in Inuit communities have died by TB since 2021. I should not have to call on the federal government to recommit funding to address tuberculosis and save lives in Nunavut, yet here I am, practically begging the government to please invest in Nunavut. This includes investing in housing so that respiratory diseases are prevented from spreading based on overcrowding.

To conclude, the NDP supports the intent of Bill S-209. COVID-19 had immeasurable impacts on Canada and abroad. My thoughts are especially with the 10 Nunavummiut who died from COVID-19, and their families. We must do better. We must be better prepared if there is ever another pandemic. I hope that the Liberals will address the persistent health issues that I outlined. I hope that the budget tomorrow will include major investments in Nunavut.

• (1930)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise and add a few thoughts in regard to the pandemic observance day that is being proposed. I would first like to acknowledge both my colleague and the Senate of Canada for coming up with the initiative and the idea of designating March 11 as pandemic observance day.

We have so many days, weeks and months that are recognized for all sorts of different reasons. When I think of March 11 being pandemic observance day, I see that as a positive thing. We all went through a great deal during a very difficult time. We are talking about a worldwide pandemic during which so many people died, because the pandemic did not discriminate.

There is a lot to be learned from the last pandemic. Seeing that designation here in Canada would allow individuals, whatever their background, their career choice or understanding of the issue, the opportunity to have that day as a day on which to highlight the concerns and issues that maybe they encountered during the pandemic, and to briefly provide comment in regard to what actually took place.

We all know about the worldwide pandemic and the individuals, non-profits and governments here in Canada, with a team Canada approach, that took on the pandemic. I am very proud of many of the things we were able to do here in Ottawa to support and have the backs of Canadians. It is something that we will no doubt continue to talk about into the future, about the government's role and how the national government worked with provincial entities, how the Prime Minister, for example, originally on a daily basis, provided a briefing for Canadians, and the financial supports that were put into place, whether it was for small businesses through the wage subsidy programs and loans, or the CERB program, which literally helped millions of Canadians to have an income.

There was a great deal of co-operation that took place with different levels of government and different political entities. We had Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats, and governments at all levels working together, recognizing the needs. We often hear about mandates. Some of the mandates were at the federal level, and others were at the provincial level. There was everything from curfews to the wearing of masks to restrictions of businesses and so forth.

There was the creation of programs that were put into place to have the backs of Canadians in all regions of the country. That is one aspect that could be reflected on, on a future March 11.

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Then there is the whole idea of heroes, individuals who really stepped up to the plate. I am thinking of first responders and our health care workers. I think about other individuals. We often think about our health care workers and recognize the amazing work they did, but I also think about public transit drivers and taxi drivers. People were going into those vehicles, and those drivers continued to provide a public service. I think about the long haul truck drivers who continued to provide the essential groceries to our stores, as well other types of consumer products, whether it was toilet paper, which was a challenge at the very beginning of the pandemic, or other supplies.

There were so many individuals, non-profits and governments whose actions made a huge difference for Canadians as a whole.

• (1935)

We had our military step up. We had organizations like Red Cross that stepped up. After mentioning those two, I think about our seniors in care facilities, where there were huge concerns about the outbreaks and the number of deaths, and so forth. It was an all-encompassing, holistic approach for the different sectors of society. We had private companies that managed to keep people employed, even when it was challenging in terms of the type of work they might be able to do. They did not want to let people go or fire people, recognizing the impact that would have on the economy.

We had some businesses retool and start production of some materials needed during the pandemic. In hindsight today, there was a great deal of effort by so many people in every capacity of society that enabled us, ultimately, to get out of the pandemic in a relatively positive fashion. In comparison to other countries around the world, like the United States or many of the European countries, Canada did reasonably well. That was, in most part, because people recognized what we needed to do, came to many different tables in many forms and ultimately made a difference. As a direct result, lives were saved. Not as many hospital expenses were incurred. The family unit, in good part, was protected as much as possible. We were able to get some sort of normalcy back in a quicker fashion, depending on the area of the nation. Some provinces had more quarantine types of issues than others.

I think recognizing March 11 as the pandemic observance day would be a positive thing where many people in many ways could reflect upon the pandemic. I think of all the different types of special days, weeks or months that we, as the House of Commons, have taken a position on and have said that we support. We have done quite a bit of that.

I suggest that recognizing a day to observe the pandemic would be of great value to Canadians. For school systems, professional organizations, working environments and governments to have that day would provide an opportunity to talk about it in the hope of ultimately moving forward. It would keep Canadians better informed, going into the future, about some of the very basic issues of medical attention and making sure things like vaccinations are done when necessary. In fact, I just recently had a constituent talk about shingles and the series for shingles. The level of heightened awareness about a variety of different medical issues is a direct result of the pandemic. I think there is a lot to be learned.

I would encourage all members to get behind this and to give their support to Bill S-209.

• (1940)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as always it is an honour to rise in this place to talk about the issues that are so important to my constituents and all Canadians.

Particularly, on Bill S-209, I find it interesting that we are debating the creation of a day, which happened approximately four years ago, for when COVID-19 became a big thing. I remember that four years ago well. I was in this place as a newly elected member of Parliament, and it was a chaotic time. Many people did not know what was going on. We had differing intelligence and news. In fact, it was not even called COVID at that time. However, then it was declared a pandemic, and then this place and basically the country was shut down. Now, four years later, we have an attempt to memorialize this in the context of a day of recognition.

What I think is interesting, and I would suggest very troubling, is that we have an effort by a member of the Liberal Party to sponsor and bring forward this pandemic day act in the House of Commons, which was put forward by a senator. However, what I think needs to be said very clearly is how impactful COVID was, and not just the virus, which had an unquestionably significant impact on so many lives.

As I have reflected back, and because the debate of the bill was bumped back a couple of weeks I have had additional time to consider it, what I find very troubling is the mismanagement and the efforts of the Liberals, in particular, to squash and disregard the rights and freedoms of Canadians and the division that took place. I think of the 2021 election. In fact, I was reflecting the other day on how unbelievably divisive that election was.

Literally, in this place two months before the Prime Minister went to Rideau Hall to call an election, he promised that he would not do that. However, he used vaccinations. Again, he promised that he would never force Canadians to get vaccinated, and then he used that as a political weapon to divide Canadians against each other, splitting families apart, churches, organizations and communities, and for what? The purpose was in pursuit of power.

I reflect back on the early days of the pandemic when the actions of this place were shut down and there was, I would suggest, cross-partisan collaboration and a willingness to say, "Okay, we do not know what's going on." We certainly could not trust what was coming out of China. There were questions about what the WHO was saying, and we had to figure things out. However, what did the Liberals do instead of being willing to work together? They would claim on television that a team Canada approach was needed, which is simply code for "they failed" as we have learned time and time again since that point. What we saw was that there was not a willingness to collaborate. They wanted unlimited taxation and spending authority for a year and a half, which is something that would have defied 800 years of Westminster democratic tradition.

We look time and time again at the tumult of COVID-19 and the pandemic, and there were certainly significant challenges. We saw our health care system put under tremendous strain. It was unfortunate that the result of that was not a realistic conversation about the fact that we had a virus that brought our health care system to its knees, even though we invest hundreds of billions of dollars a year into that health care system. We have not had those realistic conversations in the follow up to that.

I was speaking to someone earlier today who talked about the trauma to him and his family. They talked about how a member of their family committed suicide because of the isolation they faced during COVID. We see tragic stories like that, and we still have concerns, whether they are concerns around vaccine injuries, which the Liberals seem quick to suggest are simply conspiratorial, or concerns related to long COVID, where there are individuals who still cannot get access to the care that they need to deal with some of the consequences of a virus that we still do not necessarily have a good understanding of.

• (1945)

I would just note a practical impact of the mismanagement. There used to be a pretty significant consensus, and I have been very vocal in my support for the use of vaccines, dating to long before COVID. However, because of the Liberals' intentional dividing of Canadians, today we see greater vaccine hesitancy than there was only a few years ago.

I happened to be on the ethics committee, on which I have the opportunity to serve during this Parliament as well. We saw that, when Liberals spend money, along with that money, comes scandal. Whether it was the WE Charity, ventilators or arrive scam, on and on the scandal train goes. We see how things that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago have been normalized because of the willingness of the government to take advantage, and the members even use language like this. They used it in trying to reshape the economy to some utopian vision that is certainly not leaving Canadians better off, so it is the furthest thing from a utopia, but that is the language the Liberals use.

I would simply suggest this: There are still many Canadians who want answers about the spending, the actions and why things were allowed to devolve. So often, still today, we hear how COVID is still being used as an excuse, whether that be for the debt or deficits, yet we learned that, of the COVID spending, 35% of that money expended during COVID was not even related to the pandemic.

We see mismanagement. When it comes to the national response, especially in the early days of the pandemic, the economic inefficiencies with which the government managed its programs are astounding. The government was unwilling to work with industry, but encouraged sectors of the economy to lay people off, subsidized their being laid off, and then subsidized those businesses to continue to keep their doors open. Talk about inefficiencies. No wonder we have such a productivity gap existing today.

Four years ago, on March 11, I remember that briefing that took place, and the irony. It was interesting because there were a couple of hundred people packed into a committee room that had been set up in a theatre style in the Wellington Building. There were health

officials there who were basically saying that they did not know what was going on. We see how, in times of crisis, the virtue of leadership shows up, and in that regard, Canada was left lacking. We saw, instead of bringing the country together, the Prime Minister attempted to enrich himself and his friends. We saw a government that, instead of trying to collaborate, tried to consolidate and bring forward more authority upon itself.

Do we need a day to acknowledge the trauma that so many faced? I still hear from people who have broken relationships, broken family members and have lost loved ones, and they are on all sides of each debate, whether that is for vaccines or against vaccines, for lockdowns or against lockdowns. They are on both sides of the debate whether to support action on COVID, taking it seriously, or to not support that. The trauma that was unleashed upon our country because we had a government that was more worried about self-preservation than working in the best interest of Canadians is a legacy that certainly bears reflection. However, I do not think the way to do that is through a day of recognition because, on the division, I think Canadians would far rather see accountability.

• (1950)

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion.

If a member participating in person wishes the motion to be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Mr. Damien Kurek: Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 17, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today, and I want to start by wishing a very happy birthday to my uncle, Wayne MacHale. Uncle Wayne is 73 years old today. Wayne is lucky to have my aunt, Aunt Michelle, as his wife. He is also the proud father of Eric and Daniel and equally proud of their wives, his daughters-in-law, Sandra and Maureen. He is proud of his grandchildren, Liam, Rory, Molly, Owen and Cameron. I think he was watching one of them play soccer tonight. Wayne is the brother to my mom, Anne. He is a tremendously nice guy and an avid golfer. I am so proud to know him and wish Uncle Wayne a very happy birthday.

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I will move to the business that we find ourselves here to discuss, which, of course, is waste, scandal and mismanagement. That is what we see from the Liberals with everything they touch. It is like the reverse Midas touch. I think everyone would be surprised that it has been so long since I mentioned their billion-dollar green slush fund. What is the reason for that? It is because there are new details about Liberal scandals, such as their \$60-million arrive scam, every day. The Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government are always enriching their friends at the expense of Canadians; tomorrow they are going to roll out their budget, which is going to cause Canadians to continue to struggle after eight years of the government.

The billion-dollar green slush fund has appointees of the Prime Minister and people with their hand on the tiller who are under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner, having admitted to enriching themselves while Canadians struggle. It is the same story for the \$60-million arrive scam, with a dozen investigations, not the least of which is that of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

When we talk about accountability, let us look at the government's commitment to accountability. In November 2022, if people can go back to that time, the Leader of the Opposition put forward a motion to have the Auditor General investigate the arrive scam. The government says it is transparent and wants accountability. How did the Prime Minister vote? The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is going to present the budget tomorrow. How did the cabinet vote? How did Liberal members vote? They voted against having the Auditor General investigate this latest scandal.

It is hard not to feel disappointed in one's government when there is a new scandal every day. On that, the Prime Minister and I agree. We are so disappointed. While Canadians line up at food banks in record numbers, they see inaction and a government that is worsening the crisis they are facing. They are going to be able to count on common-sense Conservatives to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. When will the government do the right thing and do the same?

• (1955)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to respond to the comments made by the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes regarding Sustainable Development Technology Canada.

We have taken the responsible and prudent actions necessary to investigate the claims that are being presented to us. These processes are well under way. The party opposite needs to understand that proper due diligence takes time and that the appropriate measures are in place to allow these processes to play out. ISED has temporarily frozen SDTC's funding and has appointed a legal agent to review the organization's HR practices. The minister has also accepted the resignation of the board chair.

On the matter of a potential conflict of interest situation with the appointment of the former chair of SDTC's board of directors, the department was made aware of the situation prior to her appointment in 2019. Prior to the finalization of her appointment, Ms. Verschuren completed a conflict of interest review with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

A further review of conflict of interest practices is being conducted by the Auditor General. Innovation, Science and Economic Development is now in the process of finalizing the assessment of SDTC's response to the "Management Response and Action Plan" issued by the department to address the recommendations in the Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton report. This includes ensuring that there are appropriate oversight measures in place to provide for ongoing compliance monitoring. Funding will not be restored until the minister is fully satisfied that SDTC has fully implemented the necessary corrective measures.

The facts matter. Our actions will continue to be informed by the proper due diligence. Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada is prepared to take additional measures in response to any findings or recommendations that may result from the legal review of SDTC's human resource practices, from the audit by the Auditor General and from the Ethics Commissioner's investigation.

SDTC is an organization that wants to get back to supporting Canadian innovators in the clean-tech sector, and this government is committed to supporting Canada's innovative clean-tech industries. This is a sector that is crucial to ensuring Canada and the world meet our 2030 and 2050 climate commitments, and I am confident we are on the right path with the implementation of the corrective measures, the review of SDTC's human resource management, the AG's audit and the Ethics Commissioner's investigation. I think the party opposite should allow the due process to take its course as we remain prepared to take the necessary actions.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, every time, it is the same thing. The Liberals want us to trust them, and they say that they have processes in place. That is what they tell us. They did not want us to look deeper into the billion dollar green slush fund. When we did, after they tried to block committee investigations, we found conflicts of interest. What happened? I wrote letters to the Ethics Commissioner, and he launched investigations into their appointees.

It is the same thing with the \$60 million arrive scam. The Liberals say that everything is fine and that there is nothing to see there, yet 12 investigations later, they are still telling us to trust them. We do not. We do not trust them to keep taxes low, to build houses, to balance the budget, to bring down inflation or to return safety and sanity to our streets.

Canadians have had enough, and they want real action. They want a government that is accountable. That is why Conservatives are going to bring it home.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, it is important that we not lose sight of the importance of pursuing our actions with diligence and of focusing on what matters. I would like to urge patience as we allow the actions we have put in place to play out. The only way to get to the bottom of the issue and to have the confidence to restore funding to SDTC is to follow proper due diligence and fact-finding. We have set conditions before new spending can happen, and the organization is working to meet those conditions.

There is much at stake here, not the least of which is supporting our innovative industries in the clean-tech sector all across Canada.

• (2000)

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are about to see historic consequences for historic Liberal corruption. Here in the House of Commons chamber, this week on Wednesday, Kristian Firth, one of the two people who work at GC Strategies, one of the favourite contractors of the NDP-Liberal government, will be hauled before the bar of the House of Commons. He will be brought into the House of Commons chamber, where normally just members of Parliament meet and debate, and after being admonished by the Speaker for failing to answer questions properly at committee, the favoured contractor of the NDP-Liberal government will be forced to answer questions in multiple rounds from members of all parties for over 100 minutes. This is the history that is going to unfold in the chamber this week, a historic response to historic NDP-Liberal corruption.

GC Strategies got the contract for the arrive scam app, and it is not clear why. It is a two-person company. It did no work on the app. It got almost \$20 million simply for receiving the contract and subcontracting. Essentially, its business model is that it goes on LinkedIn, finds other people who can do the work, receives the contract and subcontracts other people who can do the work. However, GC Strategies collected almost \$20 million in the process, according to the Auditor General.

GC Strategies disputes that number; it says that it was not \$20 million but more like only \$11 million that it collected. If we do the math according to GC Strategies' own figures, Kristian Firth collected over \$2,500 per hour working for the government. How can anybody else who is good with LinkedIn get a piece of that deal as well? We are going to find that out when, in the historic moment this week, a representative of GC Strategies, Kristian Firth, is called before the bar.

What we know already, and what we will probe further with questions when we have this historic exchange, is that GC Strategies was the favourite contractor of the NDP-Liberal government. The company, founded in 2015, benefited from processes that were clearly designed to benefit it. In fact, we know from the Auditor General's report that at one point senior officials sat down and met with representatives from GC Strategies to figure out the specifications of a contract that GC Strategies would then bid on and get, so it was a made-for-insiders process, designed specifically to benefit

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the two-person company that did no IT work, got the deal and then subcontracted.

What we are seeing is historic corruption under the NDP-Liberal government. There are processes that are designed to benefit well-connected insiders at enormous expense to taxpayers. Arrive scam, GC Strategies and \$60 million spent developing an app are just the tip of the iceberg, because we know now that there are 635 different firms that are doing so-called "staff augmentation" in the IT space for the government. There are over 600 firms whose business it is to receive contracts and then to subcontract the actual work.

Is the government prepared to acknowledge and apologize for the system of costly criminal corruption that it has been presiding over for the last eight years?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reassure the member that we are taking the allegations seriously.

As the hon. member is aware, the CBSA initiated an internal investigation as soon as there were allegations of inappropriate contracting practices. The matter was also referred to the RCMP for investigation. Contracts with three companies involved, including GC Strategies, have also been suspended through a stop work order from Public Services and Procurement Canada.

We expect procurement practices to be followed properly, and anyone who does not follow contracting rules will face appropriate consequences. This has been and always will be the case.

The procurement ombud and the Auditor General's reports have identified unacceptable gaps in management processes, roles and controls. Some recommendations have already been implemented, and the CBSA is taking further action to ensure that practices are aligned with policies and meet the expectations that Canadians have.

Need I remind the hon. member of the context in which the app was developed? The CBSA needed to develop and launch this app as quickly as possible at the request of the Public Health Agency of Canada, after a global pandemic was declared in March 2020.

The CBSA was working as quickly as possible to replace a paper process that was not meeting public health needs and was also impacting the border with significant wait times that disrupted the essential flow of people and goods.

I wish to point out that the Auditor General did recognize, in her report, that the government improved the speed and quality of information collected at the border by using the ArriveCAN app rather than a paper-based format.

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The ArriveCAN app was an essential tool at the time to collect mandatory health information while facilitating travel and trade. The government is taking steps to ensure that all departments are better positioned to undertake projects of this nature in the future.

In wrapping up my remarks, I want to emphasize that this should not detract from the commendable efforts of frontline border officers and all CBSA personnel, who diligently serve and protect Canadian citizens on a daily basis and in support of our country's economy.

The government remains committed to acting on the findings of all audits, reviews and investigations.

● (2005)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, the question was not about the frontline workers. It was about the costly criminal corruption that has become commonplace under the NDP-Liberal government.

Kristian Firth, who will be hauled before the bar of this chamber and forced to answer questions on Wednesday, admitted previously, before a committee, that it was systematically part of his process to doctor the résumés of those doing the work before submitting them to the government. The government's favoured contractor, the person who it rigged the process to benefit, admitted to systematically altering résumés.

This is not about all the other points of misdirection that the parliamentary secretary is trying to serve up in the House. This is about the question of corruption in procurement and why the government was intentionally designing processes to direct contracts to its friends who engage in such corrupt practices.

Why did the parliamentary secretary and his government constantly favour GC Strategies?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to transparency and accountability.

We acknowledge that the procurement ombud and the Auditor General's reports have identified gaps in management processes, roles and controls at the CBSA. Some recommendations in the report have already been implemented, and the CBSA will take further action to ensure that management practices are aligned with policies and processes to maintain the confidence of Canadians.

We welcome the ongoing investigations and look forward to the findings. In addition, Public Services and Procurement Canada will continue to strengthen all aspects of the federal procurement system and will use the findings from these reports to improve the way the government does business with its suppliers.

I wish to assure the hon. member and all Canadians that this government takes any allegation of misconduct very seriously. We will keep prioritizing efficiency, accountability and transparency in the management of public resources.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 21, I questioned the government about the punitive carbon tax burden on Alberta families. According to the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer, the average family in Alberta will be hit with \$2,943 in carbon taxes this year. In a completely out-of-touch

response, the member for Edmonton Centre claimed this was not a problem because these families will receive \$2,160 in rebates with the rural top-up.

As I know the Liberals struggle with it, let us do the math together. If we have \$2,943 and minus \$2,160, that leaves families \$783 out of pocket. That is nearly \$800 that hard-working Albertans will pay directly from their pockets, thanks to the government's policy. The situation is even worse for those not qualifying for the rural top-up as they face a staggering \$1,043 in carbon taxes not covered by any rebate.

The evidence is clear: The average family in Alberta pays more than they get back and it is not debatable. The PBO has also dismantled the Liberals' claim that eight out of 10 Canadians come out ahead with these rebates. In truth, the PBO states that 60% are actually worse off under this tax scheme.

Furthermore, constituents are sending me their heating bills, outraged to find that the carbon tax often exceeds the cost of the gas itself. I would be happy to send these bills to the minister, so he can explain to them why everything costs more. This is not just an abstract statistic. It is a harsh reality eating into household budgets. These are budgets already suffering because of the inflation caused by the Liberal government.

Additionally, the impact on our communities is devastating. Data from food banks across Yellowhead, like in Edson, show usage has increased by nearly 300%. This tax is not just a line item on a bill. It is a factor driving more of our neighbours toward food insecurity. Let us talk about the supposed environmental benefits. This tax has done nothing to reduce emissions or address climate change.

The government boasts about reduced emissions since the tax was implemented in 2019, conveniently leaving out that a global pandemic significantly cut emissions by reducing travel and economic activity. With the end of the pandemic, emissions in Canada have surged once again. What a surprise.

Let us not forget that Canada makes up less than 2% of global emissions, meaning if we went net zero tomorrow, countries like China, which does not have a carbon tax, would offset our efforts within a year. The carbon tax forces Canadians to pay up without offering any real alternatives. As the minister from Edmonton should know, Albertans need natural gas to heat their homes and gas-powered cars to get to work, especially when EVs fail in our cold climate.

Conservatives have a common-sense plan. We will incentivize innovation across industries to develop green technologies that not only lower emissions in Canada but can be marketed globally to tackle worldwide emissions challenges. We will axe the carbon tax and bring home affordability for all Canadians.

● (2010)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me remind my colleague that the numbers are very clear: Carbon pricing is not what is causing increases in grocery prices. Economists estimate that as of December, the carbon price contributed less than half a percentage point to grocery price increases. However, I think we can all agree that many Canadians are suffering from the cost of living crisis. That is why we are addressing it with our affordability plan and many of the new actions we will hear more about in tomorrow's budget.

It is categorically false to claim carbon pricing is causing major increases to grocery prices. Let me remind my colleagues of a few other facts. Households in Alberta received their Canada carbon rebate today. A family of four receives \$450 today and \$1,800 over the course of this year, with rural households getting a 20% top-up if the Conservatives support it, which it seems they will not. Eight out of 10 households get more money back than what they pay, on average, which is exactly what it says in the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report, and lower income households benefit even more.

I am not sure where the \$3,000 number that my colleague is citing comes from, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer's March 2023 report indicates that for 2024-25, the net average cost per household after the Canada carbon rebate is actually \$558 in savings, not costs. My colleagues in the House should know that when a policy does not generate any revenue for the government and the money is given back to Canadians, we are talking about a regulatory charge that is essential to reduce pollution, not about a tax.

Making it free to pollute will not save Canadians money. It will cost them more in the long run while endangering Canadians and jeopardizing the natural environment we all depend on. We know that there are better ways to make life more affordable for Canadians without destroying the environment and incurring more devastating costs farther down the road.

Putting a price on carbon pollution reduces emissions, yes, but it also encourages innovation, and this is what we need in order to make significant strides in fighting climate change. It encourages reductions across the economy while giving households and businesses the flexibility to decide when and how to make those changes. It creates incentives for Canadian businesses to develop and adopt new low-carbon products, processes and services, and when it is done right, as we are doing here in Canada, it is both ef-

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fective and affordable for consumers. That is because the bulk of the proceeds from the price on carbon pollution go straight back into the pockets of Canadians in provinces where the fuel charge applies.

Our actions today are for everyone's tomorrow. The Government of Canada's plans are making a difference. We have successfully bent the curve on emissions and are fully committed to reaching our 2030 emissions reduction goals for a secure and prosperous future for all Canadians.

● (2015)

Mr. Gerald Soroka: Mr. Speaker, I will talk slowly so the member might understand. According to the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer, the average family will be hit with \$2,943 in carbon taxes this year. This is coming from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, where their "eight out of 10" statistic comes from. Yes, the Parliamentary Budget Officer did state that, but it refers only to the fuel charges. Once one includes everything else the carbon tax is charged on, such as groceries, then over 60% of Canadians are worse off. If the member would only read the entire report, not just the sections the Liberals want to promote, then we would actually get the truth out of them for a change.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Mr. Speaker, respectfully, the member opposite obviously has not read the PBO's report, because it does not say what he is claiming it says. Putting a price on carbon pollution has been a pillar of our climate policy since 2019, and experts around the world, including over 300 economists in an open letter, say it is the cheapest and most effective tool to fight climate change. We know now that, based on the Canadian Climate Institute's recent report, it will account for one-third of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions reduction, so that is pretty significant.

However, make no mistake: Failing to address climate change will make things even more expensive for Canadians. The cost of inaction is stark. If we ignore climate change, by 2025 we could see a \$25-billion annual slowdown in our economic growth, and the Canadian Climate Institute estimates that will be 50% of GDP growth.

Are the Conservatives really saying they want to jeopardize the future prosperity of Canada for ideological reasons?

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

(The House adjourned at 8:18 p.m.)

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