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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 18, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADA-PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA RELATIONSHIP

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth interim report of the Special Committee on the Canada-People's Republic of China Relationship, entitled "Summary of the Special Committee's Meetings in Washington, D.C." I would note that our American cousins have many of the same issues that we have, in terms of our ongoing relationship with the People's Republic of China; I would also like to take this opportunity to give a shout-out of sorts to Mike Gallagher.

Representative Gallagher from Wisconsin has been the chair of their select committee. He is leaving public life, at least for the time being, in just a few days. He has done outstanding work in Washington, and we will miss him.

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

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled "Briefing with Air Canada on Services Offered to Travellers with Disabilities".

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

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling, on behalf of Conservatives, a supplementary report from the human resources committee, where we heard testimony from Mr. Michael Rousseau, president and CEO of Air Canada, on the failures to accommodate passengers with disabilities. It took three months for him to appear before the committee, and Conservatives believe this is unacceptable, as the committee was flexible with the dates proposed.

Mr. Rousseau stated that Air Canada's objective is to be "the preferred airline for [persons] with disabilities" and to "ensure [their] services are accessible." However, evidence pointed to the contrary, and committee members shared stories of Canadians with disabilities who experienced unacceptable challenges while flying Air Canada.

Just days before Mr. Rousseau testified at committee, Air Canada published an accessibility plan, and Conservatives want to note that it was interesting to see the timing of this announcement.

Lastly, Conservatives believe that Air Canada's executives must do more to ensure that services offered to travellers and travellers with disabilities are accessible and that regulatory requirements are enforced.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the two following reports of the Standing Committee on International Trade: the 15th report, in relation to the motion adopted on Tuesday, April 9, regarding the CBSA assessment and revenue management system, and the 16th report, entitled "Canada's Proposed Biocides Regulations: Potential Trade-Related Impacts". This also includes the dissenting report from the members.

● (1005)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources in relation to Bill C-49, an act to amend the Canada—Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Act and the Canada—Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 24th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled "Including Every Child, Benefitting All: International Disability-Inclusive Education".

Routine Proceedings

I can assure the House that all the members worked very hard to present this report. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages entitled “Openness to the International Francophone Community: Optimizing Francophone Immigration to Canada”, which suggests ways to increase the demographic weight of the francophone community across the country.

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

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[English]

PETITIONS

FOOD SECURITY

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have four petitions to present.

The first three petitions are the same, and they deal with an issue that has already been dealt with, which is to bring national school food programs to Canada. These petitions are presented by the Loyalist Collegiate & Vocational Institute, also known as LCVI high school, in Kingston; Pathways to Education Kingston; and the St. Patrick Catholic School community of Kingston.

The petitioners specifically want to make sure that we do not axe the snacks and that we actually have school food for kids—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): On the petition about axing the snacks, I just want to make sure that MPs are actually reading what is in the petition.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, if you like, I will read this petition verbatim.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member cannot do that either. Members have to summarize petitions.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will summarize the next petition.

This petition is on behalf of individuals who work for National Defence, in particular, those in the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services.

I have met with these petitioners prior to their assembling this petition, and they draw attention to some very important observations—

• (1010)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, the hon. member has to reference what is in the petition. The member indicated that he had met with them.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I cannot read it, but I cannot mention—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. We know that this happens on both side of the House.

[Translation]

I know that when members present petitions, their comments often go beyond the content of the petition, but I want to make sure that members focus on a summary of their petition.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, there are members of the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services in Kingston and other cities throughout the country who are currently on strike. They are calling attention to the fact that, despite the critical work they do, these employees, whose employers are not directly the federal government but under the purview of the federal government, are among the lowest paid. They are demanding that they earn fair wages in line with other individuals who are working under similar corporations throughout the country.

I would ask that this petition be submitted to the Minister of National Defence and the President of the Treasury Board so that they can work together with the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services to ensure that the Staff of the Non-Public Funds have access to fair wages, an equitable pay scale and good, secure jobs.

TAXATION

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present petition e-4662, which is signed by 18,362 Canadians who want the GST/HST removed from massage therapy services. As it stands, massage therapy is not recognized in the list of professional services rendered by practitioners under the Excise Tax Act, meaning that Canadians must pay GST/HST on massage therapy.

These Canadians are calling on the Minister of Finance to include massage therapy in the definition of “practitioner” within the Excise Tax Act, add massage therapy to the list of services rendered by practitioners under the act and exempt massage therapy services in Canada from GST and HST.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present petition e-4765. It was initiated by Michael Lawson, and it addresses the humanitarian crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Fifty-two hundred Canadians signed this petition, calling on the Government of Canada to increase Canada's international humanitarian assistance budget for the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2024, so that additional funds can be allocated, in response to the acute crisis taking place in the region. They call for the use, as well, of Canadian diplomatic and political tools, including the feminist international assistance policy, to help alleviate the suffering of those affected by this crisis.

More than five million people are estimated to be internally displaced in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo as the result of violence and the resurgent multi-faceted conflict. The inadequate response of the government needs to be addressed.

GAZA

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have another petition that I would like to present in the House at this time. It is the ninth largest e-petition in Canadian history. It is e-4745, with 82,248 signatures. This petition was initiated by Canadians for justice and peace in the Middle East.

These Canadians are asking the government to, first of all, impose a two-way embargo on arms between Canada and Israel; investigate whether Canadian weapons or weapon components have been used against Palestinian civilians in the occupied Palestinian territories, including during the current war in Gaza; review all military and security co-operation between Canada and Israel; and close loopholes that allow for the unregulated and unreported transfer of military goods to Israel through the United States.

It has been six months since this conflict began. More than 30,000 people have lost their lives, including over 13,000 children. Canada has an obligation under the Arms Trade Treaty to ensure that we are not fuelling this conflict.

I ask the Government of Canada to consider this petition; the New Democratic Party of Canada stands very staunchly with the 82,000—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member cannot be putting the position of her or her party forward when she is presenting petitions. She is only to present the petition. We just went through that.

Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise to present a petition on behalf of over 1,200 people who note, first of all, that people with disabilities often face barriers to employment, along with higher costs associated with health care and housing. They go on to note that the Canada Disability Benefit Act was delayed for over two years; the first attempt to establish the law, known as Bill C-35, was postponed because of the 2021 election.

Routine Proceedings

The Canada Disability Benefit Act was meant to provide much-needed financial support for people with disabilities, many of whom live in poverty. They note that the minister responsible has told Canadians that implementing the Canada disability benefit is estimated to take a minimum of 18 months, following the passage of Bill C-22, which received royal assent last June. They note that there are insufficient supports in current disability programs federally and, particularly, provincially. This presents a significant risk to life and health for people with disabilities across the country who live in legislated poverty. They note that the federal government has refused to provide people with disabilities with an interim disability emergency response benefit and that the government has yet to bring the Canada disability benefit into force. The government is not starting the 12-month regulatory time clock, which is further delaying the benefit.

As a result, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to bring the Canada disability benefit into force within two weeks of this petition being presented in the House.

• (1015)

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of the residents of Humber River—Black Creek, as Transport Canada must address the ongoing aircraft-induced noise pollution by exercising its authority and implementing necessary actions in the Humber River—Black Creek community. They firmly believe that environmental responsibility extends to addressing both air pollution and the adverse effects of noise on their well-being.

Therefore, the undersigned residents of the Humber River—Black Creek community call upon the Government of Canada to promptly assess nighttime noise pollution caused by aircraft activities in their community; collaborate with Nav Canada to develop effective mitigation strategies, considering curfews and other noise reduction measures; establish and enforce noise level regulations, ensuring emissions remain within acceptable limits; conduct regular monitoring to ensure compliance with regulations; and engage in transparent communication with the Humber River—Black Creek community.

I should add that this is not an issue simply for the residents of Humber River—Black Creek; we have these kinds of issues throughout Canada.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I would remind members that they are not to give their points of view or their party's point of view on petitions. They are to summarize the petition in brief.

Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Willowdale.

The Budget

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to table two petitions today. They follow on the heels of a day of action that took place here, where over 40 Afghan and Iranian women descended upon Ottawa to meet with members of Parliament and with senators to urge them to recognize the crime of gender apartheid.

The first petition from Afghan women essentially demands that international institutions recognize gender apartheid as a crime against humanity. It goes on to urge the acceleration of the International Criminal Court's investigation of the Taliban. Finally, it advocates for feminist principles and for universalism of human rights to be reflected in existing and emergent international law.

The second petition I am honoured to table is from Iranian Canadian women, asking for the adoption of the position that gender apartheid constitutes a crime against humanity. They are demanding that international efforts be made to recognize gender apartheid as a crime against humanity in international law. Finally, they are demanding that we take effective, concerted action to adopt proactive policies to exert pressure on the Iranian government, and any regime that uses systematic gender apartheid, and that we take steps to convince other countries to adopt similar policies.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and table a petition with regard to what Canadians treasure a great deal, and those are our health care and our health care workers.

The petition calls for ensuring that our health care workers are better protected in terms of the scope of responsibilities that they have and that they carry out every day. The petitioners are asking for the different levels of government to reflect on responsibilities and to take the actions necessary to support our thousands of health care workers.

* * *

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 a revised response to Question No. 2362, originally tabled on April 10, could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately in an electronic format.

[Text]

Question No. 2362—**Mr. Philip Lawrence:**

With regard to government programs that provide funding for roads and highways, including both regular and non-traditional highways or roads, such as those in northern or remote areas: what are the details of all funding agreements that are currently in place, including, for each, the (i) amount of federal funding, (ii) type of agreement, (iii) partners of the agreement, (iv) cost-sharing arrangement, (v) name of the agreement, (vi) program under which the funding is provided, (vii) project description, (viii) specific geographic location of the roads receiving the funding, including highway or road numbers, if applicable?

(Return tabled)

● (1020)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 16 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years and nine deficit budgets, the Prime Minister has doubled the national debt. He has added more to our debt than all the other prime ministers combined.

He has doubled the cost of housing and forced two million people to rely on food banks. Now, he is presenting a budget with \$50 billion in additional inflationary spending, while repeating the same election promises he has failed to keep for a decade. That is why this budget and this Prime Minister are not worth the cost. We will be voting against this budget to show the government that we have lost confidence in it.

The Conservative Party has a common-sense plan: axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Before I get into my common-sense plan, I would like to pay the Minister of Finance a compliment for asking Canada's wealthiest some very good questions. She said, "I would like to ask Canada's 1%, Canada's 0.1%, to consider this: What kind of country do they want to live in?"

First, it bears mentioning that the minister and her leader do recognize that Canada's 0.1% are doing very well indeed after nine years of this Liberal government. They have benefited from enormous corporate handouts and grants—the biggest in the history of our country, in fact. They have received massive loan guarantees that protect them against losses from poor investments, which means that working class Canadians are left holding the bag. Millionaire businessmen like the GC Strategies contractors are surely part of the wealthiest 0.1% thanks to the gifts given them by this Prime Minister, such as the 100% increase in the number of outside contracts. In addition, by printing \$600 billion of new money, this government made billionaires even richer. Lastly, the Prime Minister is a member of the 0.1%, since he inherited millions of dollars from his grandfather and placed the money in a trust that shelters it from taxes and protects it, just like those billionaires who invite him to their private island in the Caribbean. It was therefore a very good idea to put this question to the wealthiest 0.1% who are doing better than ever after nine years under this prime minister.

The Budget

I am going to quote other questions that the minister asked them, including the following: “Do they want to live in a country where we can tell the size of one's paycheque by their smile?” After nine years of rising taxes, inflation and interest rates, Canadians are no longer smiling when they look at their paycheque, because it is disappearing. After nine years, Canada has the lowest personal income growth of any G7 country. Our GDP per capita is down from what it was five years ago. People have no reason to smile. Their paycheque does not buy them as much food or cover as much of their housing as it did nine years ago.

• (1025)

The minister also asked, “Do they want to live in a country where kids go to school hungry?” Obviously, the answer is no. However, that is the reality after nine years of this Prime Minister. According to the documents published by his own government, the Prime Minister admits that nearly one in four children go to school without food every day. After nine years of this Prime Minister, who taxes the farmers who produce our food and the truckers who deliver our food, a quarter of all children do not have enough to eat. We see today in the budget a promise to feed them. That promise was made in 2021, three years ago. How many meals have been provided since? Not a single one has been provided. After nine years of this Prime Minister, our children are going hungry.

The minister also asked, “Do they want to live in a country where the only young Canadians who can buy their own homes are those with parents who can help with the down payment?” That is the country we live in now, after nine years of this Prime Minister.

After nine years, he has doubled the cost of housing, doubled the down payment needed to buy a home and doubled the mortgage payment for an average home. Let us not forget that nine years ago, the average down payment was around \$20,000. I remember because I was the minister responsible for housing at the time and it was possible to buy a home with a modest down payment of \$20,000. Now, the down payment that is needed has doubled. Roughly 64% of the average monthly income is needed to pay the monthly costs associated with housing. That is nearly double what it was nine years ago. As a result, only the rich, only the children of the wealthy can buy a home right now.

“Do they want to live in a country where we make the investments we need in health care, in housing, in old age pensions, but we lack the political will to pay for them and choose instead to pass a ballooning debt on to our children?” I am quoting the Minister of Finance.

This Prime Minister is the one who doubled our national debt nine years after saying the budget would balance itself. He said he would run three small deficits totalling less than \$10 billion. Now he has added nearly \$700 billion to the debt, most of which has nothing to do with COVID-19 spending. He continues to rack up deficits of approximately \$40 billion, three years after COVID-19. He can no longer say that the dog ate his homework and that the deficits are tied to COVID-19. He is choosing to go deeper and deeper into debt.

I would like to tell the minister that we do not want to live in a country where we leave our children with a growing debt, but that

is the country we now live in after nine years under this prime minister.

“Do they want to live in a country where those at the very top live lives of luxury but must do so in gated communities behind ever-higher fences using private health care and private planes because the public sphere is so degraded and the wrath of the vast majority of their less-privileged compatriots burns so hot?” I am again quoting the finance minister.

That is the country that we are living in now after nine years under this Prime Minister. Yes, the wealthy, like him, have private planes. He uses his private plane more than anyone else, while he is forcing single parent mothers who dare to drive their Toyota Corolla to pay a carbon tax. He is spending taxpayers' money to take illegal vacations on private islands. He and his cronies are the ones benefiting from this, while things on our streets and in our neighbourhoods are worse than they have ever been. It is complete chaos. Auto theft has become so commonplace that the police are telling people to leave their keys next to the door so that the thieves will have an easier time of it. That is the country that we are living in after nine years under this Prime Minister.

• (1030)

Minister, do we want to live in a country where we can tell the size of one's paycheque by their smile? No, but that is the country we live in. Do we want kids to go to school hungry? No, but the government says that is the country we live in now. Do we want to live in a country where the only young people who can buy a home are those with rich parents? No, but that is the country we now live in after nine years of this Prime Minister. Do we want to live in a country where our children are saddled with more and more debt year after year? No, but that is the country we now live in after nine years of this Prime Minister. Do we want to live in a country where the rich, like this Prime Minister, can travel around the world in private jets, while the majority live in the chaos and hell of our crime-ridden cities? No, but that is the country we now live in.

We do not want that kind of country. That is exactly why we need an election to elect a new common-sense government, a government that will deliver the country we love for all Canadians.

Just for a minute, let us talk about the myth that they are very rich. Nine years ago, members will recall, the Prime Minister said that he was going to spend, spend, spend, that it would not cost anyone a cent, and that some rich guy on a hill was going to pay all the bills. Where is he?

After nine years of this government, the rich are paying less than ever. After nine years of this Prime Minister, and for the first time in our history, owning a home is beyond the reach of an entire generation. After nine years of this Prime Minister's promises to help the so-called middle class, the middle class no longer exists. The middle class is poor.

The Budget

If anyone thinks I am exaggerating, I have one simple question: Can a middle-class person afford to buy a house today? It is mathematically impossible for a middle-class person to buy an average home. I am not the one saying it. According to the Royal Bank of Canada, it takes 63% of the average family's pre-tax income to pay the average costs of a home today. It is a mathematical impossibility. Nine years ago, it took 38% of a monthly paycheck to pay the mortgage. Now, it takes twice as much.

If someone cannot buy a house, they are not part of the middle class. One in four families cannot feed their own children—one in four, and that is from the government's own statistics. That family is not part of the middle class either.

Yesterday's budget tabled by the finance minister was a major admission of failure. She admitted that after nine years of her government, life is hell for the so-called middle class. Middle-class Canadians have become Canada's poor. This Prime Minister has presided over the worst decline in middle-class quality of life in the history of our country. Things may even be worse than during the Great Depression. That is not me saying this, that is the minister herself and the Prime Minister.

When the Prime Minister talks about the condition this country is in, he describes it as a living hell for the poor and for workers. He describes a hell for the children who do not have enough food to eat. He describes a country where the elderly cannot pay their bills.

● (1035)

It is as though he has not been Prime Minister for a decade. Waving a magic wand, he tries to convince us that this is his first day on the job. After nine years, the Prime Minister is right: Life is hell for the middle class, and it is because we have a Prime Minister who is not worth the cost.

Fortunately, it was not like that before this Prime Minister and it will not be like that after this Prime Minister. We will replace him with a common-sense government that will lower taxes, build housing, fix the budget and stop the crime. I will explain how we will do this.

First, Canadians pay more in tax than they spend on food, housing and clothing. That is how things are after nine years of this costly government. That is why the trend must be reversed. Spending must be brought under control so that taxes can be lowered and Canadians' paycheques can go farther. Workers, businesspeople and seniors must be allowed to keep more of their hard-earned money.

Second, more housing must be built. After nine years of this Prime Minister, we have less housing per capita than any other G7 country. That is because we have the worst bureaucracy. Our bureaucracy prevents housing construction, adds hundreds of thousands of dollars to the cost of each home and causes years-long delays. Among OECD countries, Canada is the second slowest to issue building permits. This adds \$1.3 million to the price of each new home in Vancouver and \$350,000 in Toronto. The City of Montreal prevented the construction of 25,000 homes. The City of Winnipeg prevented the construction of 2,000 homes next to a public transit station built specifically for these future houses. That is absurd. The federal government should not be sending \$5 billion to

municipal governments for them to build bureaucracies that prevent homebuilding.

On the contrary, we must begin to encourage municipalities to allow more construction by freeing up land and authorizing construction more rapidly. Real estate companies are paid for each house sold. Builders are paid for each house built. We should pay municipalities for each housing unit approved. My common-sense plan will require municipalities to allow 15% more construction per year and authorize the construction of high rise apartment buildings near transit stations funded by the federal government. That will be the condition to meet to receive this money.

We will do this by entering into agreements with the provinces, fully respecting their areas of jurisdiction and allowing them to achieve these results as they see fit, without federal interference. Then we are going to sell 6,000 buildings and thousands of acres of federal land to allow for more construction. We will also reduce taxes on housing construction to accelerate construction. This is a common-sense plan to return to a situation where housing is affordable, as it was nine years ago, when I was the minister responsible for housing.

Third, we are going to fix the budget by imposing a dollar-for-dollar rule. For each new dollar spent, my government will find a dollar of savings somewhere else. That is how we cap the cost of government to allow taxpayers and the economy to grow and reduce the size of the government relative to the country.

● (1040)

It is a decentralizing and responsible approach. This is how we will eventually balance the budget, reduce interest rates and bring down inflation.

I find it very ironic that the Bloc Québécois has voted more than once to increase the size of the federal government. It voted in favour of \$500 billion in centralizing, inflationary and discretionary spending by the current Prime Minister. I am talking about the kind of spending that increased the size of the government and the number of federal employees by 40%. The Bloc Québécois voted to double spending for external consultants, who now cost \$21 billion, in other words, \$1,400 in taxes for each Quebec family just for consultants.

We understand why this Liberal centralist government would want to do that, but we do not understand why a so-called sovereignist party would vote for such an increase and concentration of powers and money at the federal level. It makes no sense. It is because the Bloc Québécois does not want to free Quebecers from federal costs. It wants to implement a leftist ideology born on the Plateau Mont-Royal. It just wants a bigger role for government, whether federal, provincial or municipal. The Bloc Québécois's leader is obsessed with more government, more costs for workers. We Conservatives want a smaller federal government for a bigger Quebec. We want less control by Ottawa and more power for Quebecers. A smaller federal government for a bigger Quebec is simple common sense. We are the only party that will be able to do it.

At the same time, we need to eliminate inflation, which widens the gap between the rich and the poor. A monetary system of printing money naturally favours the wealthy. It is something the Prime Minister borrowed from the United States. The United States' monetary policy causes inflation year after year to inflate Washington's spending and to inflate shares on Wall Street. It is an alliance between Wall Street and Washington, between big companies and big government. Of course, it favours the wealthy. The people who live in Manhattan and Washington are the richest people in the country. This is due in part to the fact that the United States prints a lot of money to help both groups.

Here in Canada, for the first time, a Prime Minister tried to copy and paste that approach by printing \$600 billion to finance his own spending. It caused the worst inflation since the time of his father, who did the same thing. What are the consequences? Those who have shares or investments in land that is ripe for speculation, in gold, or in exclusive luxury wines get richer. The value of their assets is inflated. Conversely, people who rely on a paycheque or pension get poorer. The value of their paycheque diminishes. It is a transfer of wealth from the poorest to the richest, and it is a benefit that often goes untaxed.

● (1045)

It is a benefit the Prime Minister keeps adding to day after day, causing this inflation. I would add that the people who receive these big financial gifts from governments often pay no taxes at all because they never sell their assets. They borrow money by using their assets as collateral to purchase more assets, whose value swells more with inflation, and then they use those assets to purchase even more assets, and so on. Wealth becomes concentrated in the hands of the infamous 1% or 0.1% of the population. This trend has been accelerating since the Prime Minister came to power, because it helps the wealthiest Canadians and also allows his government to indulge in uncontrolled spending. Both sides get what they want. The Prime Minister can spend the money he prints out of thin air, and the wealthiest benefit from the inflation of the value of their assets and their wealth. It is always the working class that ends up footing the bill for this irresponsible approach.

I will put an end to that. I will restore the Bank of Canada's mandate, which is to keep inflation low and the dollar higher. We will make sure that we do not print money just to spend it, because that is an inflation tax. It is an unjust and amoral tax. I will axe the inflation tax by fixing the budget. I want people to bring home more powerful paycheques.

The Budget

Speaking of home, home is more dangerous after nine years of this Prime Minister, who automatically releases criminals on bail or allows them to be sentenced to house arrest, the “Netflix sentences” that he implemented with bills C-5, C-75 and C-83. These laws have allowed people to be released mere hours after their arrest so that they could commit more crimes. That is why street crime is surging all across Canada.

Yesterday we heard reports of a major shootout in downtown Montreal. There has been a more than 100% increase in the number of car thefts in Montreal, Toronto and other major cities. My common-sense plan will keep the most dangerous criminals in prison by making those with dozens of convictions ineligible for bail, getting rid of “Netflix sentences,” forcing car thieves to serve their sentences in prison, and not going after our hunters and sport shooters. If someone has a gun they bought legally after going through an RCMP background check, receiving training and passing tests to prove that they are a safe, responsible person, they will be able to keep it. However, if they are criminals, we will stop them from having guns. We will strengthen the border and our ports. We will scan containers to make sure that no weapons or drugs enter the country and that no stolen vehicles leave. That is the common sense needed to stop the crime and make our communities safe again.

We are going to implement a common-sense plan that will rebuild the country that we want, a country that is the opposite of what the Minister of Finance described in her speech. It will be a country where it pays to work, where everyone who works hard can afford to buy a home and put food on the table in a safe neighbourhood. That is what Canadians are entitled to and deserve, and that is what they will have with a common-sense government.

● (1050)

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I am not finished.

I will continue in English. I want to share this great speech with English-speaking Canadians.

[English]

After nine years of the Prime Minister's deficits doubling the national debt and doubling housing costs and a new budget that brings in \$50 billion of new unfunded spending on promises he has already broken, this budget, just like the Prime Minister, is not worth the cost, and Conservatives will be voting no.

The Budget

Before I get into the reasons, and my common-sense plan to axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime, I would like to pay the Minister of Finance a compliment for a page in her speech I thought was extremely illustrative. She said, "I would like to ask Canada's 1%, Canada's 0.1%, to consider this: What kind of country do they want to live in?"

Before I go any further, let us point out the incredible irony that, as she and her leader point out, Canada's 0.1% are doing better than ever after nine years of the Prime Minister promising to go after them. Yes, they have benefited from the tens of billions of dollars of undeserved corporate welfare handouts and grants, ironically supported by the NDP; of corporate loan guarantees that protect them against losses in cases of incompetence or dishonest bidding; of contracts, of which there are now \$21 billion, granted to outside and highly paid consultants, many of them making millions of dollars a year in taxpayer contracts for work that could be done inside the government itself if that work is of any value at all; and finally, of those grand fortunes that have been inflated by the \$600 billion of inflationary money printing that has transferred wealth from the working class to the wealthiest among us. That 0.1% is doing better than ever after nine years of the Prime Minister pretending he would get tough on them.

Let me go on. I am interrupting myself. The Minister of Finance asked, "Do [you] want to live in a country where [you] can tell the size of someone's paycheque by their smile?" Wow. How many Canadians are smiling when they look at their paycheque today? People are not smiling at all, because a paycheque cannot buy them a basket of affordable food, according to Sylvain Charlebois, the food professor. He has said that the cost of a basket of food has gone up by thousands of dollars per year, but the majority of Canadians are spending hundreds of dollars less than is required to buy that basket. That means they are not getting enough food. We live in a country now where the average paycheque cannot pay the average rent, so nobody is smiling when they look at their paycheque.

The minister went on to ask, "Do [you] want to live in a country where kids go to school hungry?" According to the Prime Minister, one in four kids are going to school hungry after his nine years. I look here at a press release his government released on April 1, on April Fool's Day of all days, where he says, "Nearly one in four children do not get enough food". In fact, it says that they do not get enough food "to learn and grow".

No, we do not want to live in a country where kids go to school hungry, but according to the Prime Minister's own release, we do live in a country where one in four kids do go to school hungry. The Minister of Finance then said, "Do [they] want to live in a country where the only young Canadians who can buy their own homes are those with parents who can help with the down payment?" No, we do not want to live in that country, but we do live in that country today.

• (1055)

According to data released by RBC Dominion, for the average family to afford monthly payments on the average home in Canada, the family would have to spend 64% of its pre-tax income. Most families do not keep 64% of pre-tax income because they pay so much in taxes. Therefore, most families would have to give up on

eating, recreation, clothing themselves and transportation to be mathematically capable of making payments on the average home. For young people, it is even worse because they do not have a nest egg. They cannot afford a down payment that has doubled in the last nine years. That is why 76% of Canadians who do not own homes tell pollsters they believe they never will. Do we want to live in a country where the only young people who can afford a down payment are those whose parents can pay it for them? No. However, that is the country that we live in today.

"Do [you] want to live in a country where we make the investments we need in health care, in housing, in old age pensions, but we lack the political will to pay for them and choose instead to pass a ballooning debt on to our children?"

Are we living in the twilight zone here? These are the minister's words: Do we want to live in a country where we pass the bill on to our children with "ballooning debt"? She asks this as she is ballooning the debt by adding \$40 billion to that debt. She asks this while giving a speech about the perils of passing ballooning debt to our children. She is the finance minister for the government that has added more debt than all previous governments combined in the preceding century and a half. It is worth noting that the Prime Minister has added deficits as a share of GDP that are bigger than we had in World War I, in the Great Depression and in the great global recession of 2008 and 2009.

I should also note that the majority of debt that has been added under the Prime Minister was unrelated to COVID. The "dog ate my homework" excuse, of blaming COVID for all that is wrong in Canada, no longer works. I will add that we are now three years past COVID and the deficits and debt continue to grow, putting a lie to that entire endless, nauseating excuse that the government has made.

The Prime Minister has added so much debt that we are now spending more on interest for that debt than we are spending on health care; \$54.1 billion in debt interest this year; more money for those wealthy bankers and bondholders who own our debt; and less money for the doctors and nurses whom we await when we sit for 26 hours in the average emergency room right across the country.

No, we do not want to live in a country that passes on a ballooning debt to our children, but after nine years of the Prime Minister, that is exactly the country in which we live.

The Budget

The Minister of Finance asks, “Do [you] want to live in a country where those at the very top live lives of luxury?” Who does that remind us of? There is somebody who flies around in a private jet to stay on secret islands on the other side of the hemisphere, where they treat him to \$8,000- and \$9,000-a-day luxuries, and he pays for it with the tax dollars of Canadians and emits thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gases into our atmosphere. Somebody luxuriates in that way at the expense of everyone else. He shall remain unnamed because we cannot say the Prime Minister's name in the House of Commons, so I will not break that parliamentary rule. However, I do point out the irony.

I will start again. The Minister of Finance asks:

Do [you] want to live in a country where those at the very top live lives of luxury but must do so in gated communities behind ever-higher fences using private health care and private planes because the public sphere is so degraded and the wrath of the vast majority of their less-privileged compatriots burns so hot?

• (1100)

She says that the wrath of the majority of less privileged compatriots burns so hot. She is right that some people do not have the ability to live in gated communities, behind armed guards. Those people are told that they should leave their keys next to the door so that the car thieves can just walk in and peacefully steal their cars.

Communities across the country are being ravaged by crime, chaos, drugs and disorder. What she has described is exactly what is happening after nine years of the government. We have nurses in British Columbia hospitals who are terrified to go to work because the Prime Minister, in collusion with the NDP Premier of B.C., has decriminalized hard drugs and allowed the worst criminals to bring weapons and narcotics into their hospital rooms, where they cannot be confronted. We have 26 international students crammed into the basement of one Brampton home. We have a car stolen every 40 minutes in the GTA. We have a 100% increase in gun killings across the country.

We have communities where people are terrified to go out. We have small businesses across Brampton and Surrey that are receiving letters weekly, warning them that if they do not write cheques for millions of dollars to extortionists, their homes will be shot up, and their children will have bullets flying through the windows as they are sleeping.

That is life in Canada today. Do we want to live in that country? No, we do not want to live in that country. After eight years of rising costs, rising crime and rising chaos, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. We will replace him with a common-sense Conservative government that will bring home a country we love.

What does that country look like and how will we get there? Fortunately, we have a common-sense plan that will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

Let us start with the carbon tax, which went up 23% on April 1. Now we see the raging gas prices at the pumps across Ontario. There is chaos as people are desperately trying to get to the pumps and fill up before the latest hikes go ahead.

The Prime Minister celebrates, saying that high gas prices are his purpose, and he has the full support of the NDP leader on most days, when the NDP leader can figure out what his policy is. The

NDP leader has voted 22 times to hike the carbon tax. Both parties, along with the help of the Bloc, have voted for future increases that will quadruple the tax to 61¢ a litre, a tax that will also apply on home heating bills and, of course, a tax that applies to the farmers who produce the food, the truckers who ship the food and therefore to all who buy the food.

That is why common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax to bring home lower prices. We take exactly the opposite approach to that of the Prime Minister when it comes to protecting our environment. His approach is to raise the cost on traditional energy we still need. Our approach is to lower the cost on other alternatives. We will green-light green projects, like nuclear power, hydroelectric dams, carbon capture and storage, mining of critical minerals, like lithium, cobalt, copper and others. We will do this by repealing the unconstitutional Bill C-69 so that we can approve these projects in 18 months, rather than in 18 years.

Here is the difference, the Prime Minister wants taxes; I want technology. He wants to drive our money to the dirty dictators abroad; I want to bring it home in powerful paycheques for our people in this country.

• (1105)

The same approach that will allow us to unleash energy, abundance and affordability is the approach we will take to build the homes; that is to say getting the government gatekeepers out of the way.

Why do we have the worst housing inflation in the G7 after nine years of the Prime Minister? Why have housing costs risen 40% faster than paycheques? It is by far the worst gap of any G7 country. Why did UBS say Toronto had the worst housing bubble in the world? Vancouver is the third most overpriced when comparing median income to median house price according to Demographia. Why? It is because we have the worst bureaucracy when it comes to homebuilding.

After nine years of the Prime Minister, Canada has the second-slowest building permits out of nearly 40 OECD countries. These permitting costs add \$1.3 million to the cost of every newly built home in Vancouver and \$350,000 to every newly built home in Toronto. Winnipeg blocked 2,000 homes next to a transit station that was built for those homes. The City of Montreal has blocked 25,000 homes in the last seven years. Literally hundreds of thousands of homes are waiting to be built but are locked up in slow permitting processes.

The Budget

What do we have as a solution? The Prime Minister has taken the worst immigration minister in our country's history, the guy the Prime Minister blamed for causing out-of-control temporary immigration to balloon housing prices, and put him in charge of housing. Since that time, the minister has said that his housing accelerator fund of \$4 billion does not actually build any homes.

Since he has doled out all of this cash to political friends in incompetent city halls across the country, homebuilding has dropped. In fact, homebuilding is down this year and, according to the federal government's housing agency, it will be down next year and again the year after that. That is a housing decelerator, not an accelerator.

That is what happens when a minister is chosen because he is a media darling and a fast talker rather than someone who gets things done, as I did when I was housing minister. The rent was only \$973 a month for the average family right across the country, and the average house price was roughly \$400,000. Those are results. There was less talk and less government spending but far more homes. That is what our common-sense plan will do again.

Our plan will build the homes by requiring municipalities to speed up, permit more land and build faster. They will be required to permit 15% more homes per year as a condition of getting federal funding, and to permit high-rise apartments around every federally funded transit station. We will sell off 6,000 federal buildings and thousands of acres of federal land to build. We will get rid of the carbon tax to lower the cost of building materials.

Finally, we will reward the working people who build homes, because we need more boots, not more suits. We will pass the common-sense Conservative law that allows trade workers to write off the full cost of transportation, food and accommodation to go from one work site to another, so they can build the homes while bringing home paycheques for themselves.

These homes will be in safe neighbourhoods. We will stop the crime by making repeat violent offenders ineligible for bail, parole or house arrest. That will mean no more catch and release. We will repeal Bill C-5, the house arrest law. We will repeal Bill C-75, the catch-and-release law. We will repeal Bill C-83, the cushy living for multiple murderers law that allows Paul Bernardo to enjoy tennis courts and skating rinks that most Canadian taxpaying families can no longer afford outside of prison.

We will bring in jail and not bail for repeat violent offenders. We will repeal the entire catch-and-release criminal justice agenda that the radical Prime Minister, with the help of the loony-left NDP, has brought in. The radical agenda that has turned many of our streets into war zones will be a thing of the past.

• (1110)

We will also stop giving out deadly narcotics. I made a video about the so-called safe supply. I went to the tragic site of yet another homeless encampment in Vancouver, which used to be one of the most beautiful views in the entire world. Now it is unfortunately a place where people live in squalor and die of overdoses. Everyone said it was terrible that I was planning to take away the tax-funded drugs and that all of the claims I made were just a bunch of conspir-

acy theories, but everything I said then has been proven accurate, every word of it.

I noticed that the Liberals and the pointy-headed professors they relied on for their policies have all gone into hiding as well. Why is that? It is because the facts are now coming out. Even the public health agency in British Columbia, which has been pushing the NDP-Liberal ideology, is admitting that the tax-funded hydromorphone is being diverted. The police in Vancouver said this week that 50% of all the high-powered hydromorphone opioids are paid for with tax dollars and given out by public health agencies, supposedly to save lives. Now we know that those very powerful drugs are being resold to children, who are getting hooked on them, and the profits are being used to buy even more dangerous fentanyl, tranq and other drugs that are leaving our people face-first on the pavement, dying of record overdoses.

The so-called experts always tell us to ignore the bumper stickers and look at the facts. The facts are in. In British Columbia, where this radical and incomparable policy has been most enthusiastically embraced, overdose deaths are up 300%. They have risen in B.C. faster than anywhere else in Canada and possibly anywhere else in North America. The ultraprogressive state of Oregon has reversed decriminalization, recognizing the total chaos, death and destruction the policy has caused.

What does the radical Prime Minister, with the help of his NDP counterpart, do? They look at the death and destruction that have occurred in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver and other communities and say we should have more of that. They took a walk, or better yet, these two politicians probably drove through the Downtown Eastside in their bulletproof limousines. They looked around at the people who were bent over, completely tranquilized by fentanyl, saw the people lying face-first on the ground, saw the tents that the police would have pointed out are filled with dangerous guns and drugs, saw all the small businesses that were shuttered by this policy and said that we should have more of that. They want to replicate all the policies that have created it, so that we can have tent cities and homeless encampments in every corner of the country.

The Budget

That is exactly what they have done. In Halifax, there are 35 homeless encampments in one city after nine years of the Prime Minister, his NDP counterpart and the Liberal mayor of Halifax. If we look at every town in this country, we will find homeless encampments that never existed before the last nine years. This policy will go down in infamy as one of the most insane experiments ever carried out on a population. Nowhere else in the world is this being done. The Liberals gaslight us. They love to say that all the civilized people believe that giving out these drugs will save lives, but nowhere else is this being done. When we tell people this is happening, they have a hard time believing that we are giving out heroin-grade drugs for free to addicts and expecting it to save lives.

• (1115)

Now they spill into our hospitals, where nurses are told by the NDP government in B.C. and the Liberal government in Ottawa that they are not allowed to take away crack pipes or knives or guns. They are just supposed to expect that someone is going to consume the drugs, have a massive fit and start slashing up the hospital floor. This is something out of a bad hallucination and a hallucination that will come to an end when I am prime minister. We will end this nightmare.

We will also ensure that Canadians have a better way. We are not only going to ban the drugs. We are not only going to stop giving out taxpayer-funded drugs. We are going to provide treatment and recovery.

If people are watching today and are suffering from addiction and do not know how they can turn their lives around, I want them to know that there is hope. There is a better future ahead. We will put the money into beautiful treatment centres with counselling, group therapy, physical exercise, yoga and sweat lodges for first nations, where people can graduate drug-free, live in nearby housing that helps them transition into a law-abiding, drug-free life, and come back to the centre for a counselling session, a workout or maybe even to mentor an incoming addict on the hopeful future that is ahead. That is the way we are going to bring our loved ones home, drug-free.

As I always say, we are going to have a common-sense dollar-for-dollar law, requiring that we find one dollar of savings for every new dollar of spending. In this case, that will include how we will partly pay for this. We will unleash the biggest lawsuit in Canadian history against the corrupt pharmaceutical companies that profited off of this nightmare. We will make them pay.

Finally, we will stop the gun crime. We know that gun crime is out of control. Just yesterday, we saw this gold heist. By the way, all of the gold thieves are out on bail already, so do not worry. They will have to send the Prime Minister a nugget of gold to thank him for passing Bill C-75 and letting them out of jail within a few days of this monster gold heist.

Why did they steal the gold? They stole the gold so that they could buy the guns, because we know that all of the gun crime is happening with stolen guns. The Prime Minister wants to ban all civilian, law-abiding people from owning guns, but he wants to allow every criminal to have as many guns as they want. I am not just talking about rifles. I am talking about machine guns, fully loaded machine guns that are being found on the street, which never exist-

ed since they were banned in the 1970s. Now the criminals can get them because the Prime Minister has mismanaged the federal borders and ports and because he is wasting so much money going after the good guys.

The Prime Minister wants to ban our hunting rifles. He said so in a December 2022 interview with CTV. He was very clear. If someone has a hunting rifle, he said he will have to take it away. He kept his word by introducing a 300-page amendment to his Bill C-21, which would have banned 300 pages of the most popular and safe hunting rifles. He only put that policy on hold because of a backlash that common-sense Conservatives led, which included rural Canadians, first nations Canadians and NDPers from rural communities. He had to flip-flop.

I know that in places like Kapuskasing, the law-abiding people enjoy hunting. While the NDP leader and the Prime Minister look down on those people and think that they are to blame for crime, we know that the hunters in Kapuskasing are the salt of the earth, the best people around, and we are going to make sure that they can keep their hunting rifles. God love them. God love every one of them.

While the Prime Minister wants to protect turkeys from hunters, common-sense Conservatives want to protect Canadians from criminals. That is why we will repeal his insane policies.

By the way, I should point out that he has not even done any of the bans. We remember that he had that big press conference during the election. He said to his policy team that morning that he needed them to come up with a policy that would allow him to put a big, scary-looking black gun on his podium sign. They said, "Okay, we will think of something." He put that scary-looking gun on his podium sign, and he said he was going to ban all of these assault rifles. They asked him what an assault rifle was, and he said he did not know, just that it was the black, scary thing on the front of his podium sign. That was the assault rifle he was referring to.

• (1120)

It is now three years since he made that promise. He was asked again in the hallways what an assault rifle was. He said he was still working to figure it out. These rifles that he says he is going to ban one day, he does not know what they are but one day he is going to figure it out and ban them. In the meantime, he has spent \$40 million to buy exactly zero guns from owners. He said he was going to ban them and buy them from the owners. Not one gun has been taken off the street after he spent \$40 million.

The Budget

We could have used that money to hire CBSA officers who would have secured our ports against the thousands of illegal guns that are pouring in and killing people on our streets. When I am prime minister, we will cancel this multi-billion dollar waste of money. We will use it to hire frontline boots-on-the-ground officers who will inspect shipping containers and to buy scanners that can pierce inside to stop the drugs, stop the illegal guns, stop the export of our stolen cars and stop the crime.

What we are seeing is a very different philosophical approach. The finance minister said in her concluding remarks that what we need is bigger and stronger government. Does that not sound eerie? In other words, she and the Prime Minister want to be bigger and stronger. That is why they are always trying to make Canadians feel weaker and smaller. The Prime Minister literally called our people a small, fringe minority. He jabs his fingers in the faces of our citizens. He calls small businesses tax cheats. He claims that those who own hunting rifles are just Americans.

The Prime Minister points his fingers at people who disagree with him. He has the audacity of claiming that anyone who is off-side with him is a racist. This is a guy who dressed up in racist costumes so many times he cannot remember them all. He has been denigrating other people his whole life. That is because it is all about him. It is all about concentrating more power and more money in his hands. This budget is no different. It is about a bigger government and smaller citizens. It is about buying his way through the next election with cash that the working-class people have earned and he has burned.

By contrast, I want the opposite. I want smaller government to make room for bigger citizens. I want a state that is a servant and not the master. I want a country where the prime minister actually lives up to the meaning of the word: “prime” meaning “first”, and “minister” meaning “servant”. That is what “minister” means. “Minister” is not master; “minister” is servant.

We need a country that puts people back in charge of their money, their communities, their families and their lives, a country based on the common sense of the common people, united for our common home, their home, my home, our home. Let us bring it home.

Therefore, I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after the word “That” and substituting the following:

“the House reject the government's budget since it fails to:

- a. Axe the tax on farmers and food by passing Bill C-234 in its original form.
- b. Build the homes, not bureaucracy, by requiring cities permit 15% more home building each year as a condition for receiving federal infrastructure money.
- c. Cap the spending with a dollar-for-dollar rule to bring down interest rates and inflation by requiring the government to find a dollar in savings for every new dollar of spending.

• (1125)

[Translation]

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

[English]

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there are many aspects I could ask the leader of the Conservative Party on, but time will not allow me to do that. Suffice it to say there is no doubt that the leader is a master of manipulation of information, and we see that through social media and many of the speeches he delivers in the House.

Let me give a classic example. He was glowing about when he was the minister responsible for housing, and the truth is that he built six affordable houses while he was the minister of housing. Canadians have a reality today that demands that a government be involved in a significant way and work with other jurisdictions. Instead, as leader, he endlessly insults municipal leaders and provincial politicians in regard to not coming to the table on housing.

Why does he truly believe Canadians should trust him at all, given his past record, his disrespect for different levels of government and his inability to produce any—

• (1130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. leader of the official opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I will start by correcting the disinformation in the question. The member gets his information on my record from his source, the Twitter account of the housing minister. Before you turn to that Twitter account, remember that this is the same guy—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will address all questions and comments through the Chair. I am assuming that may be the point of order the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is referring to.

The hon. official opposition leader has the floor.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, this is the same housing minister who lost track of one million immigrants when he was the immigration minister. This is the same housing minister who unleashed absolute out-of-control chaos in our immigration system, not according to me but according to his Liberal successor and the Prime Minister, so the member opposite should stop using that source. If you want to know, Madam Speaker, how many affordable homes were built when I was the minister, we completed 92,782 apartments, and the average rent was \$973.

Can anyone tell me where we can find \$973 per month rent after nine years of the Liberals?

The Budget

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, until recently, the only questions the Conservatives asked in French during question period were about the carbon tax. For months, that was all they talked about. Finally, they had an epiphany and realized that it does not apply to Quebec, which goes to show they could understand the concept easily enough once it was explained to them over and over again. They figured they had to find something else to hammer away on during question period. They came up with federal interference in Quebec's jurisdictions, and they have been getting some good mileage out of that for the past few days.

Now, I hear the Conservative leader talking about housing. He says he is going to tell the cities what to do, but without encroaching on their areas of jurisdiction. However, when any cities disagree with him, he is quick to insult the mayors. Basically, he insults them respectfully. There was a time when Harper promised to eliminate the spending power in order to respect jurisdictions. The only way to truly respect jurisdictions is to make unconditional transfers.

Will the leader of the official opposition commit to making unconditional housing transfers to Quebec if he ever takes power?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, there will be no conditions. There will be results. I will simply tell the municipalities that they will be paid for the number of homes built. That is not interference. That is results.

The Bloc Québécois agrees that the government should make housing transfers. We simply disagree on the formula. The Bloc Québécois is proposing that money just be injected in building up local bureaucracies. I am proposing to pay the municipalities for the number of homes that they allow to be built. They can do that in several ways: fast-tracking permits, selling land, using any strategy that works for them.

What we want to fund is the result. For its part, the Bloc Québécois wants to fund bureaucracy, especially the federal bureaucracy that it voted for in order to finance the spending of this Prime Minister's centralist government.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member likes to talk about single moms, so let me talk about Brianna.

Brianna is a single mom with five kids who benefited from the life-changing interim dental benefit that the NDP negotiated. She got \$1,300 per child to help them get their teeth taken care of, just like the member's children do, from taxpayer dollars by the way. However, this is something the Conservatives voted against.

Now, we learn, as the member said yesterday in French, that under a Conservative government, a dental care program that allows everyone to go to the dentist does not exist. Can the member repeat this in English, so that Brianna and all Canadians know where the member stands on the right of every Canadian to have access to dental care?

● (1135)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, it does not currently exist after nine years of this Prime Minister and roughly two years of the NDP joining the federal government. What we have is a promise that it will eventually exist, and we do not know when and if that promise will ever be fulfilled. We know that already there are many dentists who are refusing to participate because the program is so badly run, and we know that this and other programs are being run through hundreds of millions of dollars in gifts to profit-making insurance companies, once again with the support, ironically, of the NDP.

This NDP member has betrayed his constituents to support the Prime Minister doubling the housing costs, quadrupling the carbon tax and forcing two million Canadians to a food bank. He should go back and talk to that single mother and all single mothers and apologize to them for increasing their food, gas and heating bills and making it impossible for them to ever own a home.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the government gave the oil and gas industry \$18.5 billion in corporate handouts last year and \$65 billion over the last four years alone. This is an industry whose top five companies made \$38 billion in record-breaking profits in 2022, while fuelling the climate crisis.

I understand that the Leader of the Opposition, if I am hearing him right, wants to reduce government spending. He also seems to like yes or no questions, so my question for him, yes or no, is this: If he were in government, would he end this \$18.5 billion in corporate handouts to an industry that is already making record-breaking profits?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I will end corporate handouts to all industries. I do not believe in corporate handouts. We are the only party that stands against corporate welfare. We believe businesses should make money, not take money. We believe in the free market, not state capitalism.

It is the NDP and the Liberals who continually stroke these monster cheques to businesses that have not earned the money. Ironically, they are always angry at businesses that make money by selling things that consumers choose to buy, but they are never upset to take money by force from working taxpayers and hand the money to large corporations who have very skilful lobbyists.

I want an economy where businesses make money, not take money, where they make profit based on the quality of their products, not the quality of their lobbyists, where they please customers rather than pleasing politicians. It is called the free market.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, we know that Canadians are going to be footing the bill from this massive Liberal spending. We are now going to be paying more in debt servicing charges than we pay on health care. How does the hon. Leader of the Opposition propose that we fix the budget?

The Budget

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, we will fix the budget with a dollar-for-dollar law and run our finances the way single moms and small businesses run their finances, which is by finding an equal amount of savings for every new expenditure. That is the scarcity with which every single creature in the universe must live, except for the politician, who simply externalizes the scarcity through more inflation, more debt and more taxes for everybody else.

By internalizing the scarcity within the operations of government, we will force the bureaucrats and politicians to go hunting in their own backyard for savings, rather than forcing more austerity on Canadian families and entrepreneurs through higher taxes. It is common sense. It is how we will balance the budget to bring home lower prices, lower inflation and lower interest rates.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Members cannot intentionally mislead the House, and I am afraid that the leader of the Conservative Party did just that when he knowingly made the assertion that when he was the minister of housing, he was responsible for building tens of thousands—

Some hon. members: Debate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: This is not debate.

• (1140)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): First of all, the mic is off. I did not ask for the mic to be off. I will finish hearing the point of order, and I will determine whether it is debate or not.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think this is really important, because I believe he is intentionally misleading the House. He was the minister responsible—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If the hon. member is in disagreement with what is being said, he can raise that in debate.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition also has a point of order on this.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, we can put the matter to rest.

I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for me to table in the House of Commons data from the Statistics Canada website, which shows that 92,782 apartment units were built at an average price of \$973 per month—

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the Leader of the Opposition just confirmed that he misled the House, because he was the housing minister from January until the election in 2015, so for roughly eight months. He said he built 92,000 apartment units, but there were only 190,000 new starts in all of Canada for the entire year. He just misled the House, because he implied that they were affordable units, and now we have found out that they were not.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Speaker might check the Standing Orders to find out if \$973 a month is considered affordable today. Most communities would consider that to be affordable. Do you have an answer to that?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That would be a point of debate.

On another point of order, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, going back to my original point of order, on which there was no ruling made, at that time I raised the issue that the leader of the Conservative Party had intentionally misled the House. That is what I am asking for a ruling on. I was—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Based on the information that has been provided, I will table this ruling, which is that this is a point of debate about the facts.

I would just ask members to please use the period for questions and comments to put their disagreements forward through the debate process.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Joliette.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, with its latest budget, the federal government has launched an unprecedented attack against Quebec and the provinces' powers.

We saw it coming with the striptease leading up to the budget, when the Prime Minister, worthy successor of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, proclaimed that Canadians did not care about jurisdictional matters. Although the federal government has always tried to centralize powers, this time they are doing so without reserve, without restraint and without shame.

Let us take housing, for example. While, on the one hand, the government has finally recognized the crisis and is proposing positive measures, on the other, it is taking advantage of the situation to launch an unprecedented centralist offensive. According to the budget, it is now in charge of everything housing, the provinces and municipalities being relegated to the position of executors of federal priorities.

For example, the government is forcing the provinces to sign an agreement by next January. According to the budget, if Quebec rejects the conditions set by know-it-all Ottawa or proposes different priorities, the federal government will ignore Quebec or any recalcitrant province and will negotiate directly with the municipalities. This approach is illegal in Quebec. In fact, since a decision rendered by Robert Bourassa's government in 1971, Quebec's municipalities cannot transact directly with Ottawa. The goal is to prevent the federal government from adopting a divide-and-conquer approach as it is wont to do, and from diminishing Quebec's negotiating power at the bargaining table.

The Budget

The federal government is encroaching on municipalities' urban development plans by imposing specific requirements for receiving infrastructure transfers. It is going so far as to establish the height and density of residential neighbourhoods within an 800-metre radius of educational institutions and public transportation routes. If the cities do not authorize the construction of certain types of multi-plexes in these sectors, they will not be entitled to federal transfers. The government is also encroaching on property tax rights by announcing a tax on vacant lots in urban areas.

Lastly, it intends to purchase land from the provinces and municipalities and lease it long-term to developers to construct buildings. Since these constructions will be built on federal land, they will automatically be exempt from municipal bylaws and provincial laws. This is a significant risk.

The budget is full of interference in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction that will cause repeated disputes concerning jurisdiction and delay service delivery to Canadians. In addition to housing, the federal government is interfering in health care with the announcement of a bill on Canada-wide standards for long-term care and with its prescription drug and dental insurance plans. The same is true in education.

Ottawa has announced a lot of money for the energy transition. The budget explains how it will be distributed. The private sector and western Canada will receive generous subsidies and credits for carbon capture and nuclear energy development. That is the transition plan. In terms of compensation, Ottawa is offering a 15% tax credit to publicly owned corporations like Hydro-Québec for developing green projects. However, the federal government is going even further by interfering in how provincial publicly owned corporations are run. For example, it is imposing conditions on Hydro-Québec's rates. The publicly owned corporation can have the 15% tax credit for investments in its projects only if it commits to complying with the conditions set by know-it-all Ottawa. This government is forcing Hydro-Québec to use it to reduce electricity bills and publicly report "how the tax credit has improved ratepayers' bills."

The budget is a demonstration of the effects of the fiscal imbalance. Jurisdictions no longer exist in the eyes of the federal government. With this budget, the Prime Minister is declaring himself the Prime Minister of Canada, the premier of every province and the mayor of every town. Since the Liberals are busy messing around in Quebec's jurisdictions like sorcerers' apprentices, we are entitled to ask who is taking care of federal responsibilities like managing the borders or employment insurance, which is badly in need of a long-awaited reform.

This budget was made on the backs of Quebecers. It is a clear demonstration of the damage that can be caused by the combination of the fiscal imbalance and the federal government's spending power by reducing Quebecers' ability to manage their own society themselves.

• (1145)

It is also important to note that the vast majority of the funds related to the new announcements made with great fanfare to the media are broken down in such a way that they will be spent only after the next election, so this is a budget of election promises. For ex-

ample, 97% of the \$1.1 billion allocated to accelerating the construction of apartments is budgeted for after the election, as is 91% of the \$1.5 billion for the new Canada housing infrastructure fund. The same is true of 88% of the amounts promised for pharmacare, 88% of the funding to support research and 87.5% of the funding to strengthen Canada's position in the area of artificial intelligence.

The Bloc Québécois presented its requests to the government. It asked that the government provide support for seniors, give Quebec the right to opt out when it comes to federal interference, address the housing crisis, pay Quebec back for the money it spent helping asylum seekers and put an end to its oil worship. The budget does not address any of those things.

When it comes to oil, the government recognizes in the budget that it is still subsidizing the industry by committing to develop and release "an implementation plan to phase out public financing of the fossil fuel sector, including by federal Crown corporations, by fall 2024". The government is not committing to eliminate those subsidies. It is simply committing to making a plan. If we read between the lines, it is clear that the government is going to continue to offer those subsidies.

Meanwhile, there is not one word about the aerospace policy they promised. Quebec's \$11-billion deficit caused quite a stir, but people seem fine with Ottawa's \$40-billion deficit. Ottawa's continued interference is resulting in an unprecedented centralization of power that robs Quebecers of the ability to evolve in accordance with their needs, strengths, characteristics and desires. Centralization is a trend dating back to the dawn of Confederation, but we must not forget that, in 1867, our nation agreed to be part of Canada on the condition that the federal model recognized two equal levels of government sovereign in their respective jurisdictions.

Quebeckers want to be masters in our own house, but the feds are trying to be masters everywhere. That means we have a choice to make. We can let the federal government and the neighbouring nation dictate their priorities from the top down and use our own money to make choices for our society, or we can choose to pursue our own independence. The freer Quebec is, the better off it is. That is our goal, and that goal has informed our expectations and our analysis of this budget.

All of Quebec's major social and economic leaps forward were made by opting out of federal programs that were unsuited to our needs, or by creating programs that, ironically, will now serve as models for the programs that the federal government wants to force on us. By refusing to join the Canada pension plan, Quebec was able to create the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, a powerhouse of development and economic modernization in Quebec. By pulling out of the inadequate EI special benefits, Quebec was able to implement parental leave, which caused women's participation in the workforce to skyrocket and paved the way for work-life balance. By withdrawing from federal student loans, Quebec was able to implement its financial assistance for education expenses regime, making Quebec the North American leader in education access. By opting out of federal labour programs, Quebec was able to implement an employment policy that brings workers, employers and educational institutions together to align training with the labour market.

The Budget

This would have been a good time to stop interfering, which is wasteful and causes all sorts of problems. In an economy with a combination of persistent inflation and economic stagnation, the government should have targeted spending as to better maximize its impact. That meant focusing on its own jurisdictions, such as supporting seniors or reforming employment insurance, and not interfering even more. That also meant paying what it owed to Quebec, like the billion dollars to cover the expenses related to the asylum seekers. Ottawa also has to better respond to the current emergencies, such as climate change. It has to better control its cost overruns and stop interfering in jurisdictions that are not its own. This is the opposite of what is in the budget. Year after year, budget after budget, the federal government keeps interfering in areas that do not come under its jurisdiction. With this budget, it is interfering more than ever before, and it needs to stop.

• (1150)

The Bloc Québécois demands that Quebec have the right to opt out with full financial compensation, unconditionally, in every instance where Ottawa meddles in areas not under its jurisdiction.

The latest example is dental care coverage, which falls under health care, an area under the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec. This is a new power that Ottawa assumed, choosing to have a multinational manage it. It chose not to link it to Quebec's public program, which already covers dental care for children. Sun Life, a multinational, has been awarded \$2 billion to manage the program; \$2 billion in lost dental care. Interfering Ottawa is rolling out more and more complicated targeted programs, creating red tape and confusion that prevents projects from moving forward.

In fact, one could say that the setback in Quebec's autonomy and in Quebecers' ability to make our own choices is part of a common pattern. The Institute for Research on Public Policy, a Canada-wide research group based in Ottawa, found last June that “the present trend is—

• (1155)

[English]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, there is no quorum.

The Deputy Speaker: We will look at quorum.

And the count having been taken:

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: We have quorum now.

The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues for actively listening to my speech—

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to make sure the hon. member for Joliette has the attention of all members present in the House.

Since that is now the case, the hon. member for Joliette may continue.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the erosion of Quebec's autonomy, and of Quebecers' ability to make their own choices, is a strong trend.

I quoted the Institute for Research on Public Policy, a Canada-wide research group based in Ottawa, which found last June that “the present trend is toward a more directive use of the spending power”, and that “the degree of federal-provincial collaboration in defining policy challenges has declined”. It went on to say, “Partnerships now seem to be conditional on a province accepting the federal government's policy vision”.

The most recent budget gives more weight to their findings. All of this is happening in a context where Ottawa is doing a very poor job handling areas under its own jurisdiction, spending more money without making sure that it is being effective or getting results, and cutting its transfers to the provinces while piling on conditions and delaying the payment of the amounts it promised. The example that comes to mind here again is health transfers. Their increase is six times lower than anticipated, and they come with conditions that have led to a power struggle. The result is that it is taking longer for the money to be paid out. There are also unacceptable delays when it comes to infrastructure and housing programs. It takes years for an agreement to be reached and for the approved money to be paid out because Ottawa is once again interfering. I thank know-it-all Ottawa for that. Ottawa is behaving this way because it has the upper hand as a result of the ongoing fiscal imbalance.

In a federation, a fiscal imbalance occurs when one level of government collects more taxes than it needs to fulfill its responsibilities, while the other level is unable to finance its own needs independently. In Canada, there is a serious fiscal imbalance to the detriment of Quebec and the provinces. The Parliamentary Budget Officer repeats it year after year: Ultimately, provincial finances are not sustainable. It is not just Quebec; all of the provinces are unsustainable. Provincial status is just not viable. The fiscal imbalance is causing major problems that are limiting the government's ability to address the many challenges it faces. These problems are numerous, but they fall into three categories.

First, by bringing in more revenue than it needs to fulfill its responsibilities, Ottawa is not making an effort to manage its own affairs properly. The federal government is notoriously inefficient and everything costs more than it should—just think of the ArriveCAN scandal. I have two examples that illustrate the magnitude of the discrepancy. It costs the federal government two and a half times more to process an EI claim than it costs the Quebec government to process a social assistance claim. It costs the federal government four times more to issue a passport than it costs the Quebec government to issue a driver's licence. Everything costs more.

Second, Ottawa uses its fiscal room to interfere in areas that are the responsibility of Quebec and the provinces under the Constitution. These intrusions blur the division of powers, make it less coherent, while undermining our autonomy. The jurisdictional overlap does nothing for efficiency. It only promotes centralization in Ottawa. There is a duplication of efforts with the new dental insurance. The same is true for the two tax returns. There is one too many, and that is the one that is collected by this level of government.

Finally, with Ottawa indirectly controlling the purse strings of the Government of Quebec and the governments of the other Canadian provinces, the capacity of the Quebec government to fully assume its responsibilities is diminished. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's observation is clear: The provinces will no longer be sustainable. I would add that they are at risk of collapsing, while the federal government's fiscal room will increase considerably.

This continued interference has led to an unprecedented centralization of power in Ottawa, which will take away the Quebec people's ability to control their development according to their needs, strengths, characteristics and wishes. In Canada, the status quo does not exist. The third autonomist way that lies between our sovereignty and our assimilation in which Quebec would be respected is constantly under attack by the federal government, no matter which party is in power. The status quo is actually weakening the Quebec National Assembly in favour of Ottawa. However, given the current context of uncertainty and crises, the fiscal imbalance must be addressed. The main way to achieve that is for the federal government to stop interfering and give Quebec the automatic right to opt out with full compensation.

The many crises we are experiencing bring with them many challenges. We can come out stronger or weaker. The repeated crises we have experienced over the past four years have brought to light many problems. First, COVID-19 showed that our health care system has been weakened by the federal government's chronic underfunding. Meanwhile, the serious flaws in the EI system forced the introduction of a series of costly programs that were hastily thrown together.

• (1200)

The sudden reopening of the economy exposed other problems: the housing shortage, the labour shortage exacerbated by the aging population and the considerable fragility of our manufacturing sector. That is not to mention all the problems caused by inflation. The government has not taken any of these fundamental issues seriously.

We are calling on the government to stop interfering in jurisdictions that do not belong to it and to include a permanent and automatic mechanism for Quebec to opt out with full compensation everywhere the federal government has interfered. We demand that the federal government immediately and unconditionally transfer the voted amounts that are supposed to be transferred to Quebec. We are also calling on Ottawa to immediately reimburse the Government of Quebec for costs incurred to welcome asylum seekers.

Quebec has a very clear vision of what to do to deal with the current challenges effectively. The solution is simple, but it requires more financial resources for Quebec. The government must address the fiscal imbalance by increasing federal transfers to ensure a fairer and more equitable redistribution. We can shape our future by building on Quebec's strengths, strengths that will become increasingly important in the economy of the future. Interference always costs more, always takes longer and never works as well as respecting jurisdiction. Interference will end once we have full independence.

The 21st century belongs to Quebec. This is the century of innovation, advanced technologies and green technologies that balance

wealth creation with ecology. We have an abundance of creativity in all areas, and they need support. This is the century of renewable energy and sustainable development. We have everything it takes—water, wind, forests and know-how—to become world leaders, if Ottawa stops pumping billions of dollars into fossil fuels. Canada's oil and gas model and Quebec's renewable and sustainable model are incompatible.

This is the century of local farm distribution channels, where our production primarily serves to feed our population in a world of less fluid trade networks. We have to preserve agricultural diversification despite the current challenges created by an unpredictable global environment and climate change.

However, this is also a century of social tension, where growing inequality is extinguishing the hope of a brighter future across the western world. Our government must have the means to preserve social cohesion, especially considering the urgent challenges posed by the housing crisis and rising property prices. Maintaining the purchasing power of seniors is also imperative, considering the disastrous economic consequences that would result from their impoverishment amid an aging population.

In conclusion, this budget comes at a time when the needs are great and many, but the resources are not unlimited. The only way for Ottawa to deal with that is to take care of its own responsibilities properly. A rational and well targeted use of resources will allow us to avoid austerity measures left and right that will cause everyone to suffer. That is the opposite of what we have before us in this budget.

That is why, seconded by the member for Saint-Jean, I move the following amendment to the amendment.

That the amendment be amended by replacing paragraphs (a) and (b) with the following:

(a) uphold the areas of jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces and to grant Quebec and the provinces a right to opt out with full compensation;

• (1205)

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment to the amendment is in order.

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned the fiscal issues. I would like to remind him that Canada has the lowest deficit-to-GDP ratio and lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio among all the G7 countries. In fact, Canada not only has a AAA credit rating, but it is also one of only two G7 countries that has a AAA rating from two of the three independent credit agencies.

Quebec has shown the solid move from the carbon-heavy economy to a clean economy. Quebec has very advanced manufacturing and knowledge-based companies. Does the member not recognize the importance this budget has given to knowledge-based companies and specifically how it would help Quebec companies, for example in artificial intelligence, with a \$2-billion fund for the AI compute access fund, \$200 million for artificial intelligence start-ups, and help for crucial sectors, such as agriculture, health care and manufacturing, to adopt artificial intelligence?

*The Budget**[Translation]*

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Nepean for his multi-pronged question.

First, we recognize that the federal debt-to-GDP ratio is among the best, except that goes back to what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said. Members will recall that, in the 1990s, the federal government solved its debt problem by increasing the fiscal imbalance, or in other words, by reducing transfers to the provinces. The provinces are struggling because the federal government chose to increase the fiscal imbalance rather than dealing with it.

When it comes to the various sectors of the economy, I would remind the member that the Minister of Innovation finally promised an aerospace policy. Canada is the only country with an aerospace industry that does not have such a policy. Is there anything about that in the budget? No. There is zip, zero, zilch.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some members of the Bloc Québécois are fairly sensible, but I would like to know how the Bloc Québécois can talk out of both sides of its mouth. When the NDP votes with the minority government, the Bloc Québécois votes against it. When the NDP votes against the Liberal minority government, the Bloc Québécois votes with it. The Bloc Québécois is actually keeping the Liberal minority government in power.

How can my colleague talk out of both sides of his mouth? I would like to hear his thoughts on that because the Bloc Québécois is being inconsistent. Unfortunately, I have to say that the Bloc Québécois does not really represent the interests of Quebec.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Mr. Speaker, first of all, it will be up to Quebecers to decide who represents them in the next election, as they have done in every other election. That is how it works.

We set a very clear criterion to determine whether we vote with or against the government: When it is good for Quebec, we vote in favour, and when it is not good for Quebec, we vote against. It is that simple.

Between the two, the Bloc Québécois always tries to improve the proposals to better meet Quebec's needs. Unlike the Conservatives, we are not always against the government. We do not spend our time denouncing the carbon tax, which does not apply to Quebec. We see whether it is good for Quebec. If so, we are in favour; if not, we are against.

This budget is bad for Quebec's economy and does not meet Quebec's major needs. We will therefore vote against it. It is clear, and it is how we do things.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague, who I am pleased to serve with on the finance committee, spoke about jurisdiction in pharmacare.

The Canada pharmacare legislation currently before the House would work exactly as the Canada Health Act does. It would offer federal money to every province that agrees to deliver diabetes-class and contraception drugs free to the citizens of their provinces through the single-payer public system. No province would be forced to participate. If the province wants to participate, they

would get the money and deliver it just like any other medical service through the public health care system, just like Quebec does with all the other services.

In 2016, the Union des consommateurs of Quebec made a written submission to the Standing Committee on Health on pharmacare. It said:

The explosive rise in spending on prescription drugs in Canada requires immediate action...the most effective solution would be to adopt a universal public pharmacare program. We hope the federal government will act on this issue and assure you of our full cooperation.

Does my hon. colleague not agree that Québécois deserve to have access to free diabetes medication and pharmaceuticals if 100% of it is being paid by the federal government, just like every other medical service that is available in Quebec?

● (1210)

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my new colleague on the Standing Committee on Finance. It will be a pleasure to work with him, I am sure.

Obviously, there are many major health care needs. Yes, I would like to know that everyone who needs medication can get it. Quebec has a partial prescription drug insurance plan; it has limited coverage for people who do not have access to private insurance. Yes, the price of prescription drugs is skyrocketing and it is quite the challenge.

The Bloc Québécois wants the federal government to respect areas of jurisdiction. For example, health care falls under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. The role of the federal government is to finance health care.

To meet its commitments in funding health care, the federal government needs to give six times more than it is currently giving. This shortfall means that Quebec and the provinces do not have enough resources to offer proper health care services, which should include universal pharmacare. On one hand, the federal government is underfunding the health care sector by not fulfilling its role; on the other hand, it is encroaching on our areas of jurisdiction. What are the consequences? Redundancy and a top-to-bottom vision of know-it-all Ottawa that does not reflect reality.

If Quebec is given the right to opt out with full compensation and no strings attached in order to enhance its prescription drug insurance program or manage funding in its health care sector as it sees fit, we will support the budget. We have always said that what we do not want is to see the federal government usurp spending powers. Everything that is done here is more expensive. It is bureaucratic and out of touch with the reality of Canadians.

There is not even a proposal to align with Quebec's prescription drug insurance plan. The same goes for dental care. There is not even a proposal to align with the existing public insurance plan for children. That is being turned over to Sun Life; that is a \$2-billion management fund that will enable the insurer to line its pockets instead of providing services to Canadians. That is Ottawa, right there.

That is why we want Quebec to make its own choices.

The Budget

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his quasi-scientific speech about the budget. I truly enjoyed it.

I know he wants to get to the bottom of things and uncover the truth. Here is what I am especially curious about. We know Ottawa promises a lot of money, but that money is never spent because it does not take regional realities into account. Funding for housing does not reflect the reality of regions where conditions differ from those of the greater Toronto area. It is the same thing with indigenous peoples: Year after year, there is so much money that goes back into the treasury when that money should be going into the pockets of those who need it, so they can do things such as build housing.

In my colleague's opinion, how does that impact budgets and the real deficit? When it comes to a challenge as big as housing, how could Quebec do better than Ottawa if it were independent?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and for sharing his outlook with us. I agree with him completely.

Before I talk about housing, I will speak to infrastructure. The municipalities are asking us whether Ottawa is finally going to renew the gas tax and Quebec's contribution program, or TECQ, and distribute the funds, with no strings attached, on a per capita basis. When the dollars get out the door, municipalities can get projects done quickly.

In the recent budget, Ottawa is proposing infrastructure programs that require agreements because interference is at issue. It takes one, two, three or four years to reach an agreement, and years more before the funds are disbursed. The needs are there, but the money is not.

It is the same thing when it comes to housing. With regard to the rapid housing initiative, or RHI, Ottawa let Quebec choose which housing it wants to fund. The money was allocated quickly. In all of the other programs, it takes years for Quebec to get a single penny, for a single shovel of dirt to be turned. The government is passing the buck. Money that we voted on, money paid by Quebec taxpayers is being held up here in Ottawa for ideological and bureaucratic reasons.

It is the same thing for indigenous people. Once again, the money is there in the budget, but at the end of every fiscal year, the money has not been spent. That is again because of bureaucratic management. Needs are growing and the money was approved, but it is not being spent. That needs to change. We need to tell Ottawa to cut the red tape and to stop creating obstacles by dictating conditions. Local governments are the ones that know what is good and where the needs are. The federal government needs to transfer the money and get out of the way.

• (1215)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to budget 2024 and to deliver my first speech in the House as the shadow minister of finance for the New Democratic Party of Canada. I am deeply honoured to assume this important position, and as I do so, I am reminded of the core eco-

nomic objectives of a progressive political party in a modern democracy, the principles that have underpinned impressive results in many social democratic countries around the globe.

These include the following: to build a strong domestic economy that works for all citizens, not just the privileged; to harness national assets for the collective good while creating a thriving market that produces quality goods and services; to respect both those who utilize their entrepreneurial talents and the workers whose skills and energy are essential to their realization; to develop our resources in an intelligent, sustainable and responsible manner, respecting both future generations and our planet, which, after all, are the foundation of all economic activity; to incentivize productive activity, to reward hard work, to distribute wealth fairly and to take care of those who, through no fault of their own, need our assistance; and to advance equality and to create the conditions necessary for everyone to have a full and fair opportunity to realize their potential to contribute and to succeed.

The document under debate serves as a crucial reminder of what a national government can do to help realize these goals, both in its observance and in its breach. It also shows what an effective opposition can achieve when we act maturely and work to fix what is broken, instead of engaging in division and pessimism. Although conflict may appear expedient to those politicians who want to exploit feelings of frustration and anger, it does not get results for people, and it weakens our institutions and democracy. As Jack Layton would often remind us, the opposition's job is not only to oppose, but also to propose. This budget is product of applying this approach.

In contrast to the other opposition parties in the House, the NDP has worked to deliver tangible benefits for Canadians. In this budget alone, Canada's New Democrats have compelled the Liberal government to move in a number of important, substantive and positive directions. These include the following, which the NDP has championed and has fought for, in some cases for decades: to build more homes, to preserve existing affordable housing and to protect renters, helping address one of the most foundational issues in society; to set the foundation for universal public pharmacare, starting with contraception and diabetes medications and devices, helping millions of Canadians and starting us well on the path to comprehensive drug coverage for all; to establish the very first national school food program, helping children learn and stay healthy while providing real relief to families hurt by high food prices; and to reverse damaging cuts to indigenous services, an area that cries out for resources and for reconciliation.

The Budget

Further, these also include the following: to invest in accessible, high-quality, non-profit child care, a vital social support to families, and to women in particular; to increase funding for pure and applied research and to better support Canada's students, keys to Canada's productivity and innovation; to increase the capital gains tax on the wealthiest 1%, a measure that would return some \$19 billion to the treasury over the next five years from the wealthiest 1% in Canada; to improve Via Rail capacity, helping connect communities and helping the environment; to double the volunteer firefighters' and the search and rescue volunteers' tax credits; and to create a dedicated youth mental health fund, continuing to move this critical area into our mainstream health care system.

These measures would provide urgent relief for millions of Canadians, and make no mistake, they would not have happened without the pressure and the advocacy of every NDP member in the House. However, it is crucial to emphasize that while these achievements illustrate in part what a New Democrat government could accomplish, the current budget does not fully reflect the party's vision. This is the result of a major difference between the NDP and the two old-guard establishment parties.

New Democrats see government as a profoundly important instrument of public good, as something that should stand firmly with and for people, not private powerful interests. We see it as a positive force that can provide resources collectively that individuals alone cannot, that can build institutions of opportunity available to all, regardless of personal wealth and station. We alone see the vital interconnectedness of social, economic and environmental justice.

• (1220)

In contrast, the Conservatives treat government with suspicion; it is to be feared, scorned, reduced and marginalized. The Liberals, for their part, are beholden to crippling incrementalism, afraid to take bold action, even in the face of great social need or clear evidence.

More to the point today, the Conservatives identify an economic crisis but deny that there is a climate one. The Liberals acknowledge a climate crisis but fail to fully recognize an economic one.

Only Canada's New Democrats firmly understand that Canada faces both an economic crisis and a climate crisis. We stand alone in the understanding that these crises are intertwined and that we will make real progress only by successfully addressing both.

The context for this budget is clear. The reality is that millions of Canadians are grappling with the rising costs of living and are struggling to pay for essentials like food and housing. At the same time, forest fires lay waste to entire towns; droughts threaten our food supply; floods destroy our communities; unprecedented heatwaves claim the lives of our elders; and children are confined indoors when the air is unfit to breathe. While politicians, like the Conservatives, who are in denial or who are ignorant of these realizations, point to the costs of dealing with these crises, they fail to recognize the far more expensive price of not dealing with them. The result is that Canada is falling behind in meeting our climate commitments and in the need to pivot to a sustainable economy that works for all Canadians.

While this budget promises considerable progress in a number of areas, progress that will depend on real implementation, a perennial shortcoming of the current government it must be noted, it also falls short in making the necessary investments and the policy changes that the current crises demand.

I will highlight housing. There are many issues in politics, but some are foundational, existential even. Housing is one of these. Housing is not just a commodity, but also a necessity. It anchors us in community and connects us with family, neighbours, friends, school, work and services. However, because of decades of successive Liberal and Conservative government policy failures, encampments are expanding across the country at record levels in both urban and rural areas. The federal housing advocate has called this a "life and death crisis".

The financialization of housing has left one-third of all seniors housing in Canada in the hands of institutional investors, along with 30% of purpose-built rental buildings. Young people are shut out of the housing market, and renters are losing hope of ever owning a home. Mortgage and rent payments are devouring an unsustainable share of people's incomes. The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate recently released an analysis of Canada's housing supply shortage, which found that we are missing 4.5 million homes that are affordable to people in housing need.

International evidence demonstrates that direct financing to scale up non-market housing, such as co-operative, non-profit and public housing, is the most efficient and effective way to address this shortfall, yet the Liberal government continues to rely heavily on the for-profit housing industry to fix the problem. This does not mean that the private market has no role in housing construction; instead, it underscores the importance of ensuring that public investments yield tangible public benefits and prioritizes housing solutions that truly serve the needs of our communities.

It is important to note that public spending on non-market housing is anti-inflationary. It expands supply and puts downward pressure on prices across the housing market. Moreover, if public spending is offset by measured, fair tax increases, the net effect on aggregate demand remains neutral.

This budget makes a lot of promises about housing, which if carried out will go a long way in helping meet our goals. However, the problem is that we have heard this before. In 2017, the Prime Minister announced a \$40 billion national housing strategy, saying that it was, “a robust, comprehensive, life-changing plan to help Canadians get into homes, and stay there.” Seven years later, what Canadians have really experienced is a robust, comprehensive and life-changing housing crisis, one in which rent and home prices have doubled. Home ownership is further away than ever, and we have lost 11 units of affordable housing for every one built.

While New Democrats support the investments announced in this budget, the real test will be ensuring they are realized. We will do our part to monitor and to press for that to happen.

I must say a few words about several weaknesses in this budget.

● (1225)

The allocation of a paltry \$200 a month for the Canada disability benefit for Canadians living with disabilities is beyond deficient. It is insulting. It is far below what is necessary to lift these citizens out of poverty. Combined with provincial disability programs, it fails to meet even this government's own assessment of subsistence at \$2,000 per month when it set the CERB amount during COVID. This is unacceptable and New Democrats call for it to be raised substantially and immediately.

This budget aims to slash 5,000 public service jobs through attrition. This is short-sighted and wrong. We need our public servants to deliver the programs Canadians rely on.

We all recall how vital our civil servants were during COVID, delivering the benefits we desperately needed when we were in a national crisis. What we ought to slash is the use of government outsourcing and private consultants, something that is far more costly and, in many cases, scandalously wasteful. We need only look at this government's outrageous expenditure of \$60 million to produce the ArriveCAN app, which proved unreliable and of questionable utility, something that should have been produced for, at most, one-tenth that cost.

This budget is a missed opportunity to address the gaping tax unfairness and imbalance that successive Liberal and Conservative governments have created in Canada.

For decades, both old-guard parties slashed corporate taxes, making individual working and middle-class Canadians increasingly shoulder the cost of government. Today, Canada has one of the lowest rates of corporate taxes in the OECD, ranking 33rd of 38 countries. Our federal corporate tax rate of 15% is over 5% less than the United States, and President Biden recently announced his intention to raise U.S. corporate tax rates by some 7%. The upshot is that we could and should implement a prudent and measured increase as well, providing billions of dollars of revenue for programs Canadians need and reducing our deficit while remaining competitive among our peers.

This budget also missed a clear opportunity to implement a tax on windfall oil and gas profits.

While Canadians were suffering from the after-effects of the pandemic, in 2022 oil and gas extraction companies in Canada made a

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record-breaking \$63 billion in profits. Although data for 2023 has not yet been published, it is shaping up to be the second-most profitable year in the history of the oil patch. The 2022 federal budget introduced a one-time tax of 15% on profits above \$1 billion for banks and insurance companies. The PBO report found that extending the tax to the oil and gas sector could generate \$4.2 billion in revenue over five years. New Democrats think that this is a policy measure that is eminently warranted.

I would like to also point out the lack of sufficient emphasis in this budget when it comes to the climate crisis.

We believe that this is the most important issue facing our planet, another truly existential issue. While addressing it will take concerted global action, Canada must do its part. Although the budget has a number of laudable steps in this direction, including money for the transition to zero-emission vehicles and heat pump retrofits, in our view it should go much farther and faster if we are to meet our international commitments and obligations to future generations of Canadians.

Finally, I would like to address the important discussion in Canada regarding productivity.

The statistics on productivity levels in Canada are indeed concerning. The Bank of Canada's senior deputy governor recently noted that the need to improve productivity has reached an emergency level in this country, but we do need to analyze and interpret the numbers cautiously. We are clearly still experiencing the after-effects of the pandemic and the unprecedented shocks it imposed on our economy, integrated supply chains and our labour market. We must be careful not to give credence to outdated and offensive ideas that the best way to improve productivity is to blame or put the burden on workers, compelling them to work harder, faster, longer and for less money.

A factor that is far more important to address in the productivity problem is the ongoing weakness of business capital spending in Canada. Spending on machinery and equipment by businesses and on R and D and innovation has been falling as a share of GDP for many years, dating back, in fact, to the large corporate tax cuts Paul Martin introduced at the turn of this century. That is an ironic fact, since it was argued, at the time, that corporate tax cuts would spur more business investment, not less. However, the truth is that even with rapid job creation and population growth, business capital investment has not kept up.

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• (1230)

To address this, the New Democrats believe the federal government must implement strategies that are more effective at increasing capital investment and innovation in Canada, rather than the tired, old, trickle-down theories, like tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, that clearly have not worked. Other countries, like those in northern Europe and east Asia, have shown it is possible to combine strong investment and technology with strong labour standards and public programs. Canadian workers are skilled and productive. In fact, by some measures, our workforce is the best trained of any OECD country.

To put those skills to work to their full potential, workers need good, secure and stable jobs, with access to proper machinery and equipment, lifelong training and the opportunity to earn better wages along with their productivity so that they can share in the wealth their talents and skills create. That is why New Democrats support better vocational training, stronger labour standards and unions that can be active partners in technological change, training, safety and job quality.

To conclude, allow me to draw a clear distinction between the diverging economic paths that lie ahead for our country.

The Conservatives would prioritize corporate interests, even at the expense of ordinary Canadians. If they have their way, essential services will suffer. There will be no dental care, no pharmacare, no renter protections, no investments in affordable housing or child care, and no school food programs for our children.

Under the Liberals' watch, Canadians have been left grappling and struggling with rising costs, while big corporations and wealthy CEOs are thriving. It is a stark contrast. The privileged few prosper, while the majority struggle to make ends meet. That is unconscionable in a country as wealthy as Canada. The affordability crisis has reached a breaking point, yet the Liberal government still hesitates to take decisive action. It only acts when pushed by the NDP. It took the New Democrats to force its hand in budget 2024 to push for policies that genuinely benefit people.

Our vision extends beyond the present to a future where our federal government champions affordability, equity and the well-being of every family. It would be a Canada where no one is left behind, where accessible health care, housing and opportunity for all are not mere aspirations, but fundamental rights and the reality.

Together, we know we can build a Canada that thrives on fairness, compassion and shared prosperity. Do not ever let them say it cannot be done.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about Canada's ranking among OECD countries. Does he not also note that Canada is the top among all OECD countries when it comes to per capita foreign direct investment in the last year? He knows very well that this did not happen in a vacuum. It is Canada's focus on climate change, the focus on the generation of clean energy, the availability of good, skilled workers and the overall fiscal prudence the government has shown and the economic stability it has shown.

Are these not reasons why foreign companies are still interested in investing in Canada today?

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I have seen the numbers and I listened to the finance minister state that Canada is leading the G7 in foreign direct investment.

I would turn my attention to domestic investment. I am not interested in having only foreign companies come into Canada to develop our economy. I want to build strong Canadian businesses and strong champions here at home. We have a lack of investment by Canadian companies in machinery, equipment, technology and innovation that has been lagging and dropping for many years.

That is one of the prime reasons Canada is not reaching its potential as an economy. We should be the wealthiest country in the world. We have everything in this country: land, minerals, oil and gas, food, a well-educated population and strong social supports. However, we are not reaching our potential. That is because of decades of poor economic decisions made by successive federal governments that failed to fully harness the potential that is here.

• (1235)

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, our political party's vision often closely aligns with that of my colleague's party. That said, I question how the NDP can support the fact that seniors have not had a substantial increase in their purchasing power through old age security for the past 15 years. The New Democrats have not shown a real willingness to reflect and move forward on this issue even though the Bloc Québécois has tabled a bill and has been demanding it for a very long time.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks. I know what he is going to say. He is going to say that they have dental insurance and pharmacare. However, we have to realize that seniors do not just need dental care and medication, they also need greater purchasing power to afford life's basic necessities. How is my colleague willing to support this budget when it has no regard for seniors?

[English]

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, in general, I agree totally with my hon. colleague. The seniors are the Canadians in this country who have, through their many decades of effort, toil, work and labour, built this country. It is a shame when we have so many seniors who are living paycheck to paycheck, often many beneath the poverty line, so we think there needs to be a comprehensive resolution to this issue.

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That is why, in my speech and in the budget, we are pushing for affordable non-market housing, including for seniors. We have long pushed for increases to the Canada pension plan and old age security, and it should be set, at a minimum, at the poverty level.

My hon. colleague did raise dental care. There are two ways we can help seniors. We can raise their incomes, and we can reduce their expenses. In terms of dental care, I cannot tell the House how many seniors, including many in Quebec, have come to me and our party and said thanks for providing dental care, because they now do not have to pay out of pocket for necessary dental care, such as dentures and other things, which they cannot live without. The Canadian dental plan will pay for that for them. That is going to make a meaningful impact on their bottom line and their budgets, and they are thankful for it.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Madam Speaker, I noticed in the member's speech that he said that Canada is blessed with the wonderful resource of oil and gas. The member from his party for Timmins—James Bay is bent on shutting oil and gas down. We all know that oil and gas is responsible for contributing to the taxes that fund the social programs the member mentioned.

Can he expand a little on how he sees oil and gas being a significant contributor to the Canadian economy?

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, oil and gas has provided a lot of revenue to governments over the last decades.

Oil and gas in and of themselves are wonderful products. They make flight possible and, in some cases, they provide the basis for pharmaceuticals, the plastics industry and those things. What we are finding in this country, and what I do not think Conservatives understand, is that the planet is telling us that we are burning too much of it, too fast. We do not need to eliminate it totally. What we have to do is get our carbon emissions down below the limit that our natural environment can handle.

I am always shocked that Conservatives, particularly when the root of their name is “conserve”, would not be prudent and cautious when our natural world is telling us that we have to take our foot off the gas and we have to get carbon emissions below a level that our planet can handle. That does not mean that there is not a place or a use for any fossil fuels. It means we have to make sure we calibrate that in a manner that is in harmony with our natural world.

We are not doing that now, and that is why the NDP is so concerned about the climate crisis. It is because we risk planetary catastrophe.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to listen to the speech by the member for Carleton, the leader of the Conservative Party. Particularly there were a couple of areas I found really shocking. In one he was talking about federal lands. The Conservative leader clearly does not understand indigenous rights, in terms of the right of first refusal, particularly around resource extraction.

He also has a very clear plan to eliminate any sort of public health response to the overdose crisis. In fact, he cited indigenous peoples and our traditions as the way forward, when it is indigenous peoples in my riding who are fighting for safe consumption sites and safe supply.

There is another thing that is missing in the budget. I want to say that auto theft is a critical issue in this country, but the government put \$47 million toward auto theft and \$22 million to deal with the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls. That sends a clear message to indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people that this country values cars more than us.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague can speak to some of the issues that the Conservatives clearly would gut and make worse and that the Liberals are not responding to.

• (1240)

Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the powerful voice she brings to the House, not only on behalf of people in her constituency but on behalf of indigenous, Métis and Inuit people, and people representing many minority and marginalized communities in the country.

I also want to take a moment to thank her for her persistent and effective work on the red dress alert, which I also note received a paltry amount of money in this budget, less than \$2 million, if I am not mistaken. This ought to be implemented immediately and fully financed and resourced. The red dress alert is an incredibly important precautionary and preventative measure than can perhaps warn our communities to prevent an indigenous woman or girl or anybody else who is at risk in those communities from being hurt or injured.

To the larger question, we have not had a chance yet to analyze the budget. As I said, the need for justice and reconciliation, the debt we owe to indigenous people, has yet to be repaid. This budget does not come anywhere close to the kinds of investments that are needed to ensure indigenous people can fully achieve their potential and their rights. The NDP is going to continue to press the government for that.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by recognizing that there is no coalition government in the House, that the NDP is in a supply and confidence agreement with the government, meaning its support is what allows the governing party to continue.

I appreciate that the member for Vancouver Kingsway called out the shamefully low amount set aside for the Canada disability benefit and the complete lack of a windfall profit tax on the record-breaking profits of the oil and gas industry in the midst of a climate crisis.

Will the NDP withhold its support for this budget on the condition that the government at least increase the Canada disability benefit above the poverty line and put in place a windfall profit tax on the oil and gas industry?

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Mr. Don Davies: Madam Speaker, it is an opportunity for us to say, and we are all parliamentarians here, that we have a duty to our constituents to elevate debate in the House and to speak accurately. Every time the Conservatives call it a coalition government or say we have been in power for nine years when those things are just not true does a disservice to this institution and it confuses Canadians and our democracy, and it needs to stop.

We will continue to analyze the budget, and we will come out with our position on it in due course. It is 416 pages long, and there are a lot of positive things in there, such as pharmacare, a school nutrition program—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nepean.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Milton.

I entered politics with three main objectives: first, affordable housing for all Canadians; second, provide secure retirement income security to 11 million working Canadians without workplace pensions; and third, ensure Canadian society and the economy remain robust and competitive in the global knowledge-based economy thus securing prosperity for our children and grandchildren.

On my first objective, in the budget, we have announced tremendous investments for housing, continuing our focus on what we had earlier introduced, the national housing strategy. On my second objective, we have reformed the Canada pension plan to secure retirement income for Canadians, and we have also introduced various targeted programs to support seniors. On my third objective on securing Canada's position in the changing global knowledge-based economy, we have redoubled our efforts through this budget.

Canada has been the best country in the world because of our rich natural resources like oil and gas, minerals and metals, strong agricultural sector, and the hard work of several generations of Canadians, including the present day seniors. However, there are major changes happening in the global economy that have a direct impact on the Canadian economy, which have consequences on Canadian prosperity.

Globalization as we knew it for last several decades has disappeared. Now we are moving toward onshoring, nearshoring and friend-shoring. The world is in this great transition phase and Canada has to act fast to secure our place in the new global economic order.

We foresaw this coming and hence adopted policies to strengthen our manufacturing sector and focused on the knowledge-based sector. We have made, and continue make, major investments in many economic sectors, including the manufacturing sector and sectors focused on advanced technologies.

Before I continue on the budget focus of advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence, let me first note few points.

In the fall, we set three very specific fiscal guideposts. In this budget, each one of the three objectives we set last fall are being met and so is our fiscal anchor, with a declining federal debt-to-GDP ratio over the medium term. In fact, Canada has the lowest deficit-to-GDP ratio and net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, and we

continue to maintain our AAA credit rating. We have a vision for Canada's future that is innovative, inclusive and industrious.

I wish to highlight the critical role that innovation and advanced technologies play in shaping the future of Canada's economy. In a world that is rapidly transforming through technological advancements, it is imperative that Canada not only keeps pace but leads the charge in the global innovation race. Innovation is the cornerstone of economic resilience and growth. It drives productivity, creates high-quality jobs and fosters competitive industries.

Through advanced technologies, we can solve some of our most pressing challenges, from climate change to health care, and enhancing the quality of life for all Canadians while ensuring sustainable development. Canada's commitment to technological advancement is evident in our strategic investments in sectors like artificial intelligence, quantum computing and clean technology. These sectors are not merely areas of academic interest; they are the engines of our future economy. By investing in these areas, we are setting the stage for a new era of industrial and technological leadership. Advanced technologies also bring tremendous economic benefits. They open up new markets, enable Canadian businesses to compete globally and attract foreign investment.

● (1245)

Every dollar invested in innovation multiplies across the economy, generating wealth and opportunities that extend through every province and sector. Moreover, the adoption of these technologies ensures that Canada remains a desirable destination for talented innovators and entrepreneurs from around the world. By embracing advanced technologies, we are building a robust ecosystem that nurtures creativity and turns innovative ideas into tangible solutions that benefit society as a whole.

As an example of our commitment, let me mention a subject that stands at the very heart of our future economic prosperity and global leadership, artificial intelligence, or AI. Our nation has already made significant strides in this field and it is crucial that we understand and support the ongoing efforts and strategic investments that will solidify Canada's position as a world leader in AI technology.

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Since 2017, we have dedicated over \$2 billion to nurture our AI ecosystem, establishing Canada as a beacon of innovation and expertise in the global arena. This dedication has borne fruit in numerous ways. We are globally recognized for our strong AI talent, research capabilities and a rapidly growing AI sector that leads the G7 in several key metrics, including the growth of women in AI and year-over-year growth of AI talent.

Our researchers and companies have not only kept pace but have set international benchmarks, publishing more AI-related papers per capita than any other G7 country since 2019. Our AI firms are also at the forefront of innovation, filing patents at three times the average rate in the G7 and attracting a significant portion of venture capital in Canada. Last year alone, the number of actively engaged AI professionals in Canada grew by 29%, underscoring a vibrant and expanding workforce dedicated to advancing this technology.

However, our ambition does not stop with past successes. Recognizing the transformative potential of AI, we have launched pioneering initiatives like the world's first national AI strategy, the pan-Canadian artificial intelligence strategy, yet we face challenges that could stymie our progress.

Currently, most advanced computing capacity, which is crucial for AI development, is located outside Canada. This not only slows down our research and innovation, but also poses security risks and dependencies on foreign technology. To address these challenges and propel us forward, budget 2024 announced a historic investment in AI, \$2.4 billion targeted at enhancing our AI capabilities. This includes \$2 billion for establishing the AI compute access fund and the Canadian AI sovereign compute strategy, which aims to catalyze the development of Canadian-owned AI infrastructure and reduce our reliance on external resources. An additional \$200 million will support AI start-ups and accelerate AI adoption in crucial sectors like agriculture, health care and manufacturing.

It is only through our collective effort and shared vision that we can realize the full potential of AI and secure Canada's advantage on this critical frontier.

The importance of innovation and advanced technologies to Canada's economy cannot be overstated. As we look forward, let us continue to invest in the technologies of tomorrow and ensure that Canada remains at the forefront of global innovation. Let us be bold in our ambitions and steadfast in our commitment to a prosperous, technologically advanced Canada.

● (1250)

[Translation]

Ms. Andr  anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I heard my colleague praising the budget, but I would rather talk about the people who were completely overlooked in this budget. I would even say that it adds insult to injury.

Not only did the government still not budget for the increase in old age security for seniors aged 65 to 74, as urgently called for by the Bloc Qu  b  cois in a pre-budget request, not only did it fail to allocate funding for Bill C-319, but there is nothing for seniors.

No, I do not want to hear about measures for housing. These measures for housing are not aimed specifically at seniors. Seniors

have specific requests. There is nothing in this budget for them. They have been overlooked. This only adds insult to injury.

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, since we came to power about eight and a half years back, we have taken many measures to help Canadians of all ages, including seniors. We reduced the retirement age from 67 to 65. We have targeted supports for Canadians, especially for seniors, but not just seniors. Through our Canada child benefit, through our \$10-a-day day care, through our dental care program and our proposed national pharmacare program, we are there to help Canadians in need.

● (1255)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question is around the benefit for people living with disabilities: the Canada disability benefit. The community has made its displeasure with this benefit very clear. What this would work out to is about \$200 a month for people.

We know that, during COVID, Canadians said very clearly that everyone needed \$2,000 to survive, to pay their rent, to be able to buy groceries and to be able to live with dignity. However, the government is saying to people living with disabilities that \$200 a month is all they are going to be able to get. For many of them, with their provincial benefits, it is far below \$2,000 a month, and that was before the cost of groceries and the cost of living skyrocketed. People living with disabilities in our communities are among the most vulnerable, and the government has abandoned them. What does the member have to say about that decision?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, we have introduced many programs that support Canadians in need, including the dental care program and the national pharmacare program that we are now proposing. Regarding disabilities, it is very important that we should make sure that the provinces will not be involved in a claw-back of the funding that would be provided by the federal government.

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Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as always, my colleague's speech was interesting and very informative. I know of his great advocacy in the areas of international trade, artificial intelligence and so on, and I appreciate that from him.

I know that Montreal is a hub for innovation in artificial intelligence and that there are other hubs across the country. Could the member provide some examples of how our budget would help these hubs develop further?

Mr. Chandra Arya: Madam Speaker, the point that the member raised is very important. We are a global leader in artificial intelligence, and Montreal and Quebec play a major role.

However, so far, we are dependent on jurisdictions outside Canada for the compute access that is very critical for artificial intelligence. We have now proposed a \$2-billion investment so we can provide compute access from within Canada. In addition to that, we have proposed \$200 million for AI start-ups and to help companies in other critical economic sectors, such as health care, agriculture or manufacturing, to use and embrace the artificial intelligence that is available.

[Translation]

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always nice to see you in the chair, and today is no different.

I am very proud to have the opportunity today to speak to budget 2024, a budget with a special focus on gen Z, one that aims to ensure a better future for all Canadians.

[English]

Budget 2024 ensures that Canada's social safety net will work for every generation. When our government was first elected in 2015, we recognized that the economy had changed. People needed more supports and supports of a new kind. The government got to work immediately.

We introduced the new Canada child benefit. We have helped cut child poverty by more than half in the last eight years with this measure. We reinforced the security and dignity of retirement by strengthening the CPP, increasing the old age security for seniors 75 and over, indexing it for inflation and making the CCB, in particular, tax-free. We then permanently eliminated interest on all federal student and apprenticeship loans for Canadians of student age. We also made generational investments in \$10-a-day child care, which cut Canadian child care costs by at least half in every province and territory. That gave families more money back in their pockets, and it gives kids the best start in their lives.

When I walk the streets of Milton, I see a lot of strollers. There are a lot of young people per capita in Milton. Parents stop me all the time to say that they are saving a lot of money on child care costs, and they recognize that was a measure the federal government campaigned on and made happen.

With budget 2024, we are making more transformative investments that will continue to level the playing field and lift up every generation. Top of mind is universal public health care. We made a

promise to Canadians that if they get ill or injured, or if they are born with complicated health issues, they do not need to go into debt just to get essential care. Unlike in other countries, we depend on our health care, not our credit card, to get the attention we require when we go to a doctor or a clinic. That is why, last year, the federal government announced our 10-year health care plan, providing close to \$200 billion to clear backlogs, improve primary care, cut wait times and deliver the health outcomes that Canadians need and deserve.

With budget 2024, we are introducing new measures that would strengthen Canada's social safety net to lift up every generation. Chief among those is national pharmacare. This includes our landmark move towards building a comprehensive national pharmacare program. Bill C-64, the pharmacare act, proposes the foundational principles of national universal pharmacare in Canada. It describes the federal government's intent to work with provinces and territories to provide universal single-payer coverage for most prescription contraceptives and many diabetes medications.

This is something that I campaigned on and that I strongly believe in. Canada continues to be the only country in the world with socialized medicine without national pharmacare, but that is changing now because our government took action.

We are also very aware of the fact that mental health is health. Our government is aware that young Canadians are facing extremely high levels of stress and mental health challenges. That includes depression and anxiety. It is a tough time to be a millennial. Many of those young people are still in school or are just starting out in their careers, and they are struggling with the costs of private mental health care. The rising cost of living has further exacerbated these concerns. That is why our government remains committed to ensuring that future generations have access to basic mental health supports, so that they can have a healthy start to adulthood.

Budget 2024 also proposes to provide \$500 million over five years for the creation of a new youth mental health fund, which will help younger Canadians access the mental health care they need.

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We are also supporting children in an incremental way in budget 2024. We know that children are the future of Canada. Many of them are the leaders of today. They will become tomorrow's doctors, nurses, electricians, teachers, scientists and small business owners. Every child deserves the best start in life. Their success is truly Canada's success.

In budget 2024, our government is advancing progress through investments to strengthen and grow our Canada-wide early learning and child care system, save for an education later in life, have good health care and unlock the promise of Canada for the next generation.

Budget 2024 also includes taking decisive action to launch a new national school food program to help ensure that children have access to the food they need to get a fairer start in life, regardless of their family circumstances. The \$1-billion program is expected to provide meals for over 400,000 children in schools every single year.

• (1300)

This is very personal for me. I benefited quite a lot from school food programs in my community. I was lucky. I grew up in a town that had lots of volunteers and great community-serving organizations, ones like Food for Life, Halton Food For Thought and Food4Kids in Halton Region. When kids needed a snack then or need a snack now, they can access a snack, but that is not true in every single school.

I am really proud of the fact that Brent Mansfield was here. Through the work that the Coalition for Healthy School Food did and the advocacy that all the food security organizations have done over the last decades, we are building Canada's first-ever national school food program. It would build on the work that great charities, such as Food for Life, Food For Thought, Food4Kids and many others, have been doing in their regions. It is important to note that this is all made possible through volunteer work and teachers taking on expenses themselves, sometimes bringing food from home, and sometimes taking time out of their curriculum to teach edible education and nutritional literacy. These are really important skills.

I am a big fan of Jamie Oliver. I saw on social media yesterday that he congratulated the mayor of London, in the U.K., for introducing more healthy school food for kids. I am a huge supporter and advocate for a national school food program, and I am thrilled that it is reflected in budget 2024.

We are also supporting millennials and gen Z. We must restore a fair chance for them. If they stay in school and study hard, they should be able to afford college, university or an apprenticeship. They should be able to graduate, get a good job, put a roof over their head and build a good middle-class life for them and their families. Budget 2024 would ensure the government's help to restore generational fairness for millennials and gen Z by removing the interest on Canada student loans; unlocking access to post-secondary education, including for the most vulnerable students and youth; investing in the skills of tomorrow; and creating new opportunities for younger Canadians to get the skills they need to get great jobs.

More specifically, in budget 2024, we are announcing the government's intention to extend for an additional year the increase in full-time Canada student grants from \$3,000 to \$4,200 per year and interest-free Canada student loans from \$210 to \$300 per week. The increased grants would support 587,000 students across Canada and increased interest-free loans would support 652,000 students with a combined \$7.3 billion for the upcoming academic year. I cannot think of a better investment.

While I am proud of the social safety net that our government has provided Canadians since 2015 and certainly before that, we are aware that too many Canadians are not feeling as though their hard work is paying off. I am here today to reassure Canadians that it does not have to be that way. I am regularly heard in this House talking about co-op housing, and I am really glad that we are advancing on the promise to restore co-op housing in this country, to build more co-operative housing and to invest in more non-market housing solutions.

Our government is working hard to ensure that Canadians can keep more of their money. In many respects, this would ensure that they can invest in the economy; however, it is also about the well-being of families. We are taking action to hold to account those who are charging Canadians unnecessarily high prices, whether it is corporations charging junk fees or banks charging unnecessary banking fees. This budget would also better assure that corporations are not taking advantage of Canadians. It would make sure the economy is fair and affordable, as well as that everybody is set up to get a good deal. Budget 2024 would also build on these efforts and give people back control over their personal finances and banking choices, with action to cap banking fees and give better access to digital banking, lower-cost accounts and stronger consumer protection.

While the Conservatives continually prioritize the interests of wealthy CEOs and corporate lobbyists, particularly from the oil and gas sector, we will stay focused. We know that we work for Canadians here in the House, not the greedy corporate interests of the top 0.1% of earners. With some of the measures in budget 2024 that I have touched on today, we are ensuring that the support and advocacy continue.

• (1305)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for sharing his personal stories about using the school food program and living in co-op housing.

I have always been fascinated with the concept of co-op housing; it is a form of housing where the people living there have ownership, and they participate in various ways. If they are paying below-market rent, in some cases, they will have to do other things to contribute and make up for that.

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Could the member share with the House his experience with co-op housing and whether he shares the same thought that I do in terms of the personal and co-operative ownership of it?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, I always take the opportunity to talk about co-op housing in the House because it is where I came from, and I will never forget where I came from.

Back in the nineties, various governments decided that they were getting out of the game. They were going to stop building co-operative housing and leave it up to the market. They said they were going to download that responsibility onto other levels of government and ignored all the good work that non-market housing solutions were doing. It is really unfortunate.

We do not have a time machine, but we do have a budget. In the last three budgets, our government has invested in co-operative housing. Shockingly, we are the first government to do that since the early 1990s. Recognizing there is a problem is the first step, and actually doing something takes a bit of courage and bold action. Our government is not afraid of that courage and bold action. We have taken on that responsibility to invest in co-operative housing.

I have worked really closely with the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. It is an amazing advocate. I should declare my personal conflict: I grew up in Chautauqua co-op, and my mom still builds co-op housing and manages a co-op in Mississauga. It means that some families and communities are fortunate enough to have co-ops.

I would say that there are more co-ops in Quebec and British Columbia than there are anywhere else in the world because those provinces have done an extraordinary job ensuring there are co-ops in their budgets and on their agendas. I am really proud of this government for taking on that courage as well.

• (1310)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, there is a Constitution that divvies up federal and provincial areas of jurisdiction. People can probably see where I am going with this. The level of interference in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction in this budget is appalling. It is still happening, and it will keep happening.

Last week, a journalist asked the Prime Minister how he would react if Quebec wanted to invest in one of his areas of jurisdiction. I think it was a joke, but the Prime Minister replied that he would talk to the province in question.

I would like my colleague to comment on that. Have the provinces and Quebec really been consulted? Leading up to this budget, were there negotiations that covered all these areas of jurisdiction, or is Canada interfering yet again?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, the answer is yes, every province has had the opportunity to submit provincial budgets. The provinces and territories have a lot of opportunities to discuss their priorities with our government. I am open to having this kind of conversation with my provincial and territorial colleagues at federal-provincial-territorial meetings or on other occasions.

At the same time, I think that the best way to ensure and encourage the protection of French in Canada is to promote French in all the provinces, including Ontario. Personally, improving my French is a priority, and I am very fortunate to have the opportunity to work here with a teacher. In Canadian schools across the country, however, students do not have the same opportunity to practise their French.

It is an important part of being Canadian.

[English]

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the great member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Whether one is an immigrant to this country like me, or has lived here throughout one's life, it is really hard not to feel like Canada is not the same Canada anymore. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, it feels more broken than it has ever felt. It is hard to walk down the streets of our major cities and not see tents everywhere, as well as crime, chaos and disorder, or to walk by a business that has a "for lease" or a "for sale" sign because they became insolvent.

We hear stories all the time about mothers having to put groceries back on the shelves because they are not sure if they can afford them or having to buy less nutritious food. Those moms, as well as seniors, have had to find other options because rents have gone up and mortgages have doubled. Now we are hearing stories about students living under bridges. We are hearing about nurses and teachers who have good jobs, but after nine years of the government, they have to live in their cars because they cannot afford housing. It is harder and harder for people to eat, heat and house themselves after nine years of the government.

High interest rates have been driven up by the government's deficits. Once again, last week, Canadians looking for any kind of relief when it comes to housing, received none. There is no hope at the end of that tunnel because the Bank of Canada, once again, had to hold the rates higher for longer. Due to rates staying higher for longer, builders are not building, buyers are not buying and developers are not developing.

This country used to be one where, if people put in the hard work, they would be able to get something out of that. The member previous to me spoke about personal experience. We moved here as immigrants. We did not come here with much. I was considered an at-risk youth. We went through really harsh poverty. My family and I used to stand in line for low-income bus passes. However, there was a promise that was kept in Canada back then, something that we called the Canadian dream, where if people worked hard, they would be able to see the fruits of their labour.

Today, after nine years of the government, the Canadian dream has turned into a nightmare for more and more families. Those who have moved here have said this is not the Canada that was promised to them, one where people could own a business, own a house, afford groceries and have an affordable place to live. Those people who have lived here all their lives are wondering what they are doing here as this place just does not feel like the same Canada anymore. That is because, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, life has never been so miserable or more expensive.

How did we get here? The Prime Minister, after saying that budgets balance themselves, has delivered eight inflationary budgets that drove up inflation to 40-year highs. Canadians have seen the most rapid and aggressive interest rate hikes that have never been seen before in Canadian history. The Prime Minister slammed a carbon tax scam onto Canadians, making the cost of everything even more expensive. Just recently this month, when 70% of Canadians were telling him to spike the hike and to not go ahead with a carbon tax increase, he still increased the carbon tax by 23%.

Just now the government's own Parliamentary Budget Officer once again confirmed what he said before the carbon tax increase, which was that a majority of families will be worse off after this carbon tax scam, factoring in the economic and fiscal impact of what they would get back from the so-called rebate. He also confirmed that they would still be worse off after the hike on April 1.

There is misinformation coming from the government. The government does not understand the real pain that all of these bad policies have caused for Canadians and why Canadians feel like this is not the same Canada any more. The dream and the promise of Canada is gone.

• (1315)

Just this year alone, the Liberal-NDP government will force taxpayers, Canadian taxpayers, to pay more for the Liberal-NDP Prime Minister's interest on the debt he accumulated than what goes to health care or national defence. Can members believe that? This means that \$54 billion is going to go to bankers, bondholders and this Prime Minister's Bay Street buddies rather than going to doctors, nurses and hospitals. That is after nine years of this Liberal-NDP government.

There is no relief because, on his way to quadrupling the carbon tax scam, he increased the carbon tax by 23%. We instantly saw, all across the country, what that did when people were filling up their gas tanks or when they went to the grocery stores.

There is nothing, also, on top of that to address the productivity issue. Senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada, Carolyn Rogers, recently said that Canada's productivity is a break-glass emergency. The Bank of Canada saying that should ring alarm bells. When the Bank of Canada is saying it is raining, there is probably a thunderstorm or a tornado coming. That is after nine years of the government.

It is not just Conservatives or the Bank of Canada saying this. Liberals are calling out other Liberals about this budget. A proud Liberal, former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge, said that this is going to be the worse budget since 1982. This is because Canada is in a productivity crisis that was created by the govern-

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ment when it drove out investment. In fact, it has driven more than 260 billion dollars' worth of investment out of Canada since 2016 because of its failed policies and its anti-energy, anti-Canada, anti-Alberta, anti-resources agenda.

This woke agenda is the reason why people are not investing in Canada and people are leaving Canada. They are leaving everything on the table here and just leaving, and this is because they do not see any reason to invest.

There is more of a tax burden. There is a lot more red tape and regulation here than anywhere else, even though Canada has some of the best standards when it comes to environmental standards and human rights standards, yet this anti-energy, anti-business government continues to drive more and more of our powerful paycheques outside to dirty dictators and other places when it should be here for our people.

Canada is in that bad of a situation when it comes to productivity. Canada has the worst economic growth in all of the OECD countries. In fact, our GDP per capita, or per person, which is how we consider how each Canadian is determined to be successful in this country, is worse today than it was in 2018. That means that Canadians are poorer. It is clear to see when two million Canadians are going to a food bank in a single month, and a million more are projected to be this year, and when, like I said, students are living under bridges, and nurses and teachers are living in their cars. That is Canada after nine years of this Liberal-NDP Prime Minister.

This budget does absolutely nothing but pour another \$40 billion of inflationary fuel on the fire that this government started, with higher deficits, higher taxes, more pain and more suffering for Canadians. It was not like this before this Liberal-NDP Prime Minister, and it will not be like this after he is gone.

He is not worth the cost. After the next election, the carbon tax election, Canada will see a common-sense Conservative government that would axe the tax to bring down the cost of gas, groceries and home heating. It would also knock off a huge chunk of the inflation we see today, which means that interest rates could come down at a faster rate. Common-sense Conservatives would build homes, not more bureaucracy, like we have seen after nine years of this government, which pumped in \$89 billion of inflationary spending to only double housing costs, doubling rents and mortgages.

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A common-sense Conservative government would incentivize municipalities to increase their permits by 15% so that they could build. We would fix the budget. We would bring in a dollar-for-dollar law so that interest rates and inflation could come down and so Canadians would not have to lose their homes. We would work responsibly with taxpayers' dollars and not throw it away like this government does, and we would stop the crime, chaos and disorder we see in this country. We need to help our loved ones get back on their feet through recovery and not through more drugs.

We would bring it home for Canadian people and restore the Canadian dream this great country used to have.

• (1320)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the facts seem to contradict what the hon. member is saying. Canada is one of the top countries for attracting direct foreign investment. In fact, it is the top country per capita in attracting direct foreign investment. However, I will admit that there are pressures on capital in Canada to go to the United States specifically in green industries, and that pressure was caused by a \$400-billion Inflation Reduction Act in the U.S.

Does the hon. member think that we need to spend much more on green technology in this country to counterbalance that attraction that is coming from the United States?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, the first thing we need to do is get this anti-energy, anti-resource government out of the way and replace it with a common-sense Conservative government that will green-light green projects. When Germany, Greece and Japan recently came to Canada begging for our LNG, we should have been leaders and been able to provide that, not only to bring powerful paycheques to our Canadian people but to replace dirty dictator oil around the world.

Another great way to lower global emissions is to replace that dirty dictator oil with clean, green, low-carbon Canadian energy that we can be proud of and that brings powerful paycheques to our people and a better economy, which will help fix the productivity issue. After nine years of this government, Canada does not look like it is open for business anymore.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is one of the things that always amaze me. The member is from Alberta, as I am, and he will know that, right now, the wildfire season is already under way in Alberta. It started in February this year, which is unbelievable and unprecedented. We are hearing from farmers in southern Alberta who are selling their herds. They cannot afford to feed them because of the multi-year drought that we are experiencing. However, when I hear a member from Alberta never wanting to talk about those issues, I think of my two children and the fact that I want them to live in my province. I want them to stay in Alberta and have good, forward-facing jobs, yet he has no plan for dealing with the climate crisis. There is no interest in even talking about the fact that farmers and Albertans are dealing with a climate emergency right now.

We are going to have climate refugees in Alberta this year when the forest fire season makes it impossible for people to breathe, and the Conservatives have no plan for that. I have no trust that if they

were ever to make government that they would make any effort to protect our environment.

• (1325)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member, being in the government right now, could only do something about it. What she should be doing is—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I think the hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn knows better.

The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I would encourage the member to withdraw that comment, because he knows that it is not true and I would not want him to be accused of lying in the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn knows that it is not true, and I would ask him to withdraw the comment please.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, if only the member would stop propping up this corrupt, inept—

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would ask the member to withdraw unequivocally, as you instructed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Yes, can the hon. member, before changing the way he is introducing his remarks, please withdraw the comment to begin with?

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, just for clarification, can you tell me why I need to do that? I would just like to know.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is not factually true.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, I withdraw that part of my statement unequivocally.

However, the member stands up here and continues to prop up the government, which has driven more Canadians to food banks than ever before, and then she has the gall to talk about farmers, when she completely supports almost putting our farmers into bankruptcy and not helping Bill C-234 pass in its original form so that we can bring down the cost of gas and groceries. The bill would help reduce costs for our hard-working farmers, yet they go on this attack on our farmers always and are okay with the cost of everything going up. They continue to prop up the government.

I think the member needs to stop protecting her leader's penchant for propping up the corrupt Prime Minister. It is time to get out of the way and go to a carbon tax election so that Canadians, and especially Albertans, can tell her and her government where they stand on the carbon tax. After the next carbon tax election, Canadians are going to scrap the Prime Minister and that NDP government.

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Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, something that bothers me and a lot of my constituents is just how much interest we are paying on the national debt. My hon. colleague talked about more money going to service the debt than going into health care, but he mentioned the military as well.

I would like to ask his opinion on the importance of supporting our military here in Canada, especially considering how volatile the world is, and about the lack of commitment by the current government to getting us to our international commitments, in particular NATO, and how much that bothers so many Canadians and our allies.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for his service and the great work he does here. He might be a slightly better hockey player than me.

However, I agree with him. It just goes to show that, under the Prime Minister after nine years, Canada has become a joke and is not taken seriously, not only just within our allies but on the world stage. We need to restore the responsibility of a common-sense Conservative—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time is up.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, when I give a speech, I usually say that I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to a subject. Today, however, I cannot really say that I am pleased.

I would like to begin with a brief look back in time. The date is August 2, 2015, when the election was called. We learned in the weeks following the start of the election campaign that the Conservative government had left a budget surplus of \$1 billion. The fiscal year ended with a surplus.

I have to admit that the Liberals are marketing masters. They are experts at this. They know how to play with people's emotions, with their minds. During the election campaign, the Prime Minister, who was then the leader of the Liberal Party, promised to run small \$10-billion deficits in the first and second years in order to invest heavily in Canadian infrastructure, and he promised to balance the budget in the third year.

Voters who heard that thought it might not be so crazy. Maybe he was right; maybe we did need to invest in infrastructure. They decided to give him a chance. Voters were entranced by that promise. Instead of making massive investments in infrastructure and running a \$10-billion deficit each year for the first two years, the government ran a \$30-billion deficit in the first year, and again in the next two years. Four years later, at the end of the first Liberal term, a \$100-billion deficit had been added to the debt.

In the very first year, after \$30 billion in deficits, we checked in on the infrastructure situation. In the end, \$3 billion of that \$30 billion had been spent on infrastructure. That means that \$27 billion

disappeared into thin air. That happened every year for the next nine years. We are talking nine years of budget deficits. These are not small deficits, these are massive budgets. The country's debt has doubled and now stands at \$1.2 trillion. That is \$600 billion more than it was at the beginning of the Liberal government's mandate.

Since then, what has happened? Inflationary deficits have caused interest rates to rise. I get the feeling that people are not paying attention to the fact that this is putting social programs at risk. Yes, the federal government already had social programs. However, by running up deficits, it has run out of money. It is jeopardizing what was already there by creating other programs that are just ideas—nothing is functioning yet. It is not the federal government's role to create programs that interfere in provincial jurisdictions.

As I said, the Liberal marketing machine is on overdrive, releasing lots of pretty pictures and promising everyone the moon and the stars, but that is not what is really happening. Programs are being jeopardized. Organizations everywhere are struggling and are no longer getting any answers. People are calling us and saying that they do not know what to do because the funding they used to receive no longer exists. They do not know what to do, and they are not getting any answers. It is not complicated. They have no money left in the bank and no room on their line of credit. That is what happens when the government runs a massive deficit and pretends that it is helping people, when there is no money left to help them. This is an untenable situation.

As far as this year's budget is concerned, some will say that the opposition complains all the time, that it has nothing better to do. It is true that we have some criticisms, but they are justified. There is a lot to criticize here. As a matter of fact, that is our job. More importantly, experts, analysts, journalists who cover the economy, have all said right from the start that, once again, this defies common sense. When we talk about having common sense, that is in contrast to things that defy common sense. Again, this is a massive deficit budget for which there is no explanation. The Liberals are quite adept at this.

I cannot show it because we are not allowed to show anything in the House, but I have a brick in my hands, namely the budget. In reading it we see that there are some fine words and good intentions, but there is nothing meaningful. In the end, we see that there is more than \$40 billion in inflationary spending, a \$39.5-billion or \$40-billion deficit and we are getting nothing for our money. If only there had been something meaningful.

Had the Liberals implemented something substantial in terms of infrastructure at the time when they promised to invest in it, then we could have said that their plan is working. However, instead, it seems as though the Liberals are wasting money and do not know where the money is going. That is fascinating but also unfortunate for Canadians.

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• (1330)

Many people have been raising red flags for a long time, and I am not talking about the Conservatives. On the Liberal side of things, two weeks ago, the former Liberal governor of the Bank of Canada, David Dodge, said that this budget would be the worst budget since 1982. John Manley, a former Liberal finance minister, also said a few months ago, that by acting as it is doing, the government is pushing on the inflationary gas pedal. This way of spending and wasting money—money that, let us face it, is borrowed because it is being loaned to us by a bank—is driving up inflation and interest rates.

What is shocking is that this does not seem to bother the Prime Minister. We keep telling ourselves that, at some point, he will finally understand, get his act together and realize that his peaches and cream idea is not working and that he needs to regain control of the public purse, but no. The government is cozying up with the NDP and, too often, with our Bloc Québécois friends. It keeps spending and spending, and we have no idea where that money is going. That is not helping people.

Canadians are struggling more than ever. They cannot make ends meet. Everything costs more. Rent has doubled. A down payment on a mortgage to buy a house is double what it used to be. Young people cannot afford that. I have 20-year-old children. They look at that and tell themselves they will never be able to buy a house. There is no way. House prices have gone up. The amount people need for a down payment has gone up. The same goes for rent. A small two-bedroom apartment used to cost \$1,000; now it is \$2,000 or \$2,200. This is not working.

Worse still, we now have to pay interest on nine years' worth of deficits, and that costs us \$54.1 billion a year. That is as much as the budget for health transfers. Instead of sending that money to the provinces to help the health care system, the government is sending it directly to banks in London and New York. What good does that do us? None at all.

Worse still, Thomas Mulcair and others have said that \$54.1 billion is the equivalent of all the GST we pay on our bills. If someone gets a restaurant bill that includes \$13 in GST, they might wonder where that \$13 will go and whether it will be spent on Canadians. Unfortunately, it will go to banks to pay off interest. All the GST collected from businesses and individuals will do nothing but pay interest on the debt.

No one is going to convince me that this makes any sense. No one is going to tell me that it is no big deal or, like the Liberals in defeat, that we are better off than other G7 countries. Are we really better off than other G7 countries? A typical single-family home in the United States costs half as much as it does here. Gasoline is cheaper. Everything is cheaper in the United States based on population. What are we being compared to? That is where it falls apart. The Liberals cannot get it through their heads that what needs to be looked at is daily life, the everyday lives of Canadians who work, pay taxes and realize that, when all is said and done, everything costs them more and they do not have the money to make ends meet.

Not everyone has the luxury of simply going to the bank to apply for a \$50,000 loan with the intention of paying the interest when

they have the money. That is not how it works in real life. The government should act like people do in real life and be cautious. That is what is so deplorable about this government. It is not careful with the public purse. Worse still, it keeps borrowing money and paying interest.

At the end of the day, we cannot support this bill. More than that, we will vote against it and consider that a vote of non-confidence, because it is over. We do not have confidence in this government. After nine years, we have more and more evidence of that.

• (1335)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member claims that no investments have been made in infrastructure. We know that the Canada Infrastructure Bank invested in the REM project in Montreal, a fantastic project. The Champlain Bridge was rebuilt using federal funds. That is why I am struggling to understand what he means. In other words, is that money down the drain?

The member seems to be saying that all of this spending is money down the drain. I would like to hear his thoughts on those two projects.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, on the contrary, I would have liked to see the Prime Minister, when he was leader of the Liberal Party in 2015, fulfill his promise and spend his \$10-billion deficits in the first and second years on infrastructure.

I would remind my colleague that it was Denis Lebel, a member of the Conservative government at the time, who announced the Champlain Bridge infrastructure project in Montreal, which cost \$5 billion or \$6 billion. It was the Conservatives who spearheaded that project, and we did a superb job.

We want infrastructure that respects taxpayers' wallets. We are criticizing the waste that goes who knows where.

• (1340)

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a simple question for my colleague. If the Conservative Party comes to power, what will it do with the substantial increase in the capital gains tax? Will they scrap it?

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, that is not a hypothetical question: we are going to come to power next year, while remaining very humble. I think that Canadians have understood that after nine years of this government, it is time for a major change.

As far as the capital gains tax for businesses and individuals are concerned, I think this needs to be analyzed. More and more financial analysts are looking at this. People who bought a small duplex 25 or 30 years ago as a way of creating a retirement fund for their old age are going to be taxed so heavily that all of their hopes will be dashed. These measures need to be reassessed.

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The Liberal magic is to say that the wealthiest will pay, but overall, the truly wealthy who hide their money in the Cayman Islands are not going to pay anything, while the people who are creating a retirement fund are under attack in this budget.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I found it so striking that the current government, when it comes to many of the issues, is starting to identify the problem, but its members fail to identify that they have been in charge and, in many cases, that they have been the architects of the very problems that they are now finally starting to identify. I wonder if my colleague could further elaborate on how, with respect to those problems that the members of the Liberal government are now starting to identify, they simply need to acknowledge that they are in many cases the cause.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, the Conservative government left a \$1-billion surplus in the lead-up to the 2015 election. Over the past nine years, the country's debt has doubled. The government no longer has money to subsidize existing social programs, yet it is adding new ones by interfering in provincial jurisdictions. It is all make-believe. It is simply marketing, trying to win votes, but in the end, all the government is doing is creating problems for Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one thing about the Conservative Party is that it is a misleading party. A good example of that is how the Conservatives like to twist the facts. For example, they talk about a lack of investment. In the first three quarters of 2023, which was just last year, Canada, out of the G7, had the highest amount of foreign investment. Do members know that it took Stephen Harper almost 10 years to create almost one million jobs? In less than nine years, we have created over two million jobs. I would suggest that the Conservatives are great at spin; on the reality of performing for Canadians, they fail.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Madam Speaker, I love to see my colleague get carried away and shouting, but I will not let it get to me.

Canada is clearly the laughing stock of the world on a number of fronts right now. More specifically, investors are extremely reluctant to come to the country, given the government's tax policies. Many companies have no interest in setting up shop here. The Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, whom I like very much, is working hard but, unfortunately, he is having trouble convincing industries because they can see that this government's policies are far too socialist.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the Minister of Justice.

Budget 2024 involves a number of programs. I do not have a lot of time today, so I want to focus my remarks on one particular pro-

gram, and then provide some comments on some stuff I heard earlier today in this debate.

I would first like to applaud the government on the introduction of a national school food program. Canada is the only G7 country that does not have a national school food program. I know that, in many parts of our country, different organizations like the Food Sharing Project in Kingston, in my riding, has been collaborating over the years with volunteers and donations in order to put food in schools so that children can have a healthy start and can have food in their stomachs when they start the day, and throughout the day, when they are at school.

I had the opportunity, not that long ago, to go with my family to help the Food Sharing Project pack, organize and prepare food to be sent out to schools. I really was impressed when my seven-year-old son looked at me and acknowledged that this was where the food came from. It dawned on me in that moment that, as far as children are concerned, when they are in school and accessing this food, there is no stereotyping as to who is receiving it. Whether they are less well off or more well off, everybody has access to the same food. It helps to break down the stereotyping that exist around who needs food because their parents cannot afford everything they need, and it gives kids a start in life where everybody is on an equal playing field.

Therefore, I am very glad to see \$1 billion committed over the next five years to a national school food program because it is more than just giving food to particularly vulnerable Canadians and vulnerable children; it breaks down the stereotyping that exist among the haves and the have-nots, so I am happy to see that the government has responded to the calls to action within our communities to provide this.

I have had the opportunity to present many petitions over the last several months. Each school community in my riding put together a petition, which I have presented at various times over the last several months to the House. I want to thank them for that incredible work. By doing that and by responding to that need, these school communities in my riding can see that their voices have been heard. They called on the government to do something so urgently, and it responded. I am very proud to be part of a government that is introducing this national school food program.

The other thing I want to talk about today is misinformation and some disinformation. In particular, I want to go back to an exchange that happened earlier today between the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Winnipeg North, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

After the introductory speech, where the member for Carleton went on for hours, I believe, because the first speaker has the opportunity to do that, the first question he received from the parliamentary secretary was about how many affordable homes he had built. The parliamentary secretary was gracious enough to allow the Leader of the Opposition to know that he had built a total number of six homes.

The Budget

What I find really interesting about this is the response from the Leader of the Opposition. This will demonstrate the master manipulator of information that he is, which the parliamentary secretary pointed out at the time. This is what happened. In response to that question, the Leader of the Opposition got up and basically chastised the member for Winnipeg North for spreading disinformation that he got off a Twitter account. I hope those who are listening in the gallery and at home will listen to the specific word he used. He said, "If you want to know...how many affordable homes were built when I was...minister, we completed 92,782 apartments". That is exactly what he said. The member for Winnipeg North, the parliamentary secretary, stood up on a point of order and said that the Leader of the Opposition was intentionally—

• (1345)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to add that the 90,000 or so units built on the member for Carleton's watch had an average rent of \$970 a month.

• (1350)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is not a point of order and the hon. member knows it.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I admire the work that the Conservative member is trying to do to cover up for his leader and to do his dirty work for him. Unfortunately, in the challenging exchange that occurred, the Leader of the Opposition doubled down on his comments.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I just want to remind the House that the leader of the official opposition sought the unanimous consent of the House to table the numbers that he presented—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is not a point of order. It is a matter of debate.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the good news for the member is that I will be asking to unanimously table something as well. The whip and the people in the Conservative lobby better send some people in now, and tell them to say no. I am giving them a heads-up.

The member for Winnipeg North specifically rose on a point of order to call to the attention of the Chair that the Leader of the Opposition was misleading the House. Then the Leader of the Opposition stood up and said the following, basically what we just heard a Conservative member say. He said, "from the Statistics Canada website, which shows that 92,782 apartment units were built." The Leader of the Opposition acknowledged the fact, when he stood up again later, that he was not actually talking about the affordable homes his government built, he was talking about the total number of apartment starts, all but six that came from private development.

I would probably say that the private sector was building these homes in spite of the previous government, not in line with it objectives. That is a reality of what is going on. Here is the irony behind all of it. The Leader of the Opposition was the housing minister from February until October 2015. I will give him the benefit of the doubt. Let us say that he was the housing minister for all of 2015.

The reason why we know, and where we are getting the number six from when we keep saying that he only built six affordable homes, is from an OPQ. For the people in the gallery and at home, an OPQ is an Order Paper question that can be tabled by a member to get a response from the government.

The OP question, and this was under the previous government, was about the number of units built in 2015. The response was only a total of six. Six total affordable housing units were built in 2015. With the consent of the House, I would respectfully request to table this so the public can see the Order Paper question I am referencing.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is there unanimous consent to table the document?

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, that is interesting. The Conservative members said "nay" because the Conservatives do not want me to table the Order Paper question. I have good news for the public. This Order Paper question is already tabled. It was a tabled response to the question. The public can go and get it.

We have Conservative members basically applauding the fact that their record, which is on display in that Order Paper question, consisted of building six total affordable houses during their time in government. They are literally applauding their dismal record.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I had the joy of listening to my colleague one more time. He spoke about a different speech than the one he was giving, because he did not seem to have much to say about the budget. He only had criticisms of other things that were said on this side of the House about the budget. It is a critique of a critique.

I wonder if there is anything in the budget that the member actually knows about and whether he could speak positively about in the House of Commons.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would ask the member to please go back and review the first four minutes of my speech. It seems that he did not actually listen like he said did. Apparently the Conservatives only listen to the parts when I start to critique them. I spent four minutes talking about the national school food program that would be introduced and how not only did I applaud the government for doing this, but I applauded the local champions in my community. They went from school to school to get people to sign multiple petitions, which I presented in the House.

I am very proud of the fact that our government is bringing in, for the first time ever, a national school food program to help kids get an early start in life.

Statements by Members

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1355)

[Translation]

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I commend the efforts around the House to try to win the game, but fortunately the Bloc Québécois is here. I hope that there will be even more of us here after the next election, in the next Parliament, in order to control the different extremes on these two sides of the House.

Now, I would like to address my colleague. We are going to have to redefine affordable housing because in the budget we have just been given, I see that, once again, there is nothing, zero, nada, for seniors. For those who are poor and have not gotten significant indexing of the old age security pension in 15 years, they are practically going to need to be given affordable housing. Seniors no longer have anything to live on and they are unable to adapt. They either need to be housed or they need to be fed.

I would like my colleague to talk to us about our seniors in the context of this budget.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, affordable housing has a huge spectrum. It can be anything from somebody's rent that is geared to their income right up to helping people get into home ownership. Affordable housing is everything between those two points. Of course, we cannot focus on just one side or the other side. We have to ensure we are helping the entire spectrum of affordable housing.

We have introduced a number of programs, like our national housing plan. We have introduced measures to assist younger individuals getting into home ownership. At the same time, we are building housing. I can name 12 projects in my riding alone, like on Cliff Crescent, Princess Street, Curtis Crescent and Wright Crescent. I will name the rest, if I have time. The point is that this federal government has been there to build housing.

I was mayor in Kingston and a city councillor during the time that Stephen Harper was the prime minister. Members do not have to take my word for it that the Conservatives built nothing; there was an Order Paper question that I tried to table today. It asked what the Leader of the Opposition did when he was housing minister. He was not building housing.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, could the member expand on how the leader of the official opposition in particular tends to want to mislead Canadians, especially when it comes to social media?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I outlined this very clearly. We had an example earlier today, during this budget deliberation, when the member for Carleton, the Leader of the Opposition, specifically tried to mislead the House. He said, "If [the member] wants to know how many affordable homes were built when I was the minister, we completed 92,782 apartments." He did not do that. Those were housing starts throughout the entire country, housing starts that were built by developers in spite of his government, not with his government's policies.

[English]

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House of Commons today to celebrate National Volunteer Week, which started on April 14.

In my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, volunteers play a pivotal role in empowering their neighbours and communities and supporting those in need.

This week in Cherry Brook, the Africadian Empowerment Academy is celebrating 10 years of advocacy for local African Nova Scotians. The Cobequid Food Security Network was recently established as a coalition of volunteers working together to eliminate food insecurity within their communities.

I always say that while governments can help by carving out some funds, it is the people on the ground who make the real difference. For the volunteers in Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook and across Canada, I thank them for their stewardship and generosity toward helping our communities.

* * *

• (1400)

RONNIE KING

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, we lost a giant of Canadian rock and roll. Cornelis van Sprang, better known to his fans as Ronnie King, bass player of the Stampeders, passed away in Calgary at age 76.

Ronnie co-founded the Stampeders in 1966 and they built an audience of dedicated fans with hits like *Carry Me*, *Wild Eyes*, *Oh My Lady*, and especially their iconic, international 1971 hit, *Sweet City Woman*.

Northwest Calgary is home to many of Ronnie's friends and family members, and I offer them my deepest condolences, including to Cindy and Zoe van Sprang.

He loved playing music, and was willing to jam with neighbours and friends, including the local member of Parliament. He was always looking forward to the Stampeders' next tour, including and up to his final illness.

This year, it is the Stampeders' "Rock in Memory of Ronnie King" tour, and it played in Ottawa on Tuesday night. May Ronnie rest in peace; the music lives on.

*Statements by Members***FIREFIGHTERS**

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, I welcomed two of my firefighting friends to Ottawa: Tim Sparks and Jeff Voisin from the Richmond Hill Fire Services.

We discussed matters of concern for firefighters across Canada, such as the risk of PFAS exposure and contamination in their gear, and the need for frequent and routine cancer screenings. We explored solutions and innovations being deployed, such as the Vancouver-led, PFAS-free moisture barrier in firefighters' gear certified by the National Fire Protection Association.

We are determined to work with industry to respond to these health concerns, but we need co-operation between provincial and municipal governments, and our government, to ensure that we take care of the firefighters who take care of us.

I thank Tim and Jeff, deputy chief Rocco Volpe of Central York Fire Services, chief Bryan Burbridge of Richmond Hill Fire Services, and all the firefighters across Canada for their service.

* * *

[Translation]

CHEER NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Cheer National Championships took place last weekend.

Over 8,000 athletes from across Canada gathered in Niagara Falls to compete for the title of best Canadian team. As the parent of a young athlete named Ophélie, I have to say that I was very proud.

Every time I have a chance to attend these competitions, I am impressed by the talent and determination of these athletes who push their limits and overcome obstacles and even sometimes injuries. The team members are as synchronized as a metronome during their outstanding routines.

I am even more proud to be able to say that my daughter's team, Furious Pack, won third place at the largest cheer competition in Canada. The team outdid itself under the supervision of two passionate coaches, Geneviève Laurin and Alex Côté.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the outstanding performances of the Coyotes family: the Feral Pack, the Cruel Pack and the Savage Pack, which brought home the bronze medal at the prestigious Canadian Finals.

Congratulations to the Coyotes. We are very proud of them.

* * *

NATIONAL TOURISM WEEK

Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa, our national capital, is a must-see destination for people from here and abroad, who come to visit Parliament, the National Gallery of Canada, the Rideau Canal, the Canadian Tulip Festival and even the Byward Market.

[English]

Tourism is one of Ottawa's key economic drivers. Ottawa Tourism has worked with more than 450 tourism-related businesses to profile Ottawa and all of its cultural gems.

[Translation]

This National Tourism Week is an opportunity to celebrate Ottawa's tourism economy, which employs more than 43,000 people and generates more than \$3 billion a year for our region.

[English]

The Ottawa tourism sector creates good jobs, shares cultures and grows our economy. Last year, under the tourism relief fund, almost \$1 million was received by Ottawa—Vanier businesses, helping them develop new attractions and grow their businesses.

That is why we will continue to invest in it. A thriving tourism sector means a thriving Canada.

* * *

WERNER SCHMIDT

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise with a heavy heart to announce the passing of a dear friend, Werner Schmidt. Werner was a distinguished educator, a former member of Parliament, an Alberta politician and, most importantly, a beloved man of faith and family. In his 92 years, Werner was a man with abiding values of integrity and honesty. He was committed to leading by example and inspired many of us around him.

A former school principal, Werner became the leader of the Alberta Social Credit Party from 1973 to 1975. A foundational member of the Reform Party of Canada, he was instrumental in its inception in British Columbia. His political career blossomed when he became the member of Parliament for Kelowna—Lake Country, serving from 1993 to 2006. He is lovingly remembered by his remarkable wife Teena, his sons Allan and Dwayne and their spouses Lori and Cheryl, along with his grandsons, Tyler and Wyatt.

May Werner rest in peace. Canada, as a country, is better off having had him serve with distinction.

* * *

● (1405)

CANADA-KOREA RELATIONS

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for hosting a dinner last night to warmly welcome a delegation headed by the hon. Speaker of The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea and six members of the Korean Parliament.

I believe all members of the House can agree that official relations between Canada and Korea have never been stronger. Our bilateral ties have experienced a renaissance in the last several years, marked by countless visits by heads of government and high-level ministerial visits. In fact, the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development will be departing for a team Canada trade mission to Korea shortly.

Given the bedrock of shared democratic values, our two countries have strengthened our economic security and cultural ties to forge a strong, stable and prosperous partnership on both sides of the Pacific. Our countries are each certainly stronger working together.

* * *

NATIONAL TOURISM WEEK

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during National Tourism Week, we recognize the tremendous impact tourism has on all our regions across this great nation and, of course, on the Canadian economy.

The government is there to support our tourism sector with, for example, the tourism growth fund, available across Canada. The Niagara Tourism Network, our region's destination marketing organization, works hard to promote the magnificent Niagara Region and all it has to offer to more than 14 million visitors a year. All 12 municipalities contribute to a plethora of destinations: the falls and wineries; culinary, indigenous, historical and waterfront destinations; white sand beaches; recreation trails; sport tourism and sport fishing; unique shopping districts; and events and festivals.

Niagara continues to open its front door to welcome the world. Happy National Tourism Week.

* * *

2020 SHOOTINGS IN NOVA SCOTIA

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Joy Bond, Peter Bond, Gina Goulet, Elizabeth Joanne Thomas, John Joseph Zahl, Corrie Ellison, Dawn Madsen, Frank Gulenchyn, Aaron Tuck, Emily Tuck, Jolene Oliver, Sean McLeod, Alanna Jenkins, Tom Bagley, Lisa McCully, Constable Heidi Stevenson, Heather O'Brien, Kristen Beaton, baby Beaton, Greg Blair, Jamie Blair, Joey Webber and Lillian Campbell Hyslop are the names of the 23 Canadians who were savagely murdered on April 18 and 19, 2020.

Four years have passed today, and the wounds that were inflicted on Colchester county, all of Nova Scotia and, indeed, Canada have yet to fully heal. We should remember these names. They were our friends, our co-workers, our loved ones and our neighbours.

May they rest in peace, and may they never be forgotten.

* * *

MAYOR OF DOVER

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a truly fantastic person and mayor in my riding of Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Mayor Tony Keats

Statements by Members

of the great town of Dover. Recently, Mayor Keats was short-listed as a top candidate in the World Mayor competition.

World Mayor is a biennial award organized by the City Mayors Foundation since 2004. Out of the 25 global candidates, Mayor Keats was the only Canadian mayor to make the list. Thanks to a local voting campaign, Mayor Tony Keats was one of the top-four finalists, winning the World Mayor Community Award 2023. Recently, a local event was held in Dover, on April 8, to celebrate his win.

Tony is a true advocate for the town of Dover, which people may know for its fault line or from being featured in *Come from Away*. He is well appreciated by his constituents and is a shining example of the passion and positive influence local politicians have for their communities.

I ask members to join with me in congratulating Mayor Tony Keats.

* * *

● (1410)

THE BUDGET

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, budget 2024 has dropped. The reviews are in, and I am sure NDP members and Liberals are excited. Let us see what people have had to say.

Former finance minister Bill Morneau said that aspects of this budget were “clearly a negative to our long-term goal, which is growth in the economy, productive growth and investments.” However, he is just a random Liberal.

Let us hear what the NDP had to say; I am sure the New Democrats are excited. Former NDP leader Tom Mulcair said, “It fell way short”, that it really would be “giving a sock in the jaw to a lot of small business people, entrepreneurs, artisans” and that it was not actually going after “the super rich”; it was going after “super ordinary Canadians”.

The Conservatives agree. This budget should have been about growth and instead it is more failure and more tax and spend. The good news is that it was not like this before the Prime Minister and it will not be after him. Common-sense Conservatives have a common-sense plan. Let us bring it home.

* * *

VEHICLE THEFT

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians are suffering the consequences of the government's weak on crime agenda. Canadian cars have become a target for organized crime. In Canada, a car is stolen every six minutes, and since the Prime Minister took office in 2015, car thefts have tripled in Canada's major cities.

Statements by Members

The situation is so bad that The New York Times has described Canadian streets as a “candy store” for car thieves. Criminals are emboldened because of the NDP-Liberal government's weak justice policy. Ontario Provincial Police has confirmed that 68% of convicted car thieves spend less than six months in jail. With sentences like these, it is no wonder criminal networks are focusing their efforts on targeting Canadians.

Car theft is not a victimless crime. The profits from these stolen cars are directly funding violence in our communities, including drug trafficking and homicide. Common-sense Conservatives have the only plan that will stop the crime, chaos and corruption on our streets. It is time to get tough on violent repeat offenders and secure our borders.

* * *

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Parm Bains (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Sikh Heritage Month celebrations continue all April, Vaisakhi night at BC Place Stadium was packed, with amazing performances by anthem singer Juggy Bajwa, legendary singer Jazzy B, and, finally, our Whitecaps beating Toronto FC 4:nil.

Before the match, I had the opportunity to participate in a kickoff message with Whitecaps legend Carl Valentine and young heroes Malia and Noah Kumar, encouraging fans to register as organ donors.

Malia and Noah were chosen as Whitecaps Kid Captains through their work to raise organ donor awareness with BC Transplant in memory of their mother and health care worker, Anju, a dear friend who saved eight lives by donating her organs.

As one of the thousands of fortunate Canadians to have access to great medical care and a donor, I encourage all Canadians to learn and promote organ donor awareness among their friends and families.

I wish the House will join me to recognize the efforts of BC Transplant, the Kumar family, the Vancouver Whitecaps and all volunteers and staff who worked collaboratively. Together, we can build healthier communities and save lives.

* * *

INTER-COUNCIL NETWORK

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to offer my sincere congratulations to those members of the Inter-Council Network of provincial and regional councils for global co-operation. They are celebrating an important milestone of 50 years.

The ICN is a coalition of eight provincial and regional councils. The ICN represents hundreds of Canadian organizations in every region and every province from coast to coast to coast. The first council was in my home province of Alberta, the Alberta Council for Global Cooperation, which began engaging Canadians and supporting international development operations in 1973.

The Manitoba and Saskatchewan councils began their work one year later, and the Quebec, Ontario, Atlantic, B.C. and northern councils followed after that.

These organizations are a cornerstone of Canadians' international development efforts, engaging Canadians through innovative public engagement initiatives and improving development principles. We are all so thankful and proud of the work they do for Canadians.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

GUY ROCHER

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, next Saturday is Guy Rocher's 100th birthday. Guy Rocher is one of the great intellectuals of the Quiet Revolution and, because of his own personal journey, an icon of secularism in Quebec. His century of wisdom is worth celebrating.

He is one of the little-known fathers of our education system, having played a key role in the mystical Parent commission and in the creation of the largest university in Quebec and Canada, the Université du Québec network and the extraordinary CEGEP system, which is unique to Quebec.

Rocher is a graduate of Université Laval, Université de Montréal and Harvard University. His biographer, Pierre Duchesne, called him Quebec's leading sociologist. He was the first to understand that we could not modernize our education system without making it secular. He may even have been the first to understand Quebec so well.

As we wish Guy Rocher a happy 100th birthday, which I intend to do in person this evening, let us be inspired by his calm tenacity. Mr. Rocher is indeed 100 years young.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, Canadians are struggling to make ends meet. This year, Canadians will spend over \$46 billion to service the Prime Minister's debt, but the Prime Minister's costly coalition does not stop there. On April 1, the NDP-Liberals increased the federal carbon tax by 23%. This increase affects the cost of living for all Canadians, including by a major increase in gasoline prices. This Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost.

It is not just Liberals like David Dodge and Bill Morneau who think the Prime Minister's spending is out of control; former finance minister John Manley said that his spending balloons inflation and interest rates.

Conservatives will vote non-confidence in this budget unless the Liberals cap the spending with a dollar-for-dollar rule to bring down inflation and lower interest rates. For every new dollar spent, the government must find a dollar in savings, and it must immediately pass Bill C-234, in its original form, to axe the tax on farmers and food.

* * *

WALLY FIRTH

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Wally Firth, my predecessor here and the first indigenous member of Parliament from Northwest Territories, passed away last month at the age of 89 years old. He served as the NDP MP for Northwest Territories from 1972 to 1979. He was also one of the first indigenous managers at the Hudson's Bay Company, one of the first northern indigenous commercial pilots, and a radio host and a journalist at CBC North.

Mr. Firth was an advocate for addressing the poverty and injustices that indigenous people have suffered. Wally also pushed the federal government to negotiate modern land claim agreements with the Dene and the Inuit, and it is interesting to note that we are still after the same things 50 years later.

Wally did speak with me before his passing, to talk about these issues and to catch up on family and friends. He will be remembered as a trailblazer. He was humble and a great listener, and he had a passion for music and loved to pick up the fiddle.

Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

JUSTICE

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government and its soft-on-crime policies, Canada's criminal justice system is broken and Canadians feel unsafe in their neighbourhoods. Here is where we are at today: The biggest gold heist in Canadian history with \$20 million gone and several suspects involved with gangs and gun-running, and they are already out on bail, 24 hours later.

Why does the government think that gangsters who steal millions of dollars deserve to be released back into the community?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the member opposite and other members in the chamber that we passed significant bail reform legislation in this chamber with the co-operation of premiers around the country and law enforcement officials around the country.

I would also point out to the member opposite that I share her concern about organized criminality. In fact, I share it so much so that the budget implementation act contains measures that will address money laundering and address financing through criminality. I desperately hope that the member and all of her colleagues will be

supporting that aspect of our legislation and helping us to tackle organized crime and money laundering.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1420)

The Speaker: Before I continue with question period and the next question from the hon. member for Thornhill, I am going to ask the member for Miramichi—Grand Lake as well as the member for Dufferin—Caledon to please wait their turns before taking the floor.

The hon. member for Thornhill.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it did not work because Liberals do think that these criminals should be released back into the community. They passed the very bills that made it possible. They are the reason why gunrunners and gangsters who steal millions of dollars in gold get turned back loose on to the streets.

Did the Prime Minister get a little golden nugget from these criminals to pass his catch-and-release bill, Bill C-75? When will the government finally reverse these policies, protect our communities and keep criminals in jail where they belong?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our resolve to ensure communities are safe is strong. What we did over the past 18 months was that we enacted legislation that addresses the acute causes of crime. What we have done in the past 18 months was ensure that the bail reform system deals with violent, serious offenders. We had the support of law enforcement right around this country. The other thing that law enforcement has been talking to me and my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, about is the acute need to address organized criminality in this country.

The previous times legislation has been in this chamber, they voted against such legislative initiatives. They have one more opportunity, but they have already announced that they will not be supporting us getting tough with money laundering and organized criminality.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are out on bail less than 24 hours later.

Liberal incompetence touches so much more than the criminal justice system. People may need a nugget of gold to buy gas in Ontario today. After nine years of the Prime Minister, his carbon tax prices have hiked the cost of gas by 14¢ a litre today.

If he refuses to call a carbon tax election, will the Prime Minister put a pause on his punishing hikes over the summer so that Canadians can take a little road trip, or will he do everyone in this country a favour and take a permanent road trip so that Canadians can afford to live?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, eight out of 10 families receive more from the carbon rebate than they pay on the carbon price. The reason is that all of the proceeds from the carbon price are sent back to Canadians. Wealthier families pay more so that low-income and middle-class families get more. Eight out of 10 families get more from the carbon rebate than they pay on the carbon price.

In addition, obviously, that reduces pollution and reduces the cost of climate change.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this Prime Minister, the cost of living has risen to alarming proportions, food banks are busier than ever, criminals have total impunity and affordable housing is so scarce that Quebeckers are forced to live in motels.

In today's reality, Canadians can no longer afford shelter or even food. This Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost.

Will he show a little empathy for Canadians, or will he keep making their living conditions worse?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one, two, three, four, five, six; six is the number of affordable housing units that the Conservative leader created across all of Canada over his entire term as minister responsible for housing. It is hard to talk about empathy and the Conservative leader in the same breath when we consider that he created six affordable housing units, or one for every six million Canadians, during his entire term.

In my colleague's riding alone, 170 were created in the past few weeks.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number for him: nine. Nine years of this Liberal government means nine years of inflationary policies, nine years of wasting Canadians' money, nine years of recklessness and indifference towards them. It means money everywhere except in the pockets of Canadians. It means criminals everywhere except in prison. It means affordable rent everywhere except in Canada. Why are so many things broken? The answer is very simple and very clear. It is because of this Prime Minister, who is not worth the cost.

Will he put an end to the budget mess and give a little more thought to the Canadians who cannot even put a roof over their heads because of him?

• (1425)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talks about affordable housing. Six affordable housing units were built during the entirety of the Conservative leader's term as minister responsible for housing. That was during his entire term and for the entire country.

In the member's riding alone, 173 affordable housing units have been created by the municipalities with financial assistance from

the Canadian government. However, her leader, who built only six housing units, continues to insult Quebec municipalities by calling them incompetent. In her riding, 173 affordable housing units have been built.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Once again, I invite members not to speak unless the Chair has recognized them. I am referring to my friend and dear colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's budget is a budget of threats. The Prime Minister is threatening provinces with cuts to housing if they do not accept federal conditions. He is also threatening cities with cuts to public transit if they do not allow him to dictate their zoning rules. Funny, these are exactly the same threats proposed by the Conservative leader.

Canadians already had a boss at the federal level who wants to decide everything without proposing any real solutions. Since the budget, they now have two. As for Quebeckers, we are stuck with a Liberal-Conservative coalition.

Do we need that?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois tells us that housing is important. Excellent, because it is in the budget. It tells us that helping young people is important. That is good too, because it is also in the budget. Seniors are just as important to the Bloc Québécois. Well, they are also in the budget, except that the Bloc Québécois will do as their Conservative colleagues, their good friends, have done, and vote against the budget.

They need to walk the talk.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the ultimate threat of this budget is its electioneering. The Liberals' priority is not housing, it is getting re-elected. Numbers do not lie. If housing was a priority to them, they would not have budgeted 97% of the billion dollars allocated to accelerating the construction of apartments for after the election. Nor would they have budgeted 91% of the new Canadian infrastructure funding for after the election. If housing was a priority to them, they would hand out the money now, not after the election.

Is that not their way of saying that if people do not vote Liberal, they will not get one penny?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our colleague is absolutely right, it is not after, it is right now that this is happening. In Quebec, 8,000 housing units are being built through the exceptional partnership between the Canadian and the Quebec governments. Indeed, 8,000 affordable housing units is the largest number of affordable housing units built in the history of Quebec because of the extraordinary collaboration between the Canadian government and the Quebec government.

The only problem is that that is very bad news for the Bloc Québécois.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals do not have the courage to discontinue the massive gifts that the Conservatives gave big business, but they have no problem at all cutting 5,000 jobs in the public service. Fewer employees mean fewer services for the public. Like the Conservatives, the Liberals cut services, but they are quick to give billions of dollars to incompetent subcontractors. Just look at what happened with ArriveCAN.

I have a simple question. Why not keep public services and get rid of subcontractors that cost an arm and a leg and do not get the job done?

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to act responsibly when it comes to public services, especially procurement, but also our public servants. For example, budget 2024 talks about natural attrition in the public service.

However, we will continue to consult with the public service and the unions. We know that the public service is there for us, and we will continue to be there for the public service.

* * *

• (1430)

[English]

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, documents revealed that this government does not track job creation from the billions in subsidies it gives to corporations. While Canadians struggle to pay rent and buy groceries, the Liberals, like the Conservatives before them, are shovelling billions of dollars each year to big business with no strings attached. It is bad enough that the Liberals do not make corporations pay their fair share, but handing them money without accountability is scandalous.

Why are the Liberals giving these corporations a free ride at the expense of Canadians?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that, the day after the budget, my colleagues give me the opportunity to talk about the great investments we have been attracting to this country. For example, last year, Canada ranked third in the world and first per capita for attracting foreign investment. I think about Northvolt

Oral Questions

in Quebec, the largest private investment in the province's history. I will talk about Volkswagen in St. Thomas. This is going to change the whole region. We are creating jobs. We are creating prosperity. We are creating opportunities for generations. I think about Windsor and the investment we have seen from Northstar.

We are going to fight every day for Canadians.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Some members have raised in the past that they have been concerned about the level of noise and the speaking out of turn.

Let us all restrain ourselves so we can hear the question and the answer to the question from the hon. member for Foothills.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, Canadian farmers know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. Over the last several weeks, I have received dozens of letters representing tens of thousands of farm families from right across the country. These are grain farmers, ranchers, mushroom growers, fruit and vegetable growers, provincial premiers and agriculture ministers.

They are unanimous. To ensure the sustainability of food production in Canada, they need the NDP-Liberal carbon tax coalition to reverse its 23% hike of the carbon tax and pass Bill C-234 in its original form.

Will the Prime Minister ensure that food and farming are affordable and pass Bill C-234 in its original form?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, in the budget, it has been good news not only for Canadians but for farmers right across the country. For example, we are enhancing the livestock tax deferral program, which is a big asset when ranchers have a downturn with the climate, and also the advance payments program, with \$250,000.

All of these and many more are so important to make sure that farmers and ranchers stay on the cutting edge.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that it is good news when, after nine years of the Prime Minister, demand on food banks is at a record high and more and more Canadians cannot afford to feed their families.

In Prince Edward Island, the Caring Cupboard food bank is struggling just to keep its doors open. Its demand is up 70%. These are the agriculture minister's own constituents and what is his response? It is to increase the carbon tax by 23%, driving food costs even higher.

Oral Questions

Why will the Prime Minister not ensure that farming and food is more affordable and pass Bill C-234 in its original form?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am kind of surprised to get this question from my colleague, who is so interested in agriculture.

Quite simply, when they were in power, they slashed half a billion dollars from agriculture and agri-food. They slashed \$200 million from the business risk management program. All of these things are so important when agriculture has a downturn. We have reinstated the funds, and we will continue to support our farmers and ranchers right across the country.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people in Ontario went into full panic mode last night, lining up to fill up because gas was going up to \$1.80 a litre, the highest it has been in two years. Eighteen cents on every litre of gas are because of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister's carbon tax. By the time the costly coalition is done, the carbon tax will quadruple, rising to 61¢ a litre.

After nine years and an extra \$10 to fill up overnight, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost. How about cancelling the carbon tax on gas this summer so Canadians can at least enjoy the time-honoured tradition of a road trip?

• (1435)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives blame the cost of living crisis on carbon pricing and proven emissions reduction strategies, they are only serving the greedy corporate interests of billionaire grocery and oil and gas executives.

There is no rebate on the provincial gas tax that Danielle Smith jacked up on Albertans on April 1. There is no rebate on the summer fuel surcharge or excessive oil and gas profits. However, the Canada carbon rebate has four quarterly payments per year as an incentive to use a little less and get a little more tax-free cash in one's account four times a year.

The Conservatives do not have a plan for affordability. They do not have a plan for the environment. They consistently prioritize the corporate interests of their greedy oil and gas masters over the needs of everyday Canadians.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member is so confident in the carbon tax, I dare him to convince the Prime Minister to call an election.

The increase caused panic and long lines at gas stations across Barrie—Innisfil last night. Costco was so busy that cars were lined up in live traffic on Maplevue.

The NDP-Liberal government plans to quadruple the carbon tax to 61¢ a litre. The lineups and panic across the country show that, after nine years, Canadians can no longer afford the costly coalition. Why do they not just come and live with reality and axe the carbon tax so that Canadians can afford life?

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was

an election on the carbon tax. In fact, there were three of them. We won them all.

Last election, the Conservatives ran on a promise with Erin O'Toole. Do members remember his little cover that he cared about the environment for a change? All of a sudden, Conservatives cared about climate change, and they were going to use carbon pricing to lower emissions. Well, they lost, but they still all ran on that promise to price carbon. However, when a new member of Parliament, the petro-puppet of Carleton, came into play as the leader of the Conservatives—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

Colleagues, we can be pointed, we can be passionate, and we can be many things. However, we must always make sure that we carry ourselves well and refer to each other politely. The hon. parliamentary secretary knows that. I would ask him to withdraw that part of his statement and finish his answer.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, these Conservatives can dish it out, but they ran on carbon pricing. They have no integrity for fighting it at this stage.

The Speaker: I asked the hon. parliamentary secretary to withdraw that part of his statement so that we can stay on the right side of being polite.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for causing a little bit of disruption. It seems that the Conservatives—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The member did apologize for causing disruption in the House.

The hon. member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before the government came into power, road trips used to be a staple vacation for many Canadian families. However, gas prices in Ontario skyrocketed overnight, pushing \$1.80. This is the highest price in two years.

The Liberal-NDP Prime Minister's carbon tax is now at 18¢ a litre for gas, and when he quadruples the carbon tax, it will shoot up even higher. After nine years, Canadians are convinced that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister cancel the carbon tax on gas this summer so that Canadians can afford a family vacation?

• (1440)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us bring some sanity and facts into this conversation.

According to Dan McTeague, who is the president of the advocacy group Canadians for Affordable Energy, “In past years the switchover to summer fuel typically results in an increase of about six to 10 cents per litre.” He said that in warmer weather, refiners must make this change so that the fuel is more stable.

There is good news. Prices will come down by about five cents by Friday; by September, they will be even lower. This has nothing to do with the price on pollution and everything to do with theatrics by the Conservatives.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are completely out of touch.

There is debt, chaos, hardship and stress hitting Canadians, and the policies of the Liberal-NDP government have directly contributed to the pain they are feeling.

The reality is that the family budget has shrunk, and family vacations are a thing of the past for many. It was \$1.80 for gas this morning.

Will the Prime Minister cancel the carbon tax and take a permanent vacation so Canadians can afford a small summer road trip?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we go through this every year. We change from the winter blend to the summer blend. We are required to do so, so that the fuel stays stable in our vehicles.

Here is what else Dan McTeague had to say: “The most important ingredient is alkylates and alkylates are extremely expensive [right now].” However, Mr. McTeague said that “the good news is there will be a five cents per litre drop at the pumps by [this] Friday.”

We are fighting climate change. This has nothing to do with it. It is pure theatrics from Conservatives to scare people. We have the backs of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on page 74 of budget 2024, it says, “Halal Mortgages”.

This is not the first time the federal government has given some thought to sharia-compliant mortgages. The CMHC commissioned a study on this issue in 2009.

The reaction of the Muslim Canadian Congress at the time was clear. Its founder, Tarek Fatah, said that this targets vulnerable and marginalized Muslims, who are told that, if they do business with non-Muslims, they will go to hell.

My question is simple. Who exactly is this measure for?

Oral Questions

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a financial tool that exists but that is certainly not being put out there by the government.

What we have said is that we are going to look at this to make sure it is done properly. That is all.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the Quebec lieutenant taught us a lesson: Canada is a secular country. We are also partial to secularism. We are Quebecers. They are trying to pick a fight. It is the same old story.

If the Liberals are so in favour of secularism, then why do they want to change the date of the election to accommodate a religious holiday and why do they want to introduce elements of sharia law into the mortgage rules of this so-called secular country?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, this is a financial tool that is absolutely not being proposed by our government. We are interested in the product. We want to know if it is fair, if it complies with the rules.

We are simply going to look at the issue, but our government has no intention of supporting it. We just want to make sure that it is fair.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will need to have someone explain to me why they put that in the budget. I do not really understand.

In any case, one thing is certain, we are witnessing a clash of values here. While the Minister of Justice intends to use Quebecers' money to fund the challenge to Quebec's state secularism law, the Liberals are thinking of incorporating more religion into Canadian law.

Again, Tarek Fatah, founder of the Muslim Canadian Congress said that Islamic mortgages are another financial front of the Islamist movement. Those are serious words.

Will the government admit that it is not defending secularism, but rather putting more and more religion into the affairs of state?

• (1445)

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, we are talking about financial tools that are available on the market. This is in no way a product offered by our government.

We want to make sure that this financial product, which is on the market, does not lead to abuses.

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

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, he is not worth the cost or the corruption of his \$60-million arrive scam. The Prime Minister's favourite scamster told the House yesterday that his home had been raided by the RCMP for his role in this latest scandal, but he also told the House that the NDP-Liberal government has not asked for a penny back of the ill-gotten gains.

The House has ordered it. Why has the Prime Minister not enforced it? When will Canadians get their money back?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. friend knows, there are internal audits being conducted by the CBSA. The RCMP is looking into this matter. The Auditor General has done a report, and we have accepted the recommendations; my colleague from public services and procurement has changed many of the rules around these types of contracts.

We have also said from the beginning that anybody who abused taxpayers' money will face the consequences, and the government will always seek to recover taxpayers' money that was spent inappropriately.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the latest candidate to be the next leader of the Liberal party is interested in getting Canadians their money back, because the current Prime Minister has so far refused. That is what we heard from GC Strategies' front man yesterday after he told us that, for playing his role in the Prime Minister's latest scandal, his house has been raided, but the Prime Minister has still failed to get Canadians their money back.

The House has ordered it, and we just want to know when the Prime Minister and the next person auditioning for his job are going to enforce it. When do Canadians get the cash back?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend knows that there is a series of internal audits being conducted with respect to this matter. He referred to the RCMP, which is also seized with many of these issues. They took a certain action yesterday, which we heard about in the House as well. The hon. member should have some confidence that those who have abused taxpayers' money will face the consequences; if taxpayers' money has been misplaced or mishandled, of course, the government will seek to recover those funds.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his Bloc Québécois allies should be ashamed to have voted in favour of allocating millions more dollars to ArriveCAN, a decision that made the owners of GC Strategies multimillionaires.

Yesterday, Kristian Firth, managing partner at GC Strategies, said that the Prime Minister had not taken any steps to recover the

money wasted on his ArriveCAN app. ArriveCAN cost \$60 million.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister ordered his people not to ask questions and not to ask GC Strategies for a refund.

Time is passing. When will the Prime Minister give Canadians back the money wasted on ArriveCAN?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have told our colleague before, he is well aware that investigations are under way, including an RCMP investigation. Internal audits are also under way. My colleague, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, changed certain rules in response to the Auditor General's report.

Furthermore, we have always said that anyone who abuses taxpayer money will have to face the consequences. Obviously, the government will undertake the necessary processes to recover these funds.

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*[English]***OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Ontarians woke up this morning to find out that they got mugged by corporate oil and gas greed today. Gas prices are up 14¢ to \$1.80 at the pumps. The Liberal government almost found the courage to tax the profits of the oil and gas corporations but buckled after their lobbyists told them not to.

Both Liberals and Conservatives, we know, will always protect the record profits of the oil and gas corporations. When will the Liberal government finally find the spine to say no to the lobbyists and actually stand up for hard-working Canadians?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I usually say that we will take no lessons from the Conservatives, but I will say that of the NDP this time.

Canadians watching at home know that we have been fighting for them every single day. Every member on this side of the House wakes up in the morning to work for Canadians and improve their lives. To make sure we stabilize prices, we introduced the largest reform on competition in this country. This is something we should all be proud of, because that is the most consequential thing to help Canadians, not only for this generation but for generations to come.

• (1450)

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as wildfires devastate Canadian communities, the need for sustainable clean energy is greater than ever, yet the Liberals continue to side with the oil and gas industry and delay on placing a strong emissions cap on big polluters. Conservatives, on the other hand, are happy to sit back and let the planet burn.

New Democrats know that immediate action is needed to tackle the climate crisis. Why do the Liberals keep catering to big oil and refuse to enforce an emissions cap to save the future of our kids?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the New Democrats and their leader to find the courage of their own convictions and come back to supporting us on a price on pollution.

We are staying in the lane with a price on pollution each and every day. We are going to make sure that we have a planet that will be here for our kids and grandkids. We will have a price on pollution. Eight out of 10 Canadians will get more money back. That is what we have set out to do. We have run in three elections on it. We are going to keep doing that.

We are going to defend Canadians. We are going to defend the planet. We are going to do it in a way that makes Canadians better off.

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INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the chair of the science and research committee and the member for Guelph, I am really excited about the investments in science in the recent budget. Researchers and scientists across Canada have a vital role in developing innovation and knowledge.

Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry highlight the important investments our government is making in our science and research space that would support students and generations of researchers to come?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to first thank my colleague for his leadership on research and science.

Our budget has shown that we have a vision and ambition for science and research in this country because, on this side of the House, we know that the science of today is the economy of tomorrow. We have announced historic investments in infrastructure because we want to make sure we will have state-of-the-art facilities for our researchers in this country. More importantly, we have made a historic investment in grants to support our researchers, young students and the next generation. With our investments, we know that science in this country will continue to make sure we have prosperity for generations to come.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Kristian Firth of GC Strategies confirmed his home

was raided by the RCMP. GC Strategies proposed a contract to the Deputy Prime Minister's former chief of staff and current Liberal campaign director Jeremy Broadhurst. This contract led to Tuesday's raid on Kristian Firth's home.

Can the Deputy Prime Minister confirm her communication on a contract proposal that led to an RCMP raid?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as our colleague from public safety has made clear repeatedly over the last few minutes, this is a matter under investigation, both internally and by the RCMP. It would be totally inappropriate for politicians anywhere in the House to try to pretend they would be better than others and the RCMP to do that type of work.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will tell the member what is inappropriate. The ArriveCAN app is under RCMP investigation, but we now know that there are two RCMP investigations connected to GC Strategies. The raid on Kristian Firth's house two days ago raises more concerns about both contracts, one of which we now know has a connection to the Deputy Prime Minister's office.

After nine years, GC Strategies has been paid more than \$100 million by the Liberal government. Will the Deputy Prime Minister co-operate with the RCMP investigation?

• (1455)

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I already answered that question once today. I am delighted to answer it again.

The member knows full well that internal investigations into this matter have been under way for some time. She also knows that the Auditor General's report is now known and that important measures have been put in place as a result of that report. She also knows that it would be completely inappropriate for politicians in the House to claim they could do a better job or know more about the work of these organizations, especially the RCMP.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's arrive scam led to unprecedented testimony before the House of Commons, which the Liberal House leader tried to shut down, and no wonder. That scam, which the NDP and Liberals voted for, cost taxpayers at least \$60 million. Parliament ordered the government to pay the money back, but Liberals have not even asked for it to be returned. Now, the RCMP have come knocking.

Oral Questions

After nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, the corruption or the crime. Will the Prime Minister finally follow the direction of Parliament and get back the arrive scam cash?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend knows that the government always works collaboratively with Parliament. We have done so in many cases. In fact, parliamentary committees have also looked into this matter, and government officials have been, of course, available to answer all of their questions and provide documents.

As my colleague the Minister of Public Services and Procurement made clear, there are internal audits taking place. The RCMP is also seized with this issue. We think it would be appropriate to allow these investigations to conclude.

I can assure colleagues that the government will always take steps to recuperate taxpayers' money that was inappropriately expended and hold those accountable who have abused taxpayers' money.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has not co-operated because the House voted to ask for the money to be paid back, and Kristian Firth testified that the government has not taken any steps to seek the return of the money.

After nine years, it is clear that the Prime Minister is presiding over a severely incontinent contracting system in which money constantly flows to NDP-Liberal insiders. Canadians need a government that they can depend upon to stop the crime and end the corruption.

Again, will the Prime Minister follow the direction of Parliament and ask the arrive scammers to return the money?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has just repeated his previous question. I will give him the same answer.

This government always takes the use of taxpayers' money extremely seriously. We have said that, if taxpayers' money has been misplaced or mishandled, of course, the government will ask for that money to be returned and take the appropriate steps to recuperate that money.

My colleague may have taken note of the RCMP's action yesterday. In the case of individuals who have abused taxpayers' money, of course the RCMP will take the steps necessary to investigate these matters.

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[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal budget does not just mark the end of respect for jurisdictions. It also marks the end of competent policy management.

Ottawa is imposing its priorities everywhere, without even knowing whether that is a good idea. It is calling for the construction of 40-storey apartment buildings next to schools in neighbour-

hoods where it has never set foot. It is meddling in the training of construction workers without knowing anything about that. It is imposing long-term care standards for seniors that it has never taken care of.

Why not let the competent people handle the files that fall under their jurisdiction?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois should show a bit of courage and tell us which aspect of the budget they are opposed to.

Are they against investments in housing? Are they against the fact that we are going to make sure that children are not going to school hungry? Are they against investments to help our municipalities and regions? What aspects of the budget are they opposed to? They should at least have the courage to tell us.

For now, they are not saying what they do not like. All they are doing is acting extra friendly. They are playing nice. They do not have the courage to tell us what they are opposed to, but they are still going to vote against the budget.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are against jurisdictional interference. If the Liberals want to be involved in Quebec politics, they should run for the Quebec Liberal Party. Otherwise, there is no shortage of work for them to do at the federal level.

We want them to transfer the housing money now so we can build homes now instead of negotiating until 2025. We want them to get rid of the old age pension's two classes of seniors. We want them to reimburse Quebec for asylum seekers. We want them to reform employment insurance, which they have been promising to do since 2015. We want them to stop the fossil fuel industry from sabotaging the fight against climate change. In short, we want them to do their job. When are they going to do it?

● (1500)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is a distinguished economist who knows that it is important for everyone to work together to take care of Canadians, including Quebecers, who are struggling these days. That is why I am sure he will be pleased with the \$6 billion invested in Quebec over four years. Quebec is thrilled. The money will help create 35,000 new child care spaces in Quebec.

As an economist, he knows as well as I do that this is a great way to increase family income. It is great for gender equality. It is great for poverty reduction. It is great for our children's development.

All these measures respect jurisdictions; we all contribute in our own way.

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know we have all heard the horror stories about how bad auto theft has gotten in this country after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government's soft-on-crime policies. Now, we have reports coming out of Toronto that a good Samaritan had pulled over to help somebody in medical distress and, while he was helping them, his car was stolen.

That is how broken this country has become. A car is stolen every six minutes, and violent carjackings are on the rise. Since they are not going to do anything about it, when will the Liberals just get out of the way and let a common-sense Conservative government come in to stop the crime?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend knows that the government takes that very worrisome rise in criminality very seriously. I had a very good conversation last week with my counterpart in Ontario, the solicitor general. We agreed on a series of measures that we can continue to do together with local police forces; the Ontario Provincial Police, which is doing important work in this area; and, of course, the RCMP, which is always a partner with the Canada Border Services Agency around transnational organized crime. We will continue to do everything possible in collaboration with our partners to bring this worrisome trend down.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the media are reporting that a Montreal police officer had to open fire at a car thief as he drove the stolen vehicle in the officer's direction.

Car thieves are growing bolder. They have no fear of the justice system. That is why the Conservative leader introduced a common-sense plan last February that includes longer prison sentences for auto thieves.

Will the Prime Minister listen to our calls and crack down on auto theft-related violence?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two things I would like to point out.

First of all, as soon as Bill C-75 was introduced in the House two Parliaments ago, the member opposite voted against it, even though it included longer sentences for auto theft.

Now we have a budget. In the budget, we have already announced that we are going to increase the maximum sentences for auto theft. However, the member and his leader have already said that the Conservatives oppose our budget and our efforts to control auto theft.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, I think that the Minister of Justice is forgetting that car thieves and other criminals in Montreal are not afraid because of Bill C-5 and Bill C-75, which deal with catch-and-release. They know that there will not be any conse-

Oral Questions

quences. If they are arrested, then they will be immediately released. That is what Bill C-75 does.

Can the Minister of Justice or the Prime Minister answer the question? Will they impose harsher sentences for car thieves so that these individuals are afraid of being arrested and stop stealing cars in Montreal?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to make things very clear for this member's constituents, when Bill C-75 was before the House, we proposed that the sentence for auto theft be increased from 18 months to two years. The member and all of his colleagues voted against that.

We are not just going to change the Criminal Code in this budget. We are also going to change the sentences for money laundering in the Criminal Code. The member and all of his colleagues have already said that they are going to once again vote against this.

It is a bit difficult to understand where he is coming from on this.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, eliminating violence against indigenous women, girls, two-spirit and gender-diverse people is an urgent priority in Canada. Many have been calling for the implementation of a red dress alert to notify the public when an indigenous woman, girl or two-spirit person goes missing.

Could the hon. Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations update the House on how the government is advancing these efforts?

• (1505)

Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ongoing national crisis must come to an end. No one knows this better than the families of those who have lost their loved ones to this crisis. That is why we are working with indigenous partners in leveraging budget 2024 with an investment of \$1.3 million to co-develop a regional red dress alert system.

From housing to indigenous policing, budget 2024 continues to make progress on the systemic change needed to put this crisis to an end once and for all. I want to thank the member for that important question and for her advocacy. We will continue to do this important work with indigenous partners and colleagues across the floor.

*Oral Questions***JUSTICE**

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, the Prime Minister is not worth the cost or the crime. Today, we learned that thieves who stole \$20 million in the biggest gold heist in Canadian history are out on bail. This is because of the Liberal government's shameful Bill C-75, which allows offenders to be in jail in the morning and back on the streets in the evening.

Will the Prime Minister reverse his bail-over-jail policies in Bill C-75?

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the bill that the Conservative Party loves to discuss in this context includes things such as increased penalties for auto theft, a key criminality issue that is seizing Canadians right now. It is an issue we all need to address.

I find it a bit disturbing and hypocritical that the member and all his colleagues voted against that bill at the time, which would have helped to augment the crimes of people who steal automobiles. The Conservatives have another opportunity, but unfortunately, they have already declared, vis-à-vis the further efforts we are taking to address automobile theft, that they are continuing to vote against it.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, offenders like Bernardo and Magnotta are living better than many Canadians, with cable, a canteen and a beautiful gym. This is at a time when Canadians are having trouble when it comes to heating, eating and housing. This is breaking news. The correctional officers' union tells us that crime is thriving, not on the streets but in jail, with drones dropping drugs and serious weapons.

When will the Liberal government realize that violent offenders should not have access to these things? Who is running corrections?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend knows very well that the safety of the men and women who work in the correctional service is of paramount importance to the government. I have met with representatives of the union. I talk to the administration at Correctional Service Canada often about what steps we can take to give it the technologies and the tools necessary to protect the people who work in our correctional system.

We will always do everything we can to keep these institutions safe for the brave women and men who do this difficult work for Canadians.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, top B.C. police are sounding alarm bells that drug decriminalization, a dangerous and radical NDP-Liberal experiment, has handcuffed their ability to keep our communities safe. Under this dangerous social experiment, drug use is legal in hospitals, playgrounds, parks and beaches. The deputy chief of the Vancouver police said that due to decriminalization, there is nothing they can do about it.

Will the Prime Minister end his dangerous and deadly drug decriminalization experiment, yes or no?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the member chooses to ignore, or not listen to, is that law enforcement also says it has been crystal clear. Fentanyl is driving the crisis, and too many Canadians are dying as a result of it. People are dying alone, and the Conservatives are only concerned about one thing: misusing the facts.

I will be meeting with my counterpart in B.C. and with law enforcement partners to discuss how we can further work together to address diversion. Diversion is illegal; the member knows that. We expect law enforcement officers to do their jobs, as well as the regulatory colleges, and act swiftly to address it. We are working together. Where are they?

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Tim Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small and medium-sized businesses are an integral part of Canada's economy. They employ about 65% of Canada's workers. Recognizing that small businesses deserve additional supports, it is important for us to make doing business more affordable for entrepreneurs.

Can the Minister of Small Business tell us about the measures in budget 2024 that will help entrepreneurs in Kitchener—Conestoga and across Canada?

● (1510)

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Small Business, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a former small business entrepreneur myself, I know the importance of affordability for entrepreneurs. I am glad that, through budget 2024, our government is committed to delivering \$2.5 billion to 600,000 small businesses across Canada through the Canada carbon rebate.

Reports say that 60% of small businesses are directly impacted by climate change, and while the official opposition continues to want to cut the Canada carbon rebate, on this side of the House, we are going to continue fighting climate change while putting money back into the pockets of Canadians and small businesses.

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the finance minister celebrates so-called feminist policies in this year's budget, in rural Manitoba, the Liberals have cut all funding for counselling and legal services for survivors of sexual violence at the Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre. Time and time again, the Prime Minister shows that he is a fake feminist. Meanwhile, the Conservative leader undermines women's rights at every corner, cozying up to extreme misogynists like Alex Jones.

Will the minister do what is right and restore funding for survivors at the Hope Crisis Centre?

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know there is always more to do. I really appreciate the member opposite and the work that she does on the status of women committee. She is a true advocate for women.

I will point to the fact that this budget does cover contraceptives for women, and nine million Canadians will be able to make choices about their bodies because of this investment. We have investments against workplace sexual harassment. We have investments to have more child care spaces in this country and more investments to support queer and trans people in this country.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the government has reinstated the requirement that most Mexicans must obtain a visa to enter Canada. People with valid work permits can come to Canada with a simple electronic authorization. Their family members and children, however, cannot be included in the same application.

They have to apply for a visitor visa for their children, which is a much longer process. A mother in my riding lost her job because she could not return to Canada unless she abandoned her child in Mexico. The worker loses, the family loses and the business gets left in the lurch.

Is the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship planning to fix this situation right away?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member to come see me later to discuss the situation in person. Obviously, people who have to apply for a visa need to do so from Mexico. That is the rule. If exceptions need to be made, he can come and see me and we can discuss them together.

* * *

[English]

2020 SHOOTINGS IN NOVA SCOTIA

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence.

Points of Order

I now invite the House to rise and observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims of the tragic event that happened four years ago in Nova Scotia.

[A moment of silence observed]

* * *

● (1515)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In the past, you have ruled that false titles for individual members must not be used in the House, and you have ruled that those need to be immediately withdrawn.

Today, during question period, the member for Milton used a false title. You ruled, correctly, as you have consistently, that the member needed to withdraw that immediately. The member for Milton refused to do so. He had a flippant apology, saying that he was sorry he caused “disruption”. That was not what you had ruled. You had ruled that he must withdraw the false title that he used for the member of the official opposition.

The concern that, I think, members of Parliament have, especially on these benches over here, is that there seems to be an inconsistency to the rulings that you have undertaken.

If you will allow me—

The Speaker: I appreciate the point that the member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie has raised, and it is one that I intend to address immediately.

I do see that the hon. member for Milton is rising. I hope it is to do what would be consistent with the Speaker's observations and rulings in the past.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the comment.

The Speaker: I did hear the hon. member withdraw this comment.

The hon. member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the member for North Island—Powell River did not immediately withdraw her comments, and she was sanctioned for the remainder of the day.

There is an inconsistency in the rulings in the House. That member was not offered a half an hour to decide whether they would withdraw.

For the benefit for the House, what will your rulings be, henceforth?

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his intervention. I will continue to apply the rulings as has been indicated in the House.

*Points of Order**[Translation]*

The hon. member for Drummond is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order as my Conservative colleague, but to add some supplementary comments.

Over the past few months, we have seen a lot of irregularities in the way freedom of expression is interpreted in the House of Commons. Freedom of expression is a fundamental part of parliamentary privilege, and we cannot do our jobs as parliamentarians properly if we do not know the limits the House grants us in terms of freedom of expression.

Some expressions that could be considered more or less serious than others are subject to sanctions of varying degrees of severity, and there is a certain lack of consistency. I would ask the Chair to come back to the House after some reflection and give us some clear guidelines as to where the line is drawn, so that when we rise to speak in the House of Commons, we are not always walking on eggshells for fear of saying something that could end up offending someone or contravening the rules of the House.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Drummond for his comments. Members can refer to the statement I made on October 18, 2023, which outlines what is acceptable to say in Parliament.

That said, I will have the opportunity to continue my discussions with the leaders of all the political parties to further explore the issue of the guidelines that are needed to ensure that we can have passionate and pointed debates that nevertheless remain acceptable in terms of parliamentary language.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I believe if you seek it, you shall find unanimous consent for the following motion:

“That this House find, just as the Standing Committee—

Some hon. members: Nay.

• (1520)

The Speaker: Unfortunately, I heard some members say nay.

Once again, I encourage all members to obtain confirmation from all the political parties before seeking unanimous consent to move a motion.

* * *

*[English]***JEWISH CANADIANS**

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I believe, if you seek it, you shall find unanimous consent for the following motion.

I move:

That the House unequivocally condemn antisemitism, and in particular reject the idea that Jewish Canadians are responsible for the actions of the State of Israel.

[Translation]

The Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

There is no objection. The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

*[English]***POINTS OF ORDER****ORAL QUESTIONS**

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you have just indicated that, over the coming constituency week, you will be reflecting on the usage of false titles or false information in the House of Commons.

As I pointed out yesterday, the use of the term “NDP-Liberal government” is a false term. There is no doubt that it is disinformation. There is no coalition in place. This is something that the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes did withdraw when we were questioning the witness yesterday. I believe it should be common practice in the House that, when any member rises, they give accurate and not false information.

We will certainly be asking you, Mr. Speaker, to make that ruling in the coming days after the constituency week.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, in the House there are many different kinds of governments. There are majority governments, minority governments, coalition governments and governments that rely on the support of another party. What Conservatives and other members have objected to is when the substitution of names causes disorder or is insulting.

If the New Democrats find being associated with the Liberals insulting and demeaning, then they can make decisions to not support the Liberal government. If the Liberals believe it is derogatory or insulting to be associated with the NDP, they could end the partnership.

However, the current government depends on the NDP to pass its budgets and its legislation. NDP members are actively involved in senior-level decisions when it comes to motions in the House and legislation. It is a matter of debate as to what that dynamic should be called. Conservatives are, of course, calling it what it is, an NDP-Liberal government, and there is nothing unparliamentary about describing it in that way.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the point of order that I understand you will be reflecting on during the break week, I would strongly encourage you to consider a few rulings that have been made recently with respect to what members are saying.

In particular, a member might suggest that another member aspires to a certain political ideology. When a member has done that, there is still a Liberal member who has not spoken since a ruling to that effect has come out. It is extremely appropriate and, indeed, our right to be able to express how we feel. Your job, Mr. Speaker, certainly is to control the parliamentary language and to suggest what is not parliamentary language, but I do not think it would be in the Chair's best interest to start going down the path of deciding what is a good statement in terms of political ideology and what is not. I will give an example.

If I were to say a member is pro-Russia, you might interpret that to be inappropriate, Mr. Speaker, but would you consider it to be the same if I were to say a member is pro-United States? I think it is really important that you reflect on that, because at some point we might run into a problem where we are not able to properly express ourselves.

I would encourage you, Mr. Speaker, over the next week, to consider those comments as well.

• (1525)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today during question period, the member for Milton performed a very inappropriate physical action. First, he waved and then he clearly blew a kiss across the way during his exchange with the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Non-verbal actions that are sexual in nature are not appropriate. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to denounce this unparliamentary behaviour and ask the member for Milton to apologize.

The Speaker: The Chair will have to reflect on this and come back to the House, if necessary.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it being Thursday, of course I rise to ask the government House leader if he could inform the House as to what business we will be deliberating on for the rest of this week and, with next week being a constituency workweek, what we can hope to expect after we come back from our ridings.

This being the ninth time the House will be debating a Liberal budget, I wonder if my hon. colleague truly believes that, after the first budget raised inflation and interest rates, the second budget raised inflation, interest rates and taxes, and the third, fourth, fifth and sixth all helped to create the housing crisis that is plaguing Canadians and to drive up the costs of everyday items, impoverishing the Canadian people, after eight years, eight budgets all trying the same failed approach, and after his own government admitted that it is causing hardship and unfairness for Canadians, the ninth time trying the exact same approach will yield different results.

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the different results we hope for are for Conservatives to stop voting against the series of measures we put in place to solve the very problems the member professes to care about. In particular, it would be great if we could pass the doubling of the top-up of the rebate on the price on carbon,

Speaker's Ruling

so that rural residents in this country from one coast to another could benefit from that additional affordability measure as we continue our fight against climate change, which is affecting them, it must be said, disproportionately. I assure my hon. friend we are very committed to passing what is an exceptionally good, aggressive and helpful budget for all Canadians.

[Translation]

We will continue debate on the budget this afternoon.

Tomorrow, we will conclude debate on the motion concerning the amendments proposed by the Senate to Bill C-29, An Act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation.

[English]

Upon our return from the constituency week, and I wish all members a good week of work in their constituencies, we will deal with the budget debate on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

ADVANCE DISCLOSURE OF BUDGET MEASURES—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on April 9, 2024, by the member for La Prairie concerning the premature disclosure of financial initiatives prior to the tabling of the 2024 budget.

In raising his question of privilege, the member alleged that the government had violated the principle of secrecy relating to fiscal matters by unveiling programs and measures over the past few weeks, prior to the budget presentation on April 16, 2024. In addition, the member argued that, in announcing key aspects of its budget piece by piece, the government had breached the privileges of members by affecting the opposition parties' ability to take an informed position and properly advise voters of the nature and effects of those measures.

[English]

In response, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House referenced a decision by Speaker Sauvé on November 18, 1981, and *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition. That book states the following, on page 899: "Speakers have maintained that secrecy is a matter of parliamentary convention rather than one of privilege."

In addition, while noting that it may not be a question of privilege, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby and the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands lamented that prematurely disclosing budget information has become too common and said that this practice should be examined.

The Budget

● (1530)

[Translation]

Regarding budget secrecy, I would like to highlight the ruling of Speaker Jerome of April 17, 1978, which can be found on page 4549 of the Debates, and the ruling by Speaker Fraser of June 18, 1987, on page 7315 of the Debates. I will quote from the latter:

Budgetary secrecy is a matter of parliamentary convention. Its purpose is to prevent anybody from gaining a private advantage by reason of obtaining advance budgetary information....The limits of parliamentary privilege are very narrow and it is not a responsibility of the Chair to rule as to whether or not a parliamentary convention is justified, or whether or not the matter complained of is a breach of that convention. That is a matter of political debate and not one in which the Chair would wish to become involved.

[English]

Each year, the Minister of Finance presents the government's financial position in detail in the budget. The budget can contain various measures, including the creation, modification or elimination of government programs, as well as the means to finance its expenditures. It is not unusual for some of these new initiatives to be announced at public events a few weeks or even months before the budget. Some may prefer all these announcements to be made at the same time, but the Standing Orders and practices of the House do not prescribe such an approach.

[Translation]

The statements by the members for New Westminster—Burnaby and Saanich—Gulf Islands left me with the impression that there may be an appetite for reviewing our practices. I encourage them to advise the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs if that is indeed their wish.

However, I must conclude in this case that there is no *prima facie* question of privilege.

I thank all members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address budget 2024. I propose to deliver my remarks in two contexts: first, to address how this budget resonates with the residents whom I am privileged to represent in Parkdale—High Park in Toronto; second, to look more largely at some of the very important components that relate to the administration of justice in this country and are touched on in this budget document.

I am proud to have represented, for almost nine years now, the constituents in Parkdale—High Park. What those constituents have talked to me repeatedly about is the need to address housing. In budget 2024, we find some very key provisions that relate to hous-

ing. I cannot list them all, but some deal with the pressing issue of building more housing, increasing housing supply. That is fundamental in terms of what we are trying to do as a government, and it is empowered and advanced by this important budget document. What I am speaking of here is, for example, \$15 billion in additional contributions to Canada's apartment construction loan program, which will help to build more than 30,000 additional new homes.

What I also take a lot of pride in is the fact that we are addressing the acute needs of renters. I say that in two respects. This budget document outlines, for example, how renters can be empowered to get to the point of home ownership by virtue of having a proper rental payment history. This can contribute to building up one's credit worthiness with credit ratings agencies; when the time comes to actually apply for a mortgage, one will have built up that credit worthiness by demonstrating that one has made regular rent payments over a period of years. This is truly empowering for the renters in my community and communities right around the country. I have already heard that feedback from the renters whom I represent.

Lastly, I would simply point out what we are doing with respect to the tenants' bill of rights. This is a really important document that talks about ensuring that tenants have rights they can vindicate, including in front of tribunals and, potentially, courts of law. We are coupling that with a \$15-million investment that would empower and unlock advocates who assist those renters. That is fundamental. In that respect, it actually relates to the two hats that I wear in this chamber, in both my roles as a representative of individual renters and as Minister of Justice.

Another component that my constituents have been speaking to me about regularly since 2015 is our commitment to advancing meaningful reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Again, this document has a number of components that relate to indigenous peoples in budget 2024. There are two that I would highlight for the purpose of these remarks. First, there is the idea about what we are doing to settle litigation against indigenous peoples and ensure that we are proceeding on a better and more conciliatory path forward. We talk about a \$23-billion settlement with respect to indigenous groups who are litigating discriminatory underfunding of children and child family services and the fact that this historic settlement was ratified by the federal court. That is critical.

Second, in this document we also talk about funding a project that is near and dear to my heart. Why do I say that? It is because, in 2017, I had the privilege of serving as the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Heritage. At that time, I helped to co-develop, along with Métis, first nations and Inuit leaders, the legislation that has now become the Indigenous Languages Act. That is coupled with an indigenous languages commission. In this very budget document, we talk about \$225 million to ensure the continued success of that commission and the important work it is doing to promote, enhance and revitalize indigenous languages in this country.

Those are fundamental investments. I think it is really important to highlight them in the context of this discussion.

The Budget

I would also highlight that my riding, I am proud to say, is full of a lot of people who care about women. They care about feminism; they care about social and economic policies that empower women. I would highlight just two. First of all, we talk about pharmacare in this budget. The first volley of pharmaceutical products that will be covered includes contraceptive devices that would assist, as I understand it, as many as nine million Canadians through access to contraception. This would allow women, particularly young women and older women, to ensure that they have control over their reproductive function. That is fundamental to me as a representative, and it is fundamental to our government and what our government prioritizes in this country. I would also say that, with \$10-a-day child care, there are affordable and robust means of ensuring that people's children are looked after in this country; that empowers women to do such things as participate in the workforce.

• (1535)

What I am speaking about here is that we are hitting levels of women's participation in the workforce that have never been seen before, with women's labour force participation of 85.4%. That is an incredible social policy that is translating into a terrific economic policy.

We can also talk about the \$6.1-billion Canada disability benefit. I am proud to say that the constituents of Parkdale—High Park care meaningfully about inclusive policies, policies that alleviate poverty and are addressed to those who are vulnerable and those who are in need. People have been asking me about the disability benefit, including when we will see it and when it will come to the fore. We are seeing it right now with this document. The very document that we will be voting on in this chamber includes a \$6.1-billion funding model to empower Canadians who are disabled and to ensure that we are addressing their needs.

This budget also represents a bit of a catch-up, meaning that we are catching up to the rest of the G7. Until this budget was delivered, we remained the only G7 country in the world not to have a national school food program. It goes without saying that not a single one of the 338 members privileged to serve in this House would think it is good for a child to arrive at school hungry, in any of their communities or in this country as a whole. I do not think this is a partisan statement whatsoever. We would acutely address child hunger. Through a national school food program, we would ensure that children do not arrive at school hungry, which would impede their productivity and certainly limit their education. Through a \$1-billion investment, we would cure school poverty and school hunger.

We are also introducing legislation to reduce cellphone and banking fees, which is fundamental.

With respect to the hat I wear as Minister of Justice, which I have done for about eight months, I firmly believe that one of my pivotal roles is ensuring access to justice. I would say that this document really rings true to the commitment that I have personally and that our government and the Prime Minister have to this. Here, I am speaking about the notion of our commitment to legal aid. Legal aid has multiple components, but it is fundamental to ensuring that people can have their rights vindicated with the assistance of counsel. This helps address things such as court backlogs and court

delays; it is also fundamental for the individual litigants before the courts. There is a criminal legal aid package in this budget that includes \$440 million over five years.

There is also immigration and refugee legal aid. Unfortunately, since the provinces have wholesale resiled from their involvement in this portfolio, since 2019, we have been stepping in with annual funding. We are making that funding no longer simply annual; we are projecting it over a five-year term, which gives certainty and predictability to the people who rely on immigration and refugee legal aid, to the tune of \$273 million. That is fundamental.

Members heard in question period about efforts we are making to address workplace sexual harassment. I will pivot again here to the fact that this dovetails with both my ministerial role and my role of devoted constituency representative as the MP for Parkdale—High Park. I hear a great deal from my constituents about speaking to women's needs in terms of addressing harassment and sexual harassment. With this budget, we would provide \$30 million over three years to address workplace sexual harassment. That is also fundamental.

Likewise, what we are doing on hatred is fundamental. Three full pages of the budget document are dedicated to addressing hatred. Some points dovetail with legislation that I have tabled in this House, including Bill C-63, regarding what we would do to curb online hatred and its propensity to spread. However, there are also concrete investments here that talk about Canada's action plan on combatting hate and empowering such bodies as the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, with the important work it is doing in terms of promoting better understanding and the knowledge base of hate crimes units. Also, fundamentally, there is money dedicated in this very budget to ensuring that both law enforcement agencies and Crown prosecutors are better trained and provided better information about how to identify hate and potentially prosecute it. With where we are as a country right now, this is a pressing need; I am very proud to see budget 2024 addressing it directly.

For the reasons I outlined earlier, in terms of how this addresses the particular needs of my constituents and for the very replete justice investments that are made to ensuring access to justice and tackling pernicious issues, such as sexual harassment and hatred, I believe this is a budget that all 338 of us should get behind and support.

The Budget

• (1540)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the member back to the Liberal platform of 2021, called “Forward. For Everyone.” In that platform, the Liberals’ promise was not small; it was a major promise of \$4.5 billion for the Canada mental health transfer, which would be implemented over five years. That was almost three years ago. Why has it not been dealt with in this latest budget? Is this another broken Liberal promise?

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I would say that I think our commitment to mental health is replete.

In the past 12 to 18 months, members have seen us launch a 988 helpline that deals with suicide. Members have seen an entire new Canada health accord, reaching almost \$200 billion, with a dedicated pillar addressing mental health and mental health needs. This budget document itself acutely targets mental health programs that deal with, for example, the needs of Black Canadians.

I know the member to be a committed member of the Jewish community. I would say to him that I know how the hatred fuelled by anti-Semitism also has pernicious impacts on the mental health of Jewish Canadians. In this document, he will find not only supports for the special envoy on anti-Semitism but also dedicated supports for fighting anti-Semitism and promoting Holocaust remembrance through a new museum in Montreal.

Those are the kinds of investments we need to see in this country. I think we should all get behind them.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice is preparing to challenge the principle of the separation of church and state, a democratic principle in modern democracies.

On page 74 of the budget, under the heading “Halal Mortgages”, it reads:

Canada is home to a vibrant and growing market of alternative financing products, including halal mortgages, that enable Muslim Canadians, and other diverse communities, to further participate in the housing market.

Budget 2024 announces that the government is exploring new measures to expand access to alternative financing products, like halal mortgages.

Is that his idea of a secular state?

• (1545)

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, with this budget, we want to help people with housing by creating a larger supply of housing units, whether it be apartments or houses, by providing them with the support they need to defend their rights as tenants, for example, but also by providing financial support. When we announced the creation of the tax-free first home savings account, it was to help people save the money they need. Now, as I just mentioned, people can build a credit history that shows that they pay their rent regularly, which will again help tenants become homeowners. That is our vision in this budget. We are targeting housing as a top priority.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it surprised me that something I have heard about from a lot of first nations communities across this country was missing in the budget. This is the issue of enforcement. We know that, on re-

serve lands, tribal lands or treaty lands, people do not have the ability to call the RCMP or the local police to enforce a lot of the laws of the land, whether provincially or federally. We know this is becoming a higher-risk issue in that members of the indigenous leadership are having to go out and implement enforcement to the best of their ability. Why is this not a priority for the government?

Hon. Arif Virani: Mr. Speaker, I would politely and respectfully submit that it is a priority for our government. I have been hearing the very same concern expressed to me by a series of indigenous interveners and stakeholders from around the country.

I would say this to the member: In Manitoba, we have a working example, with MKO. This organization already has a pilot project where the RCMP has commenced with the actual enforcement of bylaws that are being passed with respect to drug and alcohol usage in particular first nations communities.

There are examples that are working in this country, but I would agree with her wholeheartedly that we need more.

I would also point out that the work that one colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, is doing with respect to his mandate letter. This includes changes to policing and ensuring that policing is deemed an essential service that re-envisages the control of first nations, for example, in policing their own communities.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this budget is ironically called “Fairness for Every Generation.”

After nine years of the Prime Minister trying to make things fair, he sure has not done a very good job. Things are not fair.

Is it fair to every generation that every year life is less affordable? Is it fair to every generation that rents are sky-high? Is it fair to every generation that one in four kids cannot afford to eat? Is it fair to every generation that it takes almost 20 years just to save up for a down payment?

The Prime Minister is not worth the cost for any generation. This is the ninth straight year of deficit spending. In 2015, the federal debt was \$616 billion, accumulated from 1867, when Canada began. Today, it is \$1.25 trillion, double. The Prime Minister has borrowed more money than all other prime ministers combined.

The result is that, after 20 years of low inflation and interest rates, the Prime Minister’s irresponsible inflationary spending has upended Canada’s stable economy.

The Budget

This year, Canada will spend \$54.1 billion on interest to wealthy bankers and bondholders, instead of to doctors and nurses, to service the Prime Minister's debt. That is the same amount collected in GST. We should change the name of that tax from the GST to the DST, the debt servicing tax. It is also more money than the government spends on health care or on the Canada child benefit.

This is what happens when a Prime Minister does not want to think about monetary policy. The result is that mortgage payments have doubled, down payments have doubled, rents have doubled, the cost of gas, groceries and home heating have skyrocketed, and people cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves.

Instead of reining in spending to bring inflation under control, the Prime Minister acts like a pyromaniac, throwing another \$40 billion on the inflationary fire. This is despite warnings from economists, including Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem, who cautioned that government spending is at the upper bound. This will make it much harder for the bank to lower interest rates.

This is not a partisan point. Former parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page expressed this yesterday, telling *Global News*, “We gotta get those interest rates down. So on a net basis, this is just not good for inflation.” Former Liberal finance minister John Manley also warned this government months ago that it was pressing on the inflationary gas pedal with its spending. Even former Liberal-appointed governor of the Bank of Canada David Dodge said he believes that this will be the “worst budget” since 1982.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. After nine deficits and doubling the national debt, Canada is less fair and Canadians are worse off.

Now the finance minister says that what Canadians really want is a stronger government to make things fairer. By making government bigger, the Liberals have made citizens weaker. Conservatives believe that smaller government makes for bigger citizens.

This is not a government that gives people everything they want. It is a government that takes everything they have. Members do not have to take it from me. Just yesterday, in the *Financial Post*, it was written, “We’ve become a growth laggard and our living standards have largely stagnated for the better part of a decade.”

Part of our declining standard of living has to do with the fact that Canada has the worst productivity in the G7. Our GDP growth has been driven primarily by population and labour force growth, not productivity improvements. That may increase the total amount of goods and services, but it does not translate into increased living standards.

● (1550)

This is a real crisis. From 2000 to 2023, the growth rate of Canada's real per person GDP was 0.7%. That is meaningfully worse than the G7 average of 1% and the United States', whose GDP per person growth rate was 1.2%, almost double. Our country is facing a productivity crisis that threatens to erode this country's standard of living and erase many Canadians' hopes for a more prosperous future.

Just a few weeks ago the Bank of Canada's deputy governor Carolyn Rogers said that we have a productivity emergency, and “in case of emergency, break glass.” Even former Liberal finance minister Bill Morneau says the budget is a threat to investment and economic growth.

It is time to take action by, for instance, reducing regulatory barriers to investment, celebrating entrepreneurship, bolstering the profit incentive for private investment and loosening the federal government's tight grip on the economy. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister does the exact opposite.

There has been one change, though. The borrow-and-spend Liberals are now the tax-and-spend Liberals. On top of gouging Canadians with their April 1 tax hikes, they have decided that they know better how to spend businesses' money than the hard-working Canadians who actually run those businesses.

This is not a partisan point. Dan Kelly, president of the CFIB, said, “What worries me the most about [these tax] changes is the potential to demotivate Canadians from getting into business in the first place or working hard to grow a small business to a medium-sized business”. He is not the only one.

Harley Finkelstein, president of Canada's greatest tech company, Shopify, said:

We need to be doing everything we can to turn Canada into the best place for entrepreneurs to build.

What's proposed in the federal budget will do the complete opposite. Innovators and entrepreneurs will suffer and their success will be penalized—this is...a tax on innovation and risk taking.

Our policy failures are America's gains. At a time when our country is facing critically low productivity and business investment our political leaders are failing our country's entrepreneurs.

For nine years, the Prime Minister has told Canadians that the rich would pay for the cost of his spending, but the truth is that it has been everyday Canadians who have been the ones paying. The Prime Minister has already raised his punishing carbon tax by 23% on April 1, and with \$40 billion in new inflationary spending, Canadians will continue to pay the inflation tax that hurts the poorest among us the most. Whatever the Prime Minister says, it will not be him and his billionaire friends who pay for new spending. It will be single moms, workers and small business owners.

The Budget

We cannot tax our way to prosperity, and no government program can increase productivity better than the power of the free market, spurred on by Canadian entrepreneurs. We need to celebrate entrepreneurship in this country, not punish it.

Conservatives had three simple demands for the budget: axe the tax on farmers and food by immediately passing Bill C-234 in its original form; build the homes, not bureaucracy, by requiring cities to permit 15% more homebuilding each year as a condition for receiving federal infrastructure money; and cap spending with a dollar-for-dollar rule to bring down interest rates and inflation. The government must find a dollar in savings for every dollar of spending.

The Prime Minister did none of those things, and for those reasons, Conservatives will not be supporting the budget.

• (1555)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are many things I can go to, in terms of what the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister said in introducing the budget. One of the things that really stood out for me, and it contradicts many of the things the leader of the official opposition and the member who just spoke have said, was to take a look at the amount of foreign investment on a per capita basis. When we take a look at the G7 countries in the world, we will find that, in the first three-quarters of 2023, we were number one in terms of that foreign investment. That speaks volumes.

Next to that, I would remind the member of something I said earlier. It took Stephen Harper just over nine years to create just under a million jobs. We have been able to create over two million jobs in less time. I am wondering if the member opposite can explain to me why he believes we should take economic advice when our performance has far outweighed and benefited Canadians, more so than the Stephen Harper era.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, of course, the member is saying what all Liberals say, that Canadians have never had it so good. They think that everything is great.

It was not my advice. I do not expect him to take my advice. Bill Morneau does not like the budget. Paul Manley does not like the budget. Many of the other economists I mentioned in my speech do not like the budget. There has been a great deal of criticism over changes in tax policy that will actually penalize productivity growth in this country. He does not have to take it from me. He just has to open up a newspaper and read it for himself.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I may not agree with all of the hon. member's intervention, but I do appreciate all of us in this place having the opportunity to voice our different thoughts and opinions.

One of the concerns that I have with this budget is what seems to me to be a significant underfunding of the housing and infrastructure costs that are required for first nations and Inuit communities across Canada. I know that the Conservatives had a long history of underfunding those communities. I am just wondering if this member has any concern with the continued underfunding that we are seeing under the Liberals.

• (1600)

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, there can be no doubt that the Liberal government has abandoned indigenous communities.

We are talking about a prime minister who, when an indigenous protester showed up at one of his ritzy fundraisers, mocked that protester and said, "Thank you for your donation." This is not a prime minister who respects indigenous communities. The member for Carleton, when he is prime minister, has said that he will focus on economic reconciliation in indigenous communities. We will get those homes built in partnership with those communities.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is always thoughtful, bringing information forward that is very useful, but when the member across the way says that so many people have new jobs, the government hiring hundreds of thousands of people is not going to help the economy. That does not increase the GDP.

You also talked about who is going to be paying for this budget's huge deficit. Could you tell us again what your belief is as to who is going to be paying for this?

The Deputy Speaker: I am not going to be telling you. Maybe the hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley will.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, everyday Canadians are paying for the exorbitant interest costs generated by the irresponsible deficit spending of the government, \$54.1 billion. That is over a billion dollars a week on the backs of Canadian taxpayers going to wealthy bankers and bondholders and not to health care or child care. It is shameful, absolutely shameful.

It was not like this before the current Prime Minister and it is not going to be like this after he is gone.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I just want to remind the member opposite not to bang on the desk, because it hurts the ears of the interpreters.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a very good reminder to all of us to be careful with our microphones on our desks.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I think my friend from Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley inadvertently referred to former member of Parliament Paul Manley, Green Party, Nanaimo—Ladysmith, when I think he may have meant John Manley.

My question is this: Would he agree with Greens that buying the Trans Mountain pipeline was a particularly bad idea? That is a statement with which Paul Manley would agree.

I am afraid the Conservative leader misspoke in this place and said that the private sector was ready to build that pipeline. The reality is that the private sector had already made the key business decision that it wanted nothing to do with the project called Trans Mountain.

The Budget

Mr. Marty Morantz: Mr. Speaker, yes, I meant John Manley.

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise in the House. We are talking about the budget today, and I think it is important to start with some context as to where the country is. The member who preceded me did an excellent job. Hopefully, I will build on his strong work.

Canadians are experiencing difficult times from coast to coast. Millions of Canadians are finding that, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, there is simply more month than money. They are unable to feed themselves, and food bank usage is off the charts. Over two million families will go to the food bank each and every month in Canada. The food banks in Otonabee-South Monaghan in my riding have seen the number of families with children using food banks double just in the last six months.

The suffering is a result of Liberal policy failures. There is no two ways about this. The Liberals' policies are responsible for driving people deeper and deeper into financial crisis. Financial crises and financial issues generally have two different sides to them, as does the affordability crisis. We have income on one side and expenses on the other. There has been a lot of talk in the House about the expense side, the ever-increasing inflation, interest rates and taxes, and for good reason. It is causing considerable pain for Canadians.

My focus will be on the other side, which is the income side or the growth side of the economy. I believe this is as serious, if not more serious, than the expense side, the reason being that history shows us that, when incomes rise, increasing costs can be managed by economies. There are a number of examples, but there has never been a time, not once in human history, where there has been prosperity in the absence of economic growth. For thousands of years, when the economy has grown, we have had prosperity. When it does not grow, we do not.

Let us be clear that the income side of the ledger in Canada is bleak. We have experienced what Conservatives call, and what economists are starting to call, a lost decade in Canada. GDP per capita in Canada has barely grown. By this metric, we are in the worst economic time since the Great Depression, and quite frankly, there is no sign of relief. This is not getting better. We have had seven straight quarters of a decline in GDP per capita. If we measured recessions on a per capita basis, we would now be in one of the longest recessions in our lifetime.

Liberals, of course, will attempt to obfuscate by blaming the lack of growth on other factors beyond their control, like the weather or other things, and their having no control over a weather front coming in, but the failure is distinctly Canadian. In this last decade, the American growth of GDP per capita, or the measure of each individual economic contribution of every American, has increased by 47%. In Canada, over that same period, it is 4.73%.

An hon. member: It is not the weather.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, no, it is not the weather. It is because of the failures of the Liberal government.

Underpinning the failure of our economy to grow are our productivity issues. We have heard numerous commentators talk about this, Liberal and Conservative alike, from Bill Morneau to Lisa Raitt and commentators on all sides of the political spectrum. The productivity issue is crushing our Canadian economy. "Productivity" is a fancy word, but all it means is our ability to produce goods and deliver services efficiently.

We can think of productivity as a three-legged stool. There are three key elements to productivity. The first is capital, and I will talk about that right now. Capital investment is incredibly important. A simple analogy is two workers competing with different levels of capitalization. One worker is trying to dig a foundation for a new building using a backhoe, and the other worker is using a shovel or even bare hands. We can see that the individual who is well capitalized, even if he or she is the inferior worker, will always win that victory. The individual who is not capitalized will never be able to compete. That is where Canada is right now. We are decapitalizing our economy right now. This will have tragic impacts, not just for the near term, but for the long term as well.

● (1605)

We have, over the last 15 years, the lowest rate of investment growth into our economy in the G7. We are predicted, by many international organizations, to have the lowest investment rate in the OECD over the next 40 years. When we do this, unfortunately, we undermine the Canadian economy and the Canadian worker.

A second key and equally important leg of that productivity stool is innovation. Innovation is incredibly important, and the good news is that we have great minds and great ideas here in Canada. We also have great post-secondary education here in this country. The challenge is that, after nine years, we do not have a framework in place to successfully and efficiently capitalize and exploit those ideas, turning them from an idea formed in a university dorm room to building products and solutions on the factory floor. Unfortunately, what happens far too often in our economy is that these great ideas come up and then dissipate, or more truthfully and more accurately, they go across the border as individuals who have great ideas simply do not have the framework to market, exploit and grow their ideas here in Canada. Instead, they end up improving the wealth of the United States of America, Europe or other places in the world. Meanwhile, Canadians fall further and further behind.

The Budget

Third, it comes down to workers, and I am proud to say that we have the best workers in the entire world right here in Canada. Unfortunately, they are being undercapitalized, and there is an absence of innovation due to the poor regulatory framework here in Canada. The challenge is that we have untapped resources. We have thousands, in fact hundreds of thousands, or probably millions of newcomers who are not able to access the Canadian dream because there are various organizations that are unwilling to recognize their education and hard work across the world. They have the ability to be doctors, engineers and scientists to help our economy in this time when we need to enhance our productivity. That is why our leader would bring in a fantastic blue seal program that would allow newcomers to gain access to the Canadian dream.

With this in mind, if we look at the expense side of the ledger, this budget did not deliver. We need it to have, as is the growing consensus out there, fiscal restraint and a path to a balanced budget, but that is not there. This will continue to push along inflation and higher interest rates. Of course, we have seen higher taxation as a result of this budget as well.

However, as we look at the income side of the ledger, I was hoping to see a focus on economic growth, and I am not the only one. Bill Morneau said that he was very disappointed in the government's lack of attention on economic growth. David Dodge was also discouraged by the lack of focus on economic growth. The CFIB and numerous organizations from coast to coast to coast were disappointed to see the lack of focus on economic growth.

We can see that economic growth is the magic bullet to economics. If we have an economy that is growing, we will have jobs, standard of living increases and a stronger social safety net. Instead, the government has chosen to ignore growth, and unfortunately, we will all bear the cost for that.

Conservatives will proudly be voting no on this budget.

• (1610)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member listened to what the minister was talking about, but she made reference to an accelerated capital cost allowance. Through that, we would be seeing many of the things the member just talked about, yet he is going to be voting against it, and that is the thing. The Conservative Party has already been told. We knew that the Conservatives would be voting against this years ago. They have made that declaration, so there is no surprise there, but what is a bit of a surprise is how the Conservative Party continues to try to give a false impression.

Using what the member just indicated, and maybe he wrote it himself, I do not know, he is trying to give the impression that the government is not taking action on something that is so very important to the economy. However, the accelerated capital cost allowance does exactly what the member has been advocating for.

I am wondering if the member had the choice to vote in favour of that aspect of the budget if he would actually vote in favour of that aspect.

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, just because I like the drapes in a house, it does not mean I would buy the whole house.

The reality is that, if the member's comments were not put in context, they might have more merit.

We have had nine years of the Liberal government. We see the record food bank usage. I wrote this speech because I field the calls from my constituents about not being able to make it to the end of the month and not being able to feed their kids. This has real consequences. This is the real world. We need real change.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend from Northumberland—Peterborough South is chair of the rail caucus, an initiative that self-started, and which I am very pleased and proud to participate in. It is all-party and non-partisan.

I look at this budget, and I have to say I was very disappointed not to see a real focus on ground transportation that would include integrating rail and bus service to reach more Canadians. I was pleased to see, or at least it looks like, maybe, in a future budget, the high-frequency rail project may be restructured so that it does not kill Via Rail in the Windsor to Quebec corridor. I am very interested to know my friend's thoughts on the Via Rail sections of the budget.

• (1615)

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to work on rail alongside my respected colleague. I am an outspoken supporter of rail.

I, too, read that section of the budget. Ultimately, we will have to see what is in the implementation section. We do need strong rail infrastructure in this country. We can contrast that with the United States of America, which has the most rail per mile in the entire world, and in Canada, we are falling behind. Given our legacy of being one of the largest rail systems in the world 100 years ago, it is sad to see what we have come to.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for really focusing on the need for economic growth in this country.

I am wondering, considering that the Liberal government has put us in a position where we are paying more money to service the national debt than the government collects from taxpayers in GST, what impact that is having on increasing or supporting economic growth in this country. Even further, I am wondering what impact the carbon tax is having.

I am not talking about the rebates, but we know from the Parliamentary Budget Officer's costing note that the government is collecting over \$500 million, which will go to over \$1 billion a year over the next eight years to the tune of \$6.23 billion GST on the carbon tax alone. What impact that is having on our economic growth in Canada?

Mr. Philip Lawrence: Mr. Speaker, it is a negative spiral. They work together, unfortunately. As there is more debt, it reduces the amount of economic growth. It is taking money out of the economy.

The Budget

The reality is, as that debt reduces the growth, it then reduces the amount of revenue. It gets to a negative spiral. This is exactly what Brian Mulroney had to deal with in the mid-eighties when he took over from Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

It is a two-sided solution. We need to get the economy growing, and we need to reduce the debt so that Canadians could have a reasonable shot at prosperity.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I would like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

I am proud to rise as the member of Parliament for Richmond Hill to speak to the urgent action in budget 2024 that would help Canada build the homes needed to restore fairness for every generation.

Last week, our government released Canada's ambitious plan to build homes by the millions, to support renters and to lower the costs of home ownership so that no hard-working Canadians have to spend more than 30% of their incomes on housing costs.

With budget 2024 and with Canada's housing plan, we are going to do whatever is necessary to put money on the table to build more affordable housing, to create the market conditions necessary to get more homes built and to change the way that cities build homes.

We will restore the promise of a Canada for everyone once again.

Over the next part of my speech, I am going to focus on four major areas: building more homes faster, supporting home ownership and renters, building homes on public lands and building the infrastructure communities need to build more homes.

I will first speak about building more homes faster. We know higher interest rate environments have made it difficult to build homes. That is why we are proposing significant action in budget 2024 to boost the housing supply and to remove the areas that often slow down the construction of new homes. For example, we are reviving and modernizing Canada's post-war housing design catalogue, which will provide blueprints that can be used across the country to speed up the construction of new houses.

Budget 2024 proposes to allocate more than \$11 million in 2024-25 to support the development of this catalogue for up to 50 housing designs, including row housing and fourplexes that provinces, territories and municipalities could use to simplify and to accelerate housing approvals and builds. This first phase of the catalogue will be published in the fall of 2024.

Speaking of supporting municipalities, our \$4 billion housing accelerator fund is already cutting red tape across the country with 179 agreements with provinces, territories and municipalities, with Richmond Hill being one, enabling the construction of over 750,000 new homes over the next decade.

To continue the momentum, budget 2024 would top-up this program with an additional \$400 million to build more homes faster from coast to coast to coast. As well, to help developers get the capital they need to build more rental homes, we are also topping up the apartment construction loan program, or ACLP, with \$15 billion, starting next year.

This proposed investment alone would help build more than 30,000 additional new homes across Canada, bringing the program's total contribution to over 131,000 new homes by 2031.

We know there is no single player who can fill Canada's housing shortage on his or her own. That is why we need to take a team Canada approach to getting this work done for Canadians. That means all of us working together and using every tool in our tool kit to get more homes built much faster.

To that effect, budget 2024 announces Canada builds, which would help to leverage the ACLP so that we can better partner with provinces and territories to build more rental housing across the country. Truthfully, we could not do any of this without Canada's builders, carpenters, construction workers and similar tradesmen. They are incredible people who love their jobs, who are good at them and to whom we should all be grateful because we cannot build homes without them.

To help train and recruit the next generation of skilled workers, budget 2024 proposes to provide \$90 million over two years for the apprenticeship service program to help create placements with small and medium-sized enterprises for apprentices. Ten million dollars over two years is also being proposed for the skilled trades awareness and readiness program to encourage Canadians to explore and prepare for careers in the skilled trades.

• (1620)

In addition, budget 2024 proposes to provide \$50 million over two years for a foreign credential recognition program, at least half of which would be used to streamline foreign credential recognition in the construction sector to help skilled trades workers build more homes.

We need to do everything we can to make it easier to build homes more quickly and more cost-effectively, and the measures I have just outlined are exactly those.

Now, I will go on to the second area of my speech, which is supporting homeowners and renters. Young Canadians, including my son, in my own community of Richmond Hill and across Canada are struggling to find housing that fits their budgets. That is why the government launched the tax-free first home savings account and why, in budget 2024, we are taking action to unlock additional pathways for young renters to become homeowners and to protect middle-class homeowners from rising mortgage payments.

The Budget

To help first-time homebuyers keep pace with the rising housing costs, budget 2024 announces our intention to amend the Income Tax Act to increase the homebuyers' plan's withdrawal limit from \$35,000 to \$60,000. This budget also proposes to temporarily extend the grace period, during which homeowners are not required to pay their homebuyers' plan's withdrawals to their RRSP, by an additional three years.

This first measure will enable first-time homebuyers to save up to \$25,000 more for their own down payment faster. For a couple who withdrew the maximum in 2023, extending the grace period could allow them to defer annual repayments as large as \$4,667 by an additional three years.

Thanks to the new Canadian mortgage charter, more Canadians know about the fair, reasonable and timely mortgage relief they can seek and receive from their financial institutions. Budget 2024, aims to enhance the charter by enabling first-time homebuyers purchasing newbuilds to get a 30-year mortgage amortization, among other enhancements. The government will bring forward regulatory amendments to implement this proposal.

Additionally, budget 2024 proposes to call on banks, fintechs and credit bureaus to prioritize tools that allow renters to opt in to reporting their rent payment history to credit bureaus so that they can strengthen their credit scores when applying for a mortgage.

We are all committed to protecting the rights of tenants and to ensuring that renting a home is fair, open and transparent. For that reason, budget 2024 proposes actions to protect the millions of Canadians who rent and who have been exceptionally impacted by recent drastic rent increases.

I now move on to the third area, which is building homes on public lands. Our government is redoubling our efforts to build homes wherever and whenever possible in the face of Canada's housing crisis. We are accelerating and streamlining the process of converting surplus federal properties into housing, and we are continuing to work with Canada Lands Company to enable the construction of additional housing units.

In conclusion, our focus as a government is on building more homes at a pace and a scale not seen in generations to restore fairness and affordability for every generation. I hope my hon. colleagues will support us in this incredibly crucial work.

• (1625)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is talking about housing, and he is focused on housing. The government says that it is focused on housing, but the government has been saying it has been focused on housing for how many budgets now. How successful has it been thus far? These are regurgitated words the member is saying that come from many speeches by the government.

All the government has done so far is to drive up the cost of housing by running excessive deficits, repeatedly, which drives up inflation, which drives up the price of housing. How does the member think that by doing the same thing again and again, he is going to get a different result?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, we are not doing the same thing over and over again. If the member looks at it, starting back in 2016, we made a historical investment, and we continue to do that.

We also introduced partnerships with the provinces and territories. When it became clear that we needed other partnerships, such as the municipalities, we started working with them. When it became clear that we needed to remove the red tape, we started working on that.

We have been working consistently on that, looking at what we need to focus on and introducing new programs.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the member justify the fact that he voted in the House in favour of Bill C-319, which gives seniors over the age of 65 an increase in their old age security pension, yet there is nothing to that effect in the budget? The budget talks about housing, and seniors also have difficulty finding affordable housing.

How can he justify the fact that his government, after voting in favour of the bill in the House, did not bother to eliminate this discrimination, this double standard for seniors, even though that was part of the budget expectations we presented to the minister? What was he waiting for?

[English]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of serving with my colleague on the HESA committee.

When we talk about affordable housing and affordable rental units, we are talking about affordable housing and rental units for everyone, whether for a senior, a young couple or for an individual. We are not making any distinction among those demographics. By making sure that affordable rental units and affordable housing are available to everyone, by default, we are including seniors as well.

• (1630)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to housing, which has been in crisis for years now, the NDP made proposals and we are happy to say that the government has accepted some of them, such as using federal land and public land for affordable housing and creating an acquisition fund to buy new land and build truly affordable housing, an important concept.

In 2017, the new national housing strategy promised that all this would be fixed. However, seven years later, the situation is even more catastrophic. While it is true that historic sums of money flowed through this strategy, it ended up in the pockets of private developers and helped people make a profit. That money has not helped deliver housing that people can afford.

The Budget

How can we trust the government not to repeat the same mistakes this time around?

[English]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, I did not get a chance to cover part of my speech, which was focused on the public land the federal government is making available, but I will highlight that in a very short comment. In fact, budget 2024 proposes \$5 million over three years, starting in 2024, to support and to overhaul Canada Lands Company to expand its activities to build more homes on public lands.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Ottawa Centre, it is a great pleasure for me to speak to this budget: “Fairness for Every Generation”. I have 10 minutes and I can probably speak for hours in terms of things that are in this budget document that support members of my community here in Ottawa Centre.

We announced things like a national food program. That is going to help thousands of children in my riding. It is significant. The expansion of the \$10-a-day child care is another. I continue to hear from parents about how the reduction in fees is helping them. Now we are reinvesting more money to create more spaces. That is going to help more families and more children. We have the Canada dental care plan that is going to help so many seniors in my community of Ottawa Centre. We have also announced pharmacare that will allow women to be able to access contraception for free and provide insulin for those with diabetes.

I can go on and give individual speeches on all the benefits to my community on each issue. However, I am going to use my remaining time to talk about the housing plan that has been outlined in this budget. It is extremely important to my community. In fact, I am going to home in further on the initiatives to develop public land to build more housing, for people to both own and rent.

My community of Ottawa Centre is primarily made up of the downtown community just outside this beautiful building, the House of Commons. Like many downtown areas across the country, ours has gone through a really challenging time as a result of the pandemic. In fact, when it comes to Ottawa's downtown, it was really built upon a model of Monday to Friday, nine-to-five businesses, because of the federal government.

As we know, when the pandemic hit, all of us had to work from home to keep all of us safe, to manage the spread of COVID-19 and to protect not only ourselves but our respective families. That has caused a lot of challenges for downtown Ottawa, particularly for our small businesses, which relied on the workers who came to the downtown core.

As we are coming out of the pandemic, we know that hybrid work is here to stay. We saw that trend coming before the pandemic. Of course, during the pandemic, working from home became a norm because we all had to work and to stay safe. Now a lot of workers are choosing to have a hybrid format to how they work.

In my community, as a result, we are having many conversations as to the kinds of things we need to do to revitalize our downtown. As a member of Parliament, I initiated the downtown Ottawa re-

talization task force, which started in 2022. We brought in partners from indigenous communities, small businesses, large landlords, for-profit housing developers, not-for-profit housing developers and tourism stakeholders.

This was all done from the perspective of coming together to share not only the challenges but most importantly the solutions that we can champion that would allow for people to work, to live and to visit our downtown. I strongly feel that Ottawa is a unique place, given it is a G7 nation's capital. If our downtown Ottawa thrives, not only is the entire city of Ottawa going to do well, but it is also reflective of our country on the international stage.

There are too many members of the committee to name, but I want to thank every single one of them for their incredible work. They were all volunteers who had full-time day jobs, but for the love of their community, they spent time consulting with others online and in person. After about a year and a half of work, toward the end of last year in 2023, we issued a report outlining a vision to revitalize downtown Ottawa. It is worth looking at it. It is on my website at yasirnaqvimp.ca, if anybody is interested in it.

• (1635)

What it does is it presents many ideas as to how we can help revitalize downtown Ottawa. One of the key areas in that is using public lands. We have a lot of federal buildings in the downtown core. Some have already been deemed surplus buildings, which means that the federal government has decided that they do not have a need for them, so they will be put on the market to be sold.

Some of them are in a place where they can be converted from a commercial building to residential. We have already seen those projects happening in downtown Ottawa. In fact, I must say, Calgary is a shining example of that. I had the chance to visit Calgary about a year or so ago to see the kinds of conversion projects that are taking place. We are trying to copy that model right here in Ottawa as well.

As the local member of Parliament, I have been advocating with the federal government on a few things, such as how we make these public lands more available and accessible, and how we can make sure that the properties that have been deemed surplus can be disposed of in a relatively shorter period of time, so that we can find ways to be creative, so that, if it is possible, we can convert those buildings from commercial to residential, for people to live in.

I am really happy to see that the advocacy my community and I have been doing is reflected in this budget. This budget devotes a significant amount of time to talking about how we can make better use of public lands and buildings, whether to sell them or to lease them, so that we can use them at a far faster pace, which is an incredible opportunity. The budget actually speaks of conversion of unused office spaces as well, and it has given the responsibility both to PSPC and Canada Lands Company, which is a federal Crown corporation, to find ways to expedite that process.

The Budget

There are various programs that have been announced, such as the apartment construction loan program in this budget, which will allow for these projects to take place at a faster pace. I am also thrilled to see the creation of an acquisition fund that was also a very specific recommendation in the downtown Ottawa revitalization task force report, which will allow not-for-profits like Ottawa Community Housing or CCOC in my city to be able to buy smaller buildings that allow for affordable rents and to protect those affordable rents and make sure that the people living in them continue to live in their homes.

All of these measures added on, and there are many more, create a tremendous opportunity for communities like mine, in a practical way, to really take the next step, postpandemic, as we rebuild our community.

It is an opportunity to be able to use excess, surplus federal buildings like the ones we have in Ottawa Centre to create more homes and bring more businesses into the community. We also have federal lands in my community such as Tunney's Pasture and LeBreton Flats. It creates opportunities to use them as well to build more affordable housing, not just to rent but to own as well.

As I hope members can hear in my voice, I am really excited about what is in this budget, because it really is addressing a real need that has been identified by my community here in Ottawa Centre as something that is going to help us build a better community.

For that reason, I am supporting this budget and I urge all members of the House to do the same.

• (1640)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague represents a downtown riding. I represent a downtown riding in another part of this country, but when I am in Ottawa, I stay in his riding, where my apartment is. I will tell him that his riding, in the four years I have been here, has become more and more of a disaster. It is practically a dead zone when one walks down Bank Street now, and more and more people are lining up in the streets, living in the streets, as a result of the policies of his government.

This city is getting worse and worse under his government's watch: drugs, destitution, homelessness. The other day, I was walking down Bank Street and there was another building and a whole bunch of low-income people who were cast out on the street. His policies and his government's policies have clearly made this city worse than when they started.

How does he reconcile that with the words he just put on the floor of the House of Commons?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, I would never cast negative aspersions on the member's community, and I thank him for spending time in my community and supporting local businesses in my community. He mentioned the last four years that he has been here. Almost three of those years were during the pandemic and that, indeed, had a huge impact on our community as it did across the country. It created a lot of hardship for people. We have seen increased homelessness.

That is why I, as a local member of Parliament, am working so hard along with many community partners, who are excited about the measures in this budget because they are going to address very specific needs. I had hoped that not only would he support this budget, but that he and the members of his party would have supported all of the anti-poverty measures that we have brought in over the last several years that have helped many members in our communities.

The measures outlined in this budget are going to help make my community and, I am sure, his community, a better place to live for many people.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there are some very interesting things in my colleague's speech, including converting government buildings or commercial buildings into housing. I think that is truly interesting and there are some great examples of that.

My question is much broader and much more existential than that. There is a Constitution that exists, and we are working with it. In any case, we are working with the Constitution, and I am talking about areas of jurisdiction, unfortunately. We might want to restore some order to all of this, because the power-grab that the federal government is attempting here is becoming abusive, excessive and shameful. It is widespread. Does my colleague think that it is time to reopen the Constitution to restore a bit of order in this and determine what belongs to whom?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

[English]

I have had the honour of serving in the provincial legislature as well. For 11 years, I was the provincial member of Parliament for the same community of Ottawa Centre, which was kind enough to elect me as their member of Parliament. As a former provincial cabinet minister, I had my share of battles and debates with the former Harper government, which starved many of the provinces like mine in Ontario, by cutting off all kinds of funding and by downloading those services.

I held and still hold the view today that our federation works really well when all three orders of government work together. That gives us the opportunity to not make cuts and download all of the important services like the Harper Conservatives did, which I understand the current Conservative Party wants to copy by cutting services and downloading those important services to the provincial governments. Rather, we need to make sure that we are investing in Canadians and working with our provinces and territories.

That is precisely what we are doing when it comes to housing and when it comes to health care. In health care alone, the amount of work we are doing by working with our provincial and territorial counterparts, including Quebec, to ensure they have the resources necessary to provide important health care services will make the lives of Canadians far better than ever before.

The Budget

● (1645)

The Deputy Speaker: 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 Calgary Nose Hill, Public Safety; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Finance; the hon. member for Victoria, Climate Change.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague and friend, the member for Simcoe North who we actually meet out in the middle of Lake Simcoe in rural Ontario.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to the 2024 budget on behalf of the hard-working residents of Bradford West Gwillimbury, the soup and salad bowl of Canada; East Gwillimbury; Georgina; and the Chippewas of Georgina Island.

After nine years of the Liberal government, Canadians are worse off than ever before. Sadly, this failure of a budget will only make things even worse. The Prime Minister and finance minister have refused to listen to common sense and have presided over a shrinking middle class and record-low levels of national productivity.

Prior to releasing this budget, the finance minister promised it would be a plan to unlock pathways to the middle class for the next generation. Wow, can members believe that? The Liberal government used to brag about its ambition to grow the middle class. The first chapter of the Liberal Party's 2015 platform was entitled "Growth for the Middle Class". The 2019 platform emphasized "Forward: A Real Plan for the Middle Class". Now, here we are in 2024, and instead of looking to grow the middle class, the Liberals are admitting that because of them, the middle-class lifestyle, which used to be a reasonable and attainable expectation for living life in this country, is now something that few Canadians will ever enjoy. It seems that, over nine years, the promise of Canada is gone.

This is the day-to-day reality facing Canadians. Two-thirds of young Canadians have resigned themselves to being worse off than their parents. Can members imagine that? With this budget, instead of restoring that promise for our citizens, the Liberals are sending a clear message to millennials, to zoomers and to everyone else left behind, saying that it's tough luck and that they should have been born sooner or in better circumstances. However, Canadians, both young and old, are well aware that it is the punishing taxes and the high-spending agenda of the Liberal government that are to blame, and the policies have locked Canadians out of so many of those pathways that people used to join the middle class.

The cost of living is out of control. It has left half of Canadians living paycheque to paycheque. After paying for their everyday expenses, Canadians just do not have money left over to save, and others are resorting to charities and food banks just to get by. It did not need to be this way. Common-sense Conservatives have been calling on the Liberal government to restore the promise of Canada and to bring home lower costs by axing the tax, building the homes and fixing the budget. Unfortunately, the Liberals did not axe the tax. In fact, the Prime Minister increased it by 23% on the first of the month, making it so that families, rural residents, farmers and small businesses suffer even more.

For months, I have been calling on the Liberal government to address the unfairness that has excluded rural communities, like York—Simcoe, from the rural top-up. The Liberals insist on classifying them as Toronto, making them pay more in carbon taxes than other Canadians. After ignoring this problem for years, budget 2024 finally says that the government will look to better define rural areas, but it only commits to put forward a proposal to do so later in the year. Let us talk about a day late and a dollar short. This is just further proof of why we have to axe the tax for everyone everywhere.

The Liberals also have not built the homes, after nine years of the Liberal government. The government promised to lower the price of housing, but now rents and mortgages in Canada have doubled, and middle-class Canadians are forced to live in tent encampments in nearly every city across Canada. Even small towns like mine are seeing the impacts, as all forms of shelter have become unavailable and unaffordable.

● (1650)

Budget 2024 will not make things any better. It will certainly give more opportunities to Liberal ministers to pose for photo ops, but it will not help Canadians who cannot buy a home or who cannot afford to renew their mortgage.

With \$40 billion in new spending in budget 2024, it is obvious that the Liberal government has failed to fix the budget. The Prime Minister has failed to put a stop to the inflationary deficits and has failed to rein in spending. He will continue to make life worse for Canadians. The Liberals are now spending more on interest and more on the debt than on health care. There is more money for bankers than for nurses. It is no wonder there is still no hospital in York—Simcoe.

To protect our social programs and to lower costs, Conservatives have called on the government to cap the spending with a dollar-for-dollar rule to bring down interest rates and inflation. That would require the government to find a dollar in savings for every new dollar in spending.

Instead, the Liberals are misleading Canadians, pretending that the rich would pay for the Prime Minister's spending. We all know that it is the everyday Canadians, the extraordinary Canadians, not the Liberal bigwigs and Bay Street billionaires, who have been paying the price. The government even admitted in its response to Order Paper question 2407 this week that it does not even know how many wealthy Canadians have fled the country and no longer paying taxes.

When Canadians look around at what this country has become, they see abysmal failures of the Liberals to address the problems that the Liberal government created. It is more clear now than ever that the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost.

The Budget

I recently received a letter from a constituent of mine, Laura. I will read it into the record so that the government can finally understand the pain it is inflicting on Canadians.

She wrote that her family lives in Pefferlaw in a small bungalow. They are a single-income family. She is a stay-at-home mom of two, and her husband works 60 hours a week, just so they can survive financially. They received their gas bill, and over the months, the carbon tax has steadily increased up and up. Now, it has officially become more than their actual usage. They, like so many others, are struggling after the bills are paid and the groceries are purchased. Her grocery shop one day was \$167 for just four bags of groceries. They have nothing left over.

She does not pretend to know the intricacies of big government, but she is also not a fool. She really feels like they, and everyone else, are being cheated by the Liberals, who rob from the poor to feed the rich because they lack the ability to budget taxpayers' money. They do not go on vacations. They do not eat out or take their kids to the movies. They live like that, apparently, because the Liberals need their money more than her family does.

The Liberals can choose to keep ignoring the common-sense proposals put forward by Conservatives, but it is shameful that they continue to ignore the plight of everyday Canadians like Laura. Every Canadian knows what a budget is and what it is supposed to do. By definition, it is a means to determine financial goals. With budget 2024, it is evident that the Liberals have no financial goals, no vision, no plan to bring back balanced budgets to our country and affordability to the people. Their only objective is to spend as much of Canadians' money as they can before they are sent packing. The needs of ordinary Canadians be damned.

Canada is broken. Canadians are broke. I will be voting, alongside my common-sense Conservative colleagues, against this budget.

• (1655)

The Deputy Speaker: I am going to work my way backwards because I know the NDP have a couple of questions.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was really quite happy to hear the member talk about the fact that the government is not actually making the ultrarich pay their fair share. That is fascinating. I do agree that in terms of what we are seeing in this budget, it certainly does not go far enough. The increase of the inclusion rate for capital gains simply is not enough. New Democrats have been calling for an increase of the excess profits tax, the corporate book tax and other taxes.

Would the member be willing to work with New Democrats, and maybe put forward an amendment, to ensure that the government, within this budget, would actually increase the corporate tax rate, like what we are seeing in the states, so that we are competitive as opposed to being the lowest in the OECD?

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Speaker, to bring this back to York—Simcoe, it is the farmers, the working class and the middle-class people who are paying for these deficits. Let us look at this. There is \$50 billion in new spending. That is more than we bring in through GST alone. I alluded to the fact that York—Simcoe does

not have a hospital. We still do not have a hospital. To my NDP colleagues, I would say that we are spending more on the debt than we are on health care. It is unbelievable.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from York-Simcoe belongs to a party that has been saying for weeks that the Liberal government is corrupt, that it is mismanaging the public purse and that it is managing everything all wrong.

Yesterday, in an interview with *Le Téléjournal* on housing, the member's own leader said that he wants to use federal public funds to give money for housing to Trois-Rivières and Victoriaville, where his party hopes to win seats. Meanwhile, he plans to penalize Montreal, where he will likely not win any.

Does my colleague think it is right that his leader is already starting to buy votes with public funds, even before taking office? Does he not think that his leader should wait until he is in power before he starts using public money for partisan purposes?

[English]

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Speaker, we can talk about the housing accelerator fund. Interestingly enough, I am a York Region and Simcoe County MP. The northern six municipalities in my riding applied for the housing accelerator fund, and guess what? They got no money. Apparently, in York—Simcoe, we are “too Toronto” for the rural top-up and actually “not Toronto enough” for any housing funds.

Mr. Chad Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was in Hamilton several weeks ago as part of his “make Canada great again” tour, and he talked about dismantling the national housing strategy, which is a strategy that has built units in the member's riding. In fact, I know that there were 18 transitional units constructed in his riding. Passage House in East Gwillimbury provides shelter services for people who are in encampments. There was also a youth shelter constructed in Sutton. It provided services by Blue Door.

I wonder why the Leader of the Opposition is so intent on cutting supports for not-for-profit organizations as well as cutting supports for those most vulnerable Canadians who need the services and the facilities in the member's riding. Can I ask him why?

• (1700)

Mr. Scot Davidson: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to make the Liberal government understand. Let us take York—Simcoe, for example, which we are talking about tonight. I want to again talk about the rural top-up of the carbon tax because the government members love to divide Canadians. They are dividing Canadians based on geography now; that is what they are doing. I went atop the CN Tower with binoculars, and I still could not see my riding of York—Simcoe, with binoculars, yet the government chooses to classify us, the soup and salad bowl of Canada, as Toronto. It is actually unbelievable.

The Deputy Speaker: Before proceeding, I just want to apologize to the House because I did miss that the hon. member for Mirabel was not wearing a tie, and we all know that we should be wearing ties in the House when we are speaking, so this is just an apology to hon. members for missing that.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in this space on behalf of the people of Simcoe North. To those watching at home, “Hello, Alice.”

Before I start my comments today on the budget, I just want to take a moment, with the Chair's indulgence, to pay tribute to a former staff member in my office who passed away a couple of weeks ago.

Diane Bell had been a staff member of mine since I was elected. She was a fabulous woman, the first person I talked to in my circle of friends when I decided to run for office. She was a wonderful human; she cared a lot about kids and her small communities. In fact, the mayor of Ramara said, “On the school board, when there was a busing issue, she was always there for the kids.... She was a very strong advocate for the small schools in Ramara, that they don't get closed and that they stay open.”

To her husband, Rob, and her son, John, I want to say that we are going to miss Diane very much. We look forward to celebrating her life on the weekend with all her friends and family.

On the budget, it is a shell game of accounting, and I will get back to that later. However, one of the smartest people I worked with was named Fabrice, and he said that we cannot make a house bigger by thinning the walls. That is exactly what the government is trying to do. It has no vision and no plan. It is at the end of all its ideas, and to grow the economy, or make the house bigger, it is resorting to thinning the walls.

I looked through the budget very carefully. Everyone says we are in a productivity crisis. The government acknowledges it. I went through the budget, and there is no GDP per capita chart. We are in a productivity crisis, and the government does not care to tell Canadians how we are doing in GDP per capita.

One of my mentors, Hugh Moncrieff, said that what gets measured, gets done. Obviously, the government does not care about making Canadians wealthier every year.

I do not expect anyone to just take my word for it. Let us go to some experts.

Don Drummond, a former senior civil servant and a very smart man, said that he would grade this budget as a D, but that it is very close to an F. He said, “I actually thought given the lead-up there were going to be more tax gimmicks”. Maybe we dodged that a bit, but he would leave it on a D.

Bill Morneau said, “This was very clearly something that while I was there, we resisted.” He was referring to the capital gains changes. He said, “We resisted it for a very specific reason: [We were] concerned about the growth of the country”.

Robert Asselin, another very smart individual and someone who has written a lot about fiscal policy and government spending, said, “I'm worried the government is overspending again, in a pre-elec-

tion setup, [with] higher interest rates and debt servicing cost being very high already and rising fast”.

Andrew Coyne of The Globe and Mail wrote,

Indeed, there is not a single measure in the budget aimed at boosting investment generally.... Having spread itself so thin, budget after budget, on less urgent matters, the government finds itself without the capacity to act on the two or three things that really demand its attention. Assuming it even had any intention of doing so [in the first place].

Sahir Khan says the government is high on “aspiration” and low on “perspiration”. I could not agree more.

Let us talk about a few measures in the budget. On housing, the government wants to increase demand measures by helping individuals take more money out of their RRSP. It is also helping wealthy developers. I am surprised to learn that my NDP colleagues will be supporting the budget, because the only people who can max out their RRSPs are very wealthy individuals. The NDP is going to end up voting for a budget that supports the most wealthy in the country and wealthy developers, except that the government vastly under-delivered on its disability benefit.

● (1705)

Let us talk a little about the accounting tricks, shall we? The Bank of Canada has been losing money, lots of money, billions and billions of dollars a year. Last year the government told us it was a few billion dollars. This year, we do not actually know. The government is trying to hide that from Canadians; it does not actually disclose it in the budget. It actually buries it in another line with the Canada mortgage bond program and consolidates the two together.

The truth is that interest rates have not come down, because government spending has gone up. Therefore, Bank of Canada losses are higher this year than the government thought they would be last year.

I want to spend a minute on the capital gains trick, an accounting facade. The government expects it will get \$7 billion in new revenues because of those who transact between now and January 25. This is very convenient. It sets a date in the future to change the capital gains tax, it forces a bunch of people to transact, and it gets a bunch of revenue that goes to the bottom line.

If the government did not get that revenue, it would be offside its debt-to-GDP ratio and missing its other fiscal anchor, which is the commitment to keep the budget deficit below \$40 billion. There is a big risk to the fiscal framework just sitting there in that budget if people decide not to transact, if for some reason they think a future government might change its mind or if the government has made the wrong assumptions on how many people will transact.

The Budget

Let us talk about extra money for the Canada Revenue Agency, with \$336 million over two years and another \$180 million to write cheques to small businesses for the carbon credit rebate. I have a lot of faith and confidence in the people at CRA, who work hard, but there is something wrong over there or in the system of government.

Let us take the bare trust fiasco. On the very last day, it reversed its decision after all these taxpayers hired accountants, did the paperwork and spent thousands of dollars. The people at CRA are doing a great job, but the agency, the CRA itself, does not need more money; it needs to be visited by a proctologist.

We need to figure out why we continually have implementation problems. The government's idea is to give the CRA more to do. People are not waiting on hold long enough, so let us give it more programs to deliver. The government has a massive capacity problem. It does not need to find more things to try to do, it actually needs to be better at doing what it is supposed to do. We need to make government simpler, not bigger.

The hon. colleague before me talked about the rural top-up. It appears that some individuals in Simcoe North are not getting the rural top-up. We are investigating this, but it makes absolutely no sense. While we are on "what makes no sense", there is not a single country in the world except Canada that has raised taxes on energy over this inflationary period. For some reason, the government wants to make energy more expensive when people are having a problem paying their bills. It absolutely boggles the mind. It leaves one bewildered.

On the capital gains tax, the government wants us to believe there is a pool of people, the one percenters, and they are the same 1% and are the worst people ever, except guess what: That 1% changes every year, because people end up in the top 1% or 10% for various reasons. They might sell a business, or something might happen; they might come into some extra money. They are not the same ugly people; the top 25% are not the same nasty, money hungry, greedy people. They change from year to year. We need to be careful about how far we try to squeeze people before they start leaving this country.

I look forward to the questions from my colleagues and from the NDP members, who might be able to enlighten us on how they can vote for a budget that is going to help wealthy individuals save more money for their RRSP for a home but not for the disabilities benefit.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the most significant line item expenditures is the Canada disability benefit. It is a substantial—

An hon. member: One billion a year?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, \$1 billion is a considerable amount of money, believe it or not, for the member across the way.

At the end of the day, I find it a little confusing. I am trying to understand the Conservatives' policy on the Canada disability bene-

fit. That should not surprise anyone, because we do not know what their policy is on the pharmacare plan or the dental plan. We assume, based on their voting patterns, that they are against those initiatives.

Does the member support the allocations in the budget for programs such as the dental program, the pharmacare program and the disability program?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe the government is applauding the disability program. It over-promised and under-delivered.

If we want to talk about line items in the budget, let us talk about debt servicing costs. Debt servicing costs are now the exact same amount that the GST is to require. I have a bunch of friends I like to see on Fridays at Frank's compound, Waxy and Frank. Those guys go for lunch once a week. Now, every time they get a bill that has GST on it, they are paying interest on the debt.

There might be some good things in the budget, but people do not buy a house because they like the curtains.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, page 74 of the budget says that the government is exploring new measures to expand access to alternative financing products for mortgages, including halal mortgages.

We know, or rather we do not know, the Conservatives' regard for the separation of church and state. We know that they love to pray for their King. That being said, I know that my colleague is very familiar with the banking system.

I would like to know whether the Conservative Party is in favour of changing banking laws, mortgage laws and our prudential and mortgage regulations to accommodate certain religious minorities and possibly add to the mortgage rules certain precepts that are found in sharia law.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, I was surprised to see this in the budget as well, but I must admit that I am not an expert in how those kinds of mortgages work. All Canadians would like to believe that Canadians should have access to financial products. I am interested to see how the government is going to consult on this. I do not know what is being proposed. I think we should learn a bit more.

The Budget

I would tell my wonderful colleague that the government is creating dual classes of mortgage borrowers with respect to those insured and uninsured on mortgage renewals. The government is allowing insured mortgage holders to shop around for a renewal but not allowing uninsured mortgage holders to shop for a better rate on renewal without doing the stress test, and that is unfair.

• (1715)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague's financial acumen is renowned in our party.

What does he think is missing from this budget that he would like to see?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, a year and a half ago, the government tabled a fall economic statement that showed a balanced budget in five years. Now the deficit is \$20 billion. Since everyone started telling the government to slow down its spending, it has added \$103 billion of new spending. That is net. The gross number is \$156 billion. What I would like to have seen in this budget is some kind of plan.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when I reflect on the budget, what I see is a government that is committed to the issue of fairness, fairness for every generation. What I see is a consistency that has been clearly demonstrated since 2015. As a government, we have a responsibility to be there in a very real and tangible way, in many different ways, to support Canadians.

We saw that in the first budget we presented back in 2015-16, shortly after the 2015 fall election, where we made it very clear that fairer taxation was important. That is the reason why we put a special tax on Canada's wealthiest 1% back then, which the Conservative Party voted against. We also reduced the tax on Canada's middle class, which the Conservative Party also voted against.

We have not been discouraged with respect to moving forward and have supported Canadians in many different ways. I can talk about the supports for the poorest seniors with the guaranteed income supplement, the GIS, which was greatly enhanced back in 2016 because of a budget measure. We can go through the years that followed, where we have consistently seen the government take actions to support Canadians in a very real and tangible way. That is the consistency we have demonstrated.

This budget is a reflection of what Canadians are telling the individual Liberal members of Parliament from coast to coast to coast. We are not saying that everything is perfect. We recognize that Canadians have very real needs. This budget, much like the fall economic statement, is there to support Canadians.

One of the other things that has been consistent is the Conservative Party of Canada's approach. Its members are not there to serve the needs of Canadians. They are more interested in filibustering and being a destructive force. One member just moments ago was talking about rural Canada and how he wanted to see a certain area get a larger percentage of the carbon rebate. There is irony in that. The fall economic statement includes a doubling up of the rural carbon rebate. Why has that not been implemented? It is because of the Conservatives. They are preventing the legislation from pass-

ing, which would enable more money going into the pockets of rural Canadians, yet they criticize the government for not providing supports. That is only one example of many I could share with the House.

Unlike the Conservative Party, when we talk about a sense of fairness, we mean it. One only needs to take a look at what happened during the pandemic as a great example. We created programs that saw literally millions of dollars put into the pockets and purses of Canadians so they would have disposable income to buy the groceries necessary, pay for their mortgage and so forth. We were there to support small businesses by providing things such as the wage loss subsidy, which also helped Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We can talk about how we were there for our seniors and people with disabilities with one-time payments.

We could talk about infrastructure and what we have built over the last number of years. If I were going to give a Homer Simpson award to the leader of the Conservative Party, it would probably be, at least in part, for his position on the Canada Infrastructure Bank. We invest billions of dollars and, as a direct result of that investment, it levers virtually \$2 billion for every \$1 billion we invest, and we have infrastructure projects happening across the country.

• (1720)

What do the Conservatives say about that? They want to get rid of the Canada infrastructure program. What kind of stupid idea is that? Do they not realize the positive impact it has on Canadians every day? That is just one program about which they have no idea what they are talking about.

Today, one of the needs we are facing is the issue of housing. During the nineties, no Conservatives, New Democrats or Liberals, and I am not sure about the Greens because they were not in the House at the time, but not one political party inside this chamber was advocating for the national government to play a role in non-profit housing. There was not one political party doing that.

If we fast-forward to 2016, under the current Prime Minister's leadership, we saw a government begin to take an active interest in housing. When the leader of the Conservative Party was responsible for housing, we know what he did. He was in the position to develop a housing strategy or build houses. We barely need more than one hand to count it. He built one, two, three, four, five, six houses. That was it. His total contribution was six houses.

It is literally a joke when the Conservatives stand to be critical of the government. No government in the last 50 years has done more proactively to deal with housing than this government has. We can look at the programs. There are supports for housing co-ops and organizations such as Habitat for Humanity. We are working with different levels of government to ensure the dream of owning a home is possible.

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No government has demonstrated more leadership on the housing file than this government, which is the absolute opposite of what the current leader of the Conservative Party did when he was the minister responsible for housing. We understand the importance of the issue, and that is why we are seeing literally hundreds of millions of dollars being spent in every region of this country. We understand the best way to build more homes is by investing in it, unlike the Conservative Party.

Members can look at the contrast. Today, after the leader of the Conservative Party spoke, I asked him a question. I asked him about the fact that he only built six houses. What did he do? He stood up and attempted to mislead Canadians. He said he had built 90,000 homes. That is absolute garbage, but it is consistent with what we see coming from the Conservative Party.

It does not matter. The Conservatives will say things in here and they will use social media to mislead Canadians. When the leader was called out on it, I cannot say whether he stayed in the House, but he sure vacated his seat. He might have still been in the chamber, but he did not like being called out on the truth. The truth is, as a government, we recognize that there is a role for the national government, and the Leader of the Opposition does not recognize that. There is the contrast.

I believe if Canadians were to understand who the leader of the Conservative Party is, they would turn their backs. They want to see a national government that is prepared to work with municipalities, provincial governments, non-profits and social enterprises, or anyone who has ideas to assist in bringing in more houses. That is what it is going to take. It is not just the federal government. It is going to take a lot more co-operation, and the federal government is prepared to provide leadership. That is what we see in the budget.

One member stood up and spoke about how the government does not have anything regarding innovation and that we are not trying to encourage companies. I pointed out that we do have the accelerated investment tax credit, and the member just did not realize that. They did not hear what the Minister of Finance had said. He was being critical because he thought we did not have anything like that.

• (1725)

Again, here is the contrast. As a national government, we recognize that there is a role for the national government to play in encouraging innovation and encouraging investment, and we are not alone. Even Progressive Conservative Doug Ford in Ontario recognizes that, which is why we landed, for example, the Volkswagen electric battery plant. Members can imagine a plant the size of 200 football fields. It is likely going to be one of, if not the, largest manufacturing plants in North America. It will provide thousands of jobs, and this is not just in Ontario. This is the type of thing in which we believe. We think of the future green jobs, and there will be a lot more coming because we have a national government that has taken an interest in developing an economy that is going to be there to continue to build jobs into the future.

For those who are following the debate, I will give a clear indication of success. It took Stephen Harper almost nine years to generate just under a million jobs. Well, we are at just over eight years today, and we have actually generated over two million jobs, and

that was while going through a pandemic. It is because we understand that the Government of Canada has a role to play in increasing opportunities into the future, which is why we will find that there is no government in the history of Canada that has actually signed off on more trade agreements than this government has. We have done that because Canada is a trading nation. Trade creates jobs.

I was so pleased to be with the minister of agriculture in the Philippines where we opened up a trade office for agriculture and agriproducts. Why did we do that? We can take a look at future opportunities in the Asia-Pacific. I am glad that it is located in metro Manila in the Philippines. This is going to create more jobs into the future. It highlights industries that are very important to us. This is a government that cares, whether it is the larger cities, the smaller municipalities, our rural farms and all regions of the country, which is why we will see there are investments to support Canadians in every way.

We can take a look at what a progressive government can do to make a difference. We can think of child care. There is a national child care program, the first ever, which enables more women to participate in the workforce and improves the quality of life for so many. We can think of the Canada pharmacare program, which would take steps towards complementing the Canada Health Act and the health care services that Canadians have grown to love and cherish. We can think of the national food program. For many years, as an MLA, I used to talk about kids going to school on an empty stomach. This is a national government that would address that issue. We are supporting children because we understand the need for it.

However, what kind of response do we get from the Conservative Party, from the members opposite? They say, "Well, the federal government should not play in roles like that. Maybe just hand over money, but do not care how that money is spent." That is not good enough. Canadians' expectations are that the government will be there to support them.

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• (1730)

[English]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

Mr. Corey Tochor (Saskatoon—University, CPC) moved that Bill C-380, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (plastic manufactured items), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

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He said: Madam Speaker, soggy, limp, wet and utterly useless: we are not talking about the Liberals. We are talking about paper straws. The only people who like to suck on these paper straws are Liberal and NDP MPs. New research shows them to be harmful to our health because they are coated in truly toxic, forever chemicals. The Liberal replacements are four times as expensive.

Just in case the Liberals in the chamber have not knocked on any doors lately or talked to Canadians, which we know is true, Canadians are suffering in the worst inflationary crisis in my lifetime. Two million Canadians are using a food bank. One in four Canadians are skipping meals because of the cost of living crisis caused by the Liberal government.

The Liberal government is hell-bent on making everything more expensive. Banning plastic is bad for people's health. It is bad for their pocketbooks, and it is bad, actually, for the environment. Take a look around. People are listening to this speech, maybe in the chamber, maybe at home on their laptops or cellphones, which are all made of plastic. Many of the items we see in the rooms we are sitting in have plastic components. What the Liberals are trying to do is replace those components with more expensive materials. If people think they cannot afford their bills now, wait until the Liberals fully enact their plastic ban. Start with six items, then 16 and then 60. After that, the cost of living quadruples again.

The plastic straw ban is a fantasy. It is not based on reality. The reality is that the science backs up my position. Later today, I will be attempting to table the documents that I am referencing here to help people understand the science behind this ridiculous ban that does not make sense.

First up is that eco-friendly paper straws may be worse. According to this peer-reviewed article, it was reported in 2023 that many of the paper straws on the market have toxic forever chemicals like PFAS, which are associated with health problems like low birth weight, cancer, low response to vaccines and more. That is the first report that I will be tabling later on.

Another one is a regulatory impact analysis statement that members of the government should know about very well because it is from the Department of Health. The government's own regulation analysis shows an increase in costs, GHG emissions and also tonnes of waste as a result of this ban. This means there will be increased emissions and increased costs for consumers. Their own report shows that.

The third report that I will be tabling later today is a comparative study of a life-cycle assessment of bio-plastic straws and paper straws. This is a peer-reviewed article demonstrating that plastic straws have a lower environmental impact than paper straws.

Paper straws are terrible. No one likes them. They suck. Now the science shows that they are actually bad for people's health, bad for the environment and bad for our pocketbooks.

We have a waste management issue, not a plastics issue, so we do have issues. The poster child of this is garbage in the ocean. We should never use our waterways as a dump. We should never transport waste through our waterways, but that is exactly what is causing the garbage in the ocean. There are 10 rivers in the world that cause 95% of the garbage that is found in oceans. Eight of those

rivers are in Asia and two in Africa. Banning more and more plastics in Canada will not stop this problem.

Banning plastic straws will hurt the most vulnerable: the disability community. This ban is cruel and heartless for people who rely on safe plastic straws. If people cared and listened to Canadians, they would hear from nurses and care aids about how people with physical and mental health challenges are suffering with this ban. I have a friend who just got shoulder surgery done. He is in a sling and having difficulties drinking and carrying on. It would be nice to have one of those plastic straws that bend to be able to take sips of water as casually as can be. We are hearing from many medical professionals about how this ban has impacted their ability to care for seniors and people with disabilities. It is cruel that the Liberal government is banning one of the tools they use to make sure that people are hydrated.

● (1735)

It is not just the straws the Liberals are banning that make things more expensive. It is also grocery bags. Grocery stores are making a killing selling reusable plastic bags. They come with massive margins that are supposedly good for the environment. If we look in the trunk of our cars or at home, everyone has bags stuffed with other bags and stuffed with other bags on top, because every time we go to a store and forget to bring them or whatnot, we buy another reusable bag. It is the margins on these bags that are very impressive for the grocery stores.

My NDP colleagues always want to bring up Galen Weston, and I am sure they receive a huge card of thanks for supporting the Liberals. Maybe the Liberals themselves will get a big card thanking them for banning plastic bags because now they get to sell reusable bags over and over again, which is maximizing profits for grocery stores. Long suffering Canadians pay the price for this ill-thought-out and illogical argument.

Depending on the bag, if one buys one of the reusable ones, one might need to use it over a thousand times before it equals the environmental footprint of a plastic bag. This is unrealistic and ultimately worse for the consumer and the environment. On these reusable bags, we often see organic cotton bags, which are popular with the woke crowd. Those organic cotton bags are worse for the environment than the regular cotton bags, because they need to be used weekly for years to match the environmental footprint.

The problem with organic farming is the yield is not as much off the acre of land and the inputs are different and cost more, so the organic material the stores are selling has a larger footprint than just regular cotton.

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It is not that long ago and we remember what it was like before we had the Prime Minister, and it will not be like this when he is gone. We used to be able to receive complimentary bags for our groceries, and we could reuse them for multiple purposes. For example, for a pet, a garbage can in the house or to store anything. There was no cost to us and we had these bags. We could save our money to pay for other items. However, the Liberals, in the charade of belief that this is for environmental reasons, banned this and are making us buy replacement bags, which are usually plastic and have an even larger environmental footprint than the original plastic bag.

There is technology that can help. Governments should be working with provinces and companies, and the Calgary Co-op is a great example. After it heard of the silly idea to ban plastic bags, it tasked its supplier to come up with a biodegradable bag, which it did. It found a bag that performed much like the old plastic bags, and in 10 years' time in a landfill it composts to nothing. It is a great idea. It is great for the environment. It is great Canadian technology and it is something the government, after review, said no to. It said that if they were to be sold, they needed to be sold in bulk and at a distance away from the till, making it inconvenient for consumers and ultimately inconvenient for the country.

This is not about science. It is about government controlling our lives. If the government really cared about Canadians and the planet, it would cancel next week's radical international plastics banning meeting. There is a delegation of people flying from all corners of the world to Ottawa to discuss what plastic item they will ban next. They will be burning all that jet fuel and driving those emissions into the atmosphere, and while they are here I am sure they will be hosted with galas, food and fine wine.

I propose we take the millions that are going to be blown next week on nothing and a whole bunch of hot air and invest them in waste management in the countries that have those 10 rivers that are causing 95% of the garbage in our oceans.

• (1740)

That would be a concrete, common-sense Conservative solution. Spike the meetings, take the money and invest in waste management in countries that need it. If we do that, we actually have an impact on the environment versus the virtue signalling these guys are so good at. However, the idea is too practical for the Liberals, who are not about solutions but feelings, emotions and tag lines.

On the plastics in the ocean, which is a problem that we need to address, when we faced environmental problems in the past, we used technology, not government's heavy hand, to fix it.

I have done some research: What is that plastic? Where is it coming from? The majority of plastics are from commercial fishermen. They call it "ghost gear". When fishermen are done with the gear, which is made out of plastic, be it nets or fishing lines, the practice that takes place is that they throw it overboard. These nets float with the ocean currents, collecting debris and making a bigger problem.

What I am proposing here as a common-sense solution is that we have a deposit placed on the commercial equipment that usually gets tossed overboard. Instead of tossing it overboard, the fisher-

men would take it back to the supplier, get their money back from the refund and the net will never get into the ocean. That is a common-sense solution that I plead with some of the MPs here who might be at this elitist, fancy gathering next week to propose. Steal the idea. It costs nothing for consumers. It costs nothing for the taxpayer, but it is a concrete solution to go after the majority of plastic that we find in the oceans.

Common-sense Conservatives will fix what this Liberal government has broken. Canada should be a superpower in recycling plastics. If this government would just meet with the first ministers, it would learn the solution is plastic recycling, not the heavy hand of government. Like many issues we face in Canada, the federal Liberal government ignores the provinces. To improve plastic recycling in our country, it starts with meeting with the premiers. It is real Canadians, such as from the premiers, that this government needs to listen to. It is not cheap slogans and bans that will make a difference in our environment.

Why the Prime Minister needs to meet with the ministers was proven in court. The federal Liberals broke the law. They went around the Constitution and meddled in provincial business. If the Prime Minister would just meet with the premiers, whom he brags about not having met with since 2016, he may find out about some of the great work they are doing on recycling.

With this recycling of plastic molecules, we can do it over and over again, which can become the building blocks for the next consumer good. It would drive down the cost of goods, which is a good thing in a cost of living crisis. Any consumer goods that we can lower the cost on is a good thing, and I encourage, once again, this government to pick up on that idea.

Canada should be that superpower in plastic recycling. If we had a competent government, we would be investing in technology, not bans, and this technology already exists. If there were a federal government willing to partner with provinces and private entities to increase and scale up that recycling, we could be that powerhouse and reuse that molecule over and over again.

However, the Prime Minister will not listen to the courts, will not listen to Canadians and will not listen to the experts that are in these studies. There is another study I will table after my speech about the Calgary Co-op shopping bag ban, which shows that it is scientific, it is biodegradable and it can work within our system.

However, for this government to admit its errors, backtrack and be transparent, I will not hold my breath. The Prime Minister will not listen to anybody, but soon enough, he will hear from voters.

• (1745)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member could provide his thoughts on the fact that part of demonstrating leadership is to take action. It is not just words. If we go around the world and say, “Look, we think you should be doing X, Y and Z,” would he not think that one of the ways that we demonstrate leadership is to actually take action, which he is suggesting we not take?

The member opposite is saying that we should not be having any form of ban on plastics and that it is okay to have plastic grocery bags and so forth. I would think that a majority of Canadians might disagree with that principle. Does he believe that the banning of plastic grocery bags is a bad thing?

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, it is bad for one's health, one's environment and one's pocketbook. There are studies that I will be tabling that the member has access to. It is the government's studies that show that greenhouse gases increase with such a ban. The costs increase with such a ban.

If they want to take a leadership role, they should follow the science. The science shows that plastic is not toxic. What this Liberal government is doing is virtue signalling at the worst level.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, I have to say that he gave a rather odd speech to Parliament. He spoke for almost 10 minutes about paper straws. In any case, my understanding is that my colleague and the Conservative Party want to reverse the ban on plastics. I never thought I would hear such a thing in an institution like ours, in Parliament.

At the same time, he had a lot to say about the fact that there is so much plastic in our oceans. That strikes me as a paradox. Is my colleague simply trying to highlight the relevance of oil, since we know very well that plastics are primarily made from oil?

[English]

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, the member talked about plastic straws and paper straws. Paper straws are shown to be worse for one's health and worse for the environment.

With this ideology that is hell-bent on opposing anything associated with the petrochemical industry, one might find people opposed to bringing back the plastic straw, but I would propose that the member go knock on a hundred doors and ask Canadians what they think. They will tell us that no one likes the paper straw. It sucks.

Let us get back to the plastic straw. It is functional. It works. It is better for the environment.

As for the ocean, he must have missed the first part of my speech, when I talked about how the majority of plastics is ghost gear, which is fishing gear, not plastics. Changing the straw in Canada will not make a lick of difference in the oceans, because we actually have a waste management system.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, it was a very interesting speech, to say the least. I

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would love to sit down and talk with the member, as a person who represents coastal communities, about the amount of plastic we see in our oceans.

He compared a friend of his who had a short-term injury to a person living with a disability.

What I am trying to get clear about is this: My mother had a stroke close to seven years ago. She is physically disabled on one side of her body. She does not have the use of the right side of her body. She uses a straw to drink because of that limitation. She uses metal straws.

There are particular people who have disabilities, who may need to use a plastic straw. I am just wondering if he could be very specific about who they are, because it felt like he was saying that all people living with disabilities have the same need, and I do not think that is the case.

• (1750)

Mr. Corey Tochor: Madam Speaker, I would ask the member to go look at the plastics and, unfortunately, the garbage that is on her coasts and to do a little investigating on where it is coming from.

We know that 95% of the garbage comes from 10 rivers, eight of which are found in Asia and two of which are in Africa. There is not a plastic issue from Canadian consumers. It is from developing worlds that do not have a waste management program.

As for people with disabilities, they have made a loophole whereby if one goes into a store to ask for a plastic straw and asks really nicely and winks twice, they will look underneath their counter and there might be a box of plastic straws.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-380, an act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, regarding plastic manufactured items, introduced by the member for Saskatoon—University, whom we just heard from.

If passed, Bill C-380 would remove “plastic manufactured items” from the list of toxic substances in schedule 1 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, or CEPA, as it is more commonly known.

We unequivocally oppose this bill. It would eliminate the legislative basis underpinning the regulatory actions the government has taken and is taking under CEPA to prevent plastic pollution. The vast majority of Canadians are concerned about plastic pollution and they expect our government to act.

In 2021, a survey found that over 90% of Canadians expressed concern about the impact that plastic pollution has on oceans and wildlife. In late 2023, a survey from the Angus Reid Institute revealed that most Canadians felt that a single-use plastic ban is an effective means to reduce plastic waste.

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We know that plastic pollution is everywhere in the environment, posing the threat of harm to wildlife and damaging their habitats. Scientific findings support this conclusion. The government's 2020 science assessment provides a summary of peer-reviewed studies related to the effects of plastic pollution on organisms and their habitats. It confirms that plastic pollution is everywhere in the environment, including shorelines, surface waters, sediment, soil, groundwater, indoor and outdoor air, drinking water and food.

Statistics Canada's physical flow account for plastic material estimates that of the 4.9 million tonnes of discarded plastics in Canada in 2020, only a little over 7% of that was recycled into pellets and flakes for use in the production of new products, while over 40,000 tonnes ended up in the environment as pollution. That is why the government is taking regulatory action, as part of Canada's comprehensive zero plastic waste agenda, to eliminate certain harmful and problematic plastic products before they enter the marketplace.

The Government of Canada's zero plastic waste agenda also includes a wide range of measures aimed at reducing plastic pollution, enhancing value retention processes including reuse and recycling systems, minimizing single-use plastics, and fostering a circular economy approach to plastic management. With a focus on collaboration between government, industry and stakeholders, we are making meaningful and substantive progress. Implementing measures to prevent plastic pollution from single-use plastics is a common-sense approach.

This preventative approach is reflected in the government's single-use plastics prohibition regulations. These regulations, published in June 2022, phase out certain single-use plastics that are commonly found in the environment as pollution, pose a threat to wildlife and their habitats, are difficult to recycle and have readily available alternatives.

Over the next decade, it is estimated that these regulations will eliminate over 1.3 million tonnes of hard-to-recycle plastic waste and more than 22,000 tonnes of plastic pollution, which is equivalent to over a million garbage bags full of litter. These regulations have spurred businesses across Canada to elevate their efforts and successfully transition to sustainable alternatives, including the adoption of reusable items.

Provinces and territories are also providing important leadership in improving the management of plastic waste and diverting plastic waste from landfills. Across Canada, many municipalities, including major cities such as Montreal, St. John's, Edmonton and Victoria, have either banned single-use plastic checkout bags outright or are charging a fee to discourage their use.

• (1755)

Bill C-380 arrives in the House for debate at an interesting moment. Next week, Canada will welcome the world to the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution, or INC4. This is a pivotal moment for Canada and the world as countries meet to negotiate a new global agreement on plastics. Canada, from the start of the negotiations, has called for an ambitious and effective treaty that addresses the life cycle of plastics. We want to see negotiations conclude this year so that countries can move forward on implementation.

To ensure that we take an evidence-based approach and measure progress over time, we are advancing a federal plastics registry. The registry, the first of its kind in the world, would require plastics producers to report annually on the quantity and types of plastic they place on the Canadian market. This would facilitate the design, implementation and monitoring of measures aimed at addressing plastic pollution that are part of the zero plastic waste agenda, and it would help to identify areas where further action is required.

We also recognize the importance of innovation in addressing plastic waste and preventing plastic pollution. Through the innovative solutions Canada program, we are supporting Canadian businesses to spur innovation and the development of technologies that address issues such as reuse and difficult-to-recycle film and flexible plastic.

Most recently, the government has contributed over \$25 million to support small and medium-sized businesses in Canada to find innovative solutions to specific plastics issues. The government will continue engaging provinces, territories, civil society, indigenous partners, industry and other concrete initiatives to keep plastics out of the economy and out of the environment. A plastics circular economy would help strengthen sustainable economies and create jobs; it would help fight climate change by avoiding the production of virgin plastic in favour of approaches like recycling and reuse, and it would protect biodiversity and the environment.

In conclusion, federal leadership, via concrete regulatory action, is essential to effectively prevent plastic pollution. It is in the interests of Canadians and the environment that the listing of plastic manufactured items on schedule 1 of CEPA is critical to the important work we are doing, and it should be kept intact. It is essential that we oppose this bill.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-380 raises some worrisome doubts about the Conservative Party's position on a policy objective that is in the common interest and that is accepted by all departments of the environment in every province and territory, including Quebec.

This bill once again embodies the official opposition's denial of environmental issues, but especially its denial of everything that years of scientific work and research have analyzed and confirmed, namely four things. First, plastic pollution is a major environmental and health problem. Second, it is the result of the widespread use of plastic, especially for manufacturing single-use products. Third, whether it is in the form of visible waste, microplastics or nanoplastics, this pollution harms our ecosystems as well as biodiversity. It can also have adverse effects on health, particularly when it goes up the food chain and ends up in our food. Fourth, plastic pollution is present along our shorelines and in our surface waters, sediment, soil, groundwater, indoor and outdoor air, drinking water and food.

The author of the bill, the member for Saskatoon—University, makes a bold statement by claiming, and I am paraphrasing, that the management of plastic manufactured products has no positive impact on environmental protection and public health. This is patently false. I would almost describe this statement as abhorrent. No specialized scientific organization recognized in this field of research shares this position, not one. We might reasonably wonder whether the Conservatives have ever read a scientific study on this. To be clear, I am talking about independent studies carried out somewhere other than the labs at Dow Chemical or Imperial Oil.

Before I address another angle, I would like to clarify something right away, because members of the official opposition might try to say that the Bloc Québécois is not defending provincial jurisdictions. What Bill C-380 seeks to do is invoke the alleged unconstitutionality of the Single-use Plastics Prohibition Regulations made under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

We all know that the federal government is appealing the Federal Court's decision to overturn the government's order on plastics, which the court found to be unconstitutional. The Bloc Québécois agrees with the government's approach for one simple reason, that is, because the Federal Court's decision was wrong, period. If an environmental policy were unconstitutional, of course the Bloc Québécois would immediately demand that the Government of Canada review that policy and respect the environmental sovereignty of Quebec and the provinces.

As a reminder, the Supreme Court already ruled in favour of the provisions of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act that prohibit “specific acts for the purpose of preventing pollution or, to put it in other terms, causing the entry into the environment of certain toxic substances”.

However, the Conservatives do not see the difference between reviewing a policy and completely abandoning a legitimate policy objective. Bill C-380 proposes to completely eliminate the main regulatory measure that allows the government to act on the issue of single-use plastics.

It comes as no surprise to the Bloc Québécois that the official opposition is once again acting as the political valet of the oil and petrochemical lobby. I am saying that because Dow Chemical, Imperial Oil and Nova Chemicals are the ones that led the legal challenge against the regulations.

I am sorry, but no good will come of rejecting science, denying the evidence and filling the legislative agenda with the concerns of

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companies that want the status quo or, even worse, full deregulation.

Let us look back on what the government has done. In 2019, it made an ambitious announcement about banning the use of some single-use plastics. In October 2020, it announced its intention to impose standards to make plastic manufacturers accountable when it comes to the collection and recycling of plastic waste. Then, the environment minister at the time, the current Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, announced, with great fanfare, the goal of achieving zero plastic waste by 2030. That was a good intention, an honourable desire, but it was just an announcement, nothing more.

• (1800)

The government had promised to bring this regulation into force as early as 2021. However, as has been the case with other issues where the government has lacked ambition and not taken action, they blamed the pandemic, that old scapegoat. That said, the government did not lack ambition or action during the pandemic when it came to prioritizing the interests of the fossil fuel sector. It subsidized oil companies in the name of fighting climate change, granted new multibillion-dollar loans for Trans Mountain and authorized exploratory offshore drilling without impact assessments and in marine refuges it had created itself, to name just a few.

Today, the restrictions in force are very incomplete. They cover only six of the hundreds of items in the economy. As far as exports are concerned, no ban on manufacturing or sales will be in force before December 20, 2025, in other words, after the government's current term of office. In our opinion, this is already a rather half-hearted regulation, and I sometimes doubt that it will be enforced. Liberal policies are certainly not up to the task of providing solutions to the growing and worrying problems of plastic pollution, but the Conservative stance on this global issue is damning in its denial of what is basically obvious—namely, that the use of plastics, and consequently their waste, has reached dizzying, even stratospheric heights.

According to every credible and independent source, items made of plastic were considered a toxic substance under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act precisely because the scientific literature proved it. As far as the temptation to talk about recycling is concerned, I would remind the House that the data from 2016 show that Canada recycles only 9% of plastic waste, that 86% ends up in landfills, that 4% is incinerated and that 1% end up in nature. There is no circular economy here.

Recognizing the problem may lead us part-way to the solution. However, let us be clear: the challenge before us is first to recognize that we must act predictably and firmly and then oppose any hint of deregulation with respect to the existing framework. Reusing, remanufacturing, repairing, prioritizing the use of renewable energy in the process of using the material: these priorities alone would guide us to healthy public policies on plastics.

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Thanks to the expertise of Recyc-Québec and its recycling facilities, Quebec is already engaged in a process aimed at moving away from the linear extractivist economic model that the Conservatives hold dear and that also seems to suit the government just fine. Recyc-Québec has made the circular economy its priority. In Quebec, we value the principle of extended producer responsibility, under which the responsibility for managing end-of-life products lies with the companies that produce them.

I will close by quoting Michael Burt, vice-president and global director of climate and energy policy at Dow Canada, in an appearance before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development on the issue of single-use plastics. I talked about Dow Canada's expertise in industrial chemistry and engineering, and I said that there was no doubt that Dow Canada could contribute to advancing the circular economy or developing something innovative. When I asked him if he intended to transition away from virgin resin production, he slowly leaned towards the microphone, maintained eye contact with me and, without hesitation, replied no. He also said, "The reality is that the world doesn't have a plastic problem, but it definitely has a plastic-waste problem. ...The reality is that, from an investment standpoint, Dow Canada is a profitable company." I think his remarks were clear.

How can the production of plastics possibly be separated from their existence as waste? Mr. Burt's statement speaks volumes, does it not? One thing is certain. By introducing Bill C-380, the official opposition wins the prize for being this major lobby group's legislative representative.

• (1805)

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to stand up and speak to this bill. I have to admit it is a little disheartening to hear how the mover of this motion started his speech this evening. However, it is also not surprising from a party that continues to deny that there are environmental issues that need to be addressed in a timely manner in order to protect our futures and the future generations to come.

We heard the member speak about paper straws, make jokes about the sogginess of them and ask who really liked paper straws. I understand they are inconvenient, but my goodness, let us talk about the issue at hand here. The issue at hand is that we have plastic pollution that is destroying our marine ecosystems and is destroying the health and well-being of people across the country.

The real problem is around plastics that are polluting our planet and being ingested through marine ecosystems. It goes into the entire ecosystem and then into us, creating health implications. Instead of talking about the real issues at hand, the member was deflecting and talking about soggy straws.

I think this is exactly what is to be expected from my colleagues in the Conservative Party: a consistent deflection from the issues at hand. The member even went so far as to say that banning plastics is bad for health, bad for pocketbooks and bad for the environment. I am floored to hear this.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

• (1810)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind members to not be heckling or trying to make points while someone else has the floor. I am sure the member was not disturbed while he was speaking, and I am sure that he would want to return that respect during other people's speeches.

The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron: Madam Speaker, instead of what was shared in the prior member's speech, we know that regulating plastics is essential to addressing the harms of plastic, especially of single-use plastics, that are caused to our ecosystem, human health, the environment and even our climate. This is what we should be talking about.

We know that plastics are polluting our oceans at a fast rate. The impacts are horrific. As the critic for fisheries and oceans, and a West Coaster, previously an East Coaster, but now on Vancouver Island, I know that, in Canada, we are seeing the impacts of plastic pollution in so many ways.

One such example that comes to mind is from when I was first elected and we had the *Zim Kingston* freighter spill along the coast of Vancouver Island. I believe there were over 100 containers spilled, and only four of those containers were recovered. The rest were left to sink along the shores of Vancouver Island. In these containers were a variety of items, many of them plastic.

A year after the spill, there was a story by the CBC, entitled "From urinal mats to unicorns, cargo from major container spill is still washing up on B.C. shores". I will ask members to imagine walking down the shoreline of our beautiful coastal Vancouver Island and there are these pink inflatable unicorns washing up on the shore. I do not know if everybody here has had an opportunity to visit our beautiful coastline, but most certainly, pink plastic unicorns are not a part of our natural marine ecosystem. It is quite the opposite. There is a tremendous negative impact to our environment when these plastic unicorns and urinal mats break down into microplastics and get into our marine life. The exact seafood we are eating is full of microplastics, and the cycle continues.

We need to be addressing this plastic pollution in all ways. One being that, if marine cargo spills continue to happen, there needs to be a strategy in place to make sure we are integrating local knowledge to put a response plan in place immediately. I hope we will see some of these things from the Liberal government in due time.

With that, I would like to speak about a new disease that has been found. There is an article by the National Audubon Society, a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to the conservation of birds and their habitats, entitled “Plastic Pollution Is So Pervasive That It’s Causing a New Disease in Seabirds”. This new disease is “marked by severe stomach damage from eating little bits of plastic”. The damage is tremendous to these birds that are ingesting these plastics. It is scraping their organs, causing “several knock-on health effects”. It makes the birds “feel less hungry”. There is also “less room for nutrients”. It is scarring their stomachs, creating less flexibility, “so birds are able to transport less fish back to the nest”. The article explains how the “damaged organ creates less digestive acid to process food and protect against parasites”.

• (1815)

With that, I would like to point out that the impacts of the plastic pollution disproportionately impact many indigenous communities across Canada. A constituent in my riding, from whom I have not received permission to talk about this, but I know he will be very excited for me to do so because he talks about it at all times, has been very focused on gathering and providing detailed information around the location of city dumps and how close in proximity they are, consistently, to first nations. We know these dumps are places where plastics are brought.

I would like to finish by saying that constituents in my riding are reaching out, asking for the Minister of Environment to deal with plastic pollution, and are calling on him to take action on plastics in Canada to address the adverse human health outcomes linked with chemicals of concern in the cradle-to-grave cycle of plastics. This includes a few points: a just and equitable treaty, and national policies that respect human rights; limit global production of plastics; eliminate unnecessary plastic products; prioritize the prohibition of hazardous chemicals of concern; prioritize immediate action to address people vulnerable to exposure; and ensure that business respects the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

Despite the Conservatives' attempt to ensure that our planet is burning, that our planet is polluted and that people are not provided with strong solutions to move forward, I would ask that we take the actions necessary to put an end to plastic pollution.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to address Bill C-380, a private member's bill from my friend and colleague, the member for Saskatoon—University, with the very important aim of repealing the government's irresponsible and senseless ban on single-use plastics.

This debate tonight is not about plastic waste, although certainly there is more to be done there. This is about whether plastic manufactured products are toxic, because that is what the government did. It had them labelled “toxic” and it was ruled to be unconstitutional.

In my speech today, I will first outline the history of the ban and its flawed premise, and then detail why it is ultimately unhelpful to the environment and talk about the harmful impacts on Canadians and Canadian industry. Finally, I will expand on the unintended and knock-on consequences of the ban, with a final appeal to the House for some common sense.

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Canadians are now unfortunately well versed in the effects of climate change. The Liberals, with a need to be seen to be taking action, decided to place the blame for climate change exclusively on Canadian consumers, making plastics the scapegoat with a particular spotlight on single-use plastics.

In 2019, the Prime Minister announced bans on single-use plastics, and in May 2021, plastic manufactured items were added to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, or CEPA, to be designated as toxic. In June 2022, six categories of single-use plastics, or SUPs, were banned, with a timeline to prohibit manufacture and import for sale in Canada, prohibition on sale in Canada and prohibition on manufacturing, import and export sales.

Unfortunately, quite in line with a government bent on destroying Canada's competitiveness and foreign direct investment, check-out bags, cutlery, straws, food service utensils, stir sticks, ring carriers and plastic straws packaged with drink containers were outlawed in one fell swoop. Yes, because banning the straws from juice boxes in the lunches of Canada's first graders will definitely beat climate change. No, it will not.

First, this ban on single-use plastics is unfounded and a serious overreach. Plastic manufactured items, as I referred to, do not rightfully belong in the CEPA list as a toxic substance. CEPA is a federal criminal statute and the enabling mechanism that the federal government is applying wrongly to provide a legal basis for usurping provincial powers over waste management and the local plastics economy.

Using CEPA, while unjustified, allows the federal government to take control of provincial waste management systems and centralizes all decisions related to what plastic products can be manufactured, imported, exported and distributed in Canada. CEPA is a chemical management tool for toxic substances. It was never intended to be an environmental management tool. This broadens the scope of the act, which was to list chemically harmful substances like mercury and lead as toxic. Therefore, listing the entire category of plastic manufactured items in schedule 1 of the CEPA without a chemical risk assessment testing for toxicity is a serious violation of the act.

What is more is that it is not even plastic itself that is listed as toxic. It is plastic manufactured items, things like medical supplies and devices, protective equipment, food packaging, fridges and cars. All of these are made with plastic. Are they all toxic? No, they are not.

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I worked for 21 years as a chemical engineer in plastics. I designed many plastic products used in medical devices, medical supplies and food packaging. I was involved in the approval process to understand how we assess to make sure they do not have a negative medical impact.

People here in the House every day are drinking orange juice from a plastic container. Is it toxic? No, it is not. They are eating their yogourt in the lobby from a plastic container. Is it toxic? No, it is not. They are going to the hospital, and in the hospital they use a single-use plastic for blood transfusions. Is it toxic? No, it is not. We are putting contact lenses in our eyes that are plastic. Is it toxic? No, it is not. We are giving babies formula in plastic bottles. Is it toxic? No, it is not.

It is such a ridiculous argument to say that plastic is not toxic, but plastic manufactured items are. That is like me saying that the wool I am knitting with is not toxic, but the sweater I produce is. It is absolutely ridiculous.

• (1820)

Even the minister himself said at the environment committee, “Plastics are not toxic in the normal sense of the word that people use pejoratively,” and that he does not think anybody says they are. Then why are they on the list? This is causing a huge issue in the industry, threatening jobs and the environment. As usual for the Liberals, their words and actions do not line up.

Perhaps they think that by banning plastics and causing serious deleterious effects to Canadians and Canadian industry, they can fool voters into thinking they did something, but like most Liberal strategies, it is built on false premises. The Liberals want Canadians to believe that banning single-use plastics will assist with the reduction of plastic pollution and emissions production. However, the scale of plastic pollution is small, less than 1% of all litter in Canada, according to a report written by the Liberal government in 2020.

Further, only 1% of Canada's plastic waste is disposed of improperly. Plastic pollution is not a pervasive problem in Canada. Moreover, alternatives to plastic actually produce more carbon emissions, not less. We know the government loves McKinsey and its consulting work, so I will quote from one of its reports, “The potential impact of reusable packaging”. Modelling done by McKinsey in 2023 indicates that there would be a 150% increase in emissions due to the higher share of fossil components in materials, transport and energy use to make the alternative products. What a good job fighting climate change.

These so-called alternatives cost twice as much to make as well. Packaging accounts for 10% to 20% of a product's cost, and if the packaging now costs twice as much, as likewise estimated in that same McKinsey report, there will be a significant inflationary increase to consumers if the government introduces requirements related to use, recycled content and eliminating plastic from produce and meats. That is just what we need when Canadians cannot afford to eat and are going to homeless shelters and food banks in increasing numbers.

As it is, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates the added cost to the Canadian economy is \$1.9 billion to

produce these alternatives to the banned plastic packaging. We use plastic for a reason. It is vital to extend the shelf life of foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables. These fresh fruits and vegetables, even pet food, will face a reduced shelf life and increased prices due to the federal regulations on plastic.

The Canadian Produce Marketing Association estimates it will cost between \$2.5 billion and \$5 billion in costs for food losses, accompanying an estimated half million tonne increase in food losses. Rotting food increases methane emissions. At a time when so many Canadians are struggling and the food banks are seeing unprecedented usage, it is unconscionable.

Worse still are the effects on the thousands of families who rely on those working in the plastic manufacturing industry. More than 99,000 people work in the Canadian plastics industry, which is estimated to be worth \$35 billion. The ban will impact 13,000 to 20,000 direct jobs and as many as 26,000 to 40,000 indirect jobs. Together, that is up to 60,000 Canadians who will face further hardship at the hands of the Liberal-NDP government and its ideology.

In my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, there are multiple plastics facilities that produce single-use plastics. In 2019, the federal Liberals decided they wanted Nova Chemicals to build a \$3-billion plant in my riding instead of in Texas. They provided incentives and money to get it to build a single-use plastic production facility that would export plastics to the world. The very next month, they decided they were going to ban the products it is producing, and now they are planning to stop the export. They would shut that facility down, along with all the economic benefits. It is total hypocrisy on the part of the government.

Are we really going to destroy the lives and livelihoods of 60,000 Canadians and their families while putting increased costs and inconveniences on Canadians for a detrimental environmental and economic outcome? There is no benefit to this, and it was an egregious error to enact the ban in the first place.

Instead, efforts can be made to shore up recycling and recovery infrastructure to better manage plastic waste sources. These industries are willing to partner to address some of the issues that we know exist with plastics, like microbeads in the Great Lakes, for example. Let us work on those problems.

Plastics are not toxic, and plastic-manufactured products are not toxic, so I implore the government to listen to reason and common sense.

• (1825)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a lot of people are a bit surprised, but maybe not so surprised, that the Conservative Party is going against policy here in Canada, but there are many countries around the world that are moving toward the banning, for example, of plastic bags. That is the question I had posed to the member opposite. The Conservative Party wants to take some backward steps in regard to the environment and to go around the world saying that they care about the environment, when other countries around the world are in fact taking actions. Many countries have banned it, and many of them are actually in the process.

I will continue on, the next time—

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do apologize. That is twice in one day for the hon. parliamentary secretary. I am so sorry.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise tonight on a very important issue.

In November of last year, a 12-year-old child committed suicide in British Columbia, after being the victim of online sexual extortion. The Liberal government has known that this has been a growing problem during the entirety of its nearly nine-year mandate and has taken no action to address this issue. It has gotten worse, and more children have been victimized. It is not just children who are the victims of extortion, and it does not just happen online, but I want to specifically address the extortion of children in Canada, particularly sexual extortion.

This is a federal problem. The gaps in the Criminal Code that allow these criminals to operate are in the federal jurisdiction. The RCMP, which is responsible for catching these organized criminals, is federal. The Prime Minister passed federal Bill C-5, which eliminated mandatory jail time for committing extortion with a firearm. On top of this, he brought into place very detrimental, very poor bail reform, with Bill C-75, which makes it easier for offenders to get back on our streets.

Instead of reacting in a way that would address these gaps, the federal government has proposed a very large bureaucracy that is extrajudicial, that has no costing associated with it, that does not have a set timeline for coming into force and that would be subject to regulations that would not be built for years down the road. That is opposed to supporting common-sense measures, like establishing increased mandatory sentences for criminals convicted of extortion; bringing in five-year prison sentences for any criminal convicted of extortion who is acting on behalf of gangs, and there could be mod-

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ifiers for cases of children; also restoring mandatory four-year prison sentences for the offence of extortion with a firearm; making arson an aggravating factor for the charge of extortion; and reversing the damage done by Bill C-75.

There are other things the government could be doing as well. We know that the problem of bringing people to justice, for any crime in Canada, but certainly for serious criminal issues, has been a problem since the government took office because the government has not been appointing judges. Across the country, there is a lack of judges. That lack of the ability of the government to appoint judges, coupled with Jordan's principle, has created this system where essentially the criminals act without any sort of deterrent.

I am just wondering why the government has chosen this “kick the can farther down the road” approach to dealing with child online sexual extortion, as opposed to closing loopholes in the Criminal Code and ensuring that there are adequate resources and tools for law enforcement agencies and the judiciary to bring criminals to justice.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member certainly could consider supporting the government's online harms bill, which I think is a major piece of legislation that certainly will help to protect minors and children when they are interacting online.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak about the ongoing threat of extortion in Canada. The Government of Canada is deeply concerned about Canadians who are victimized by acts of extortion and related violence. The Government of Canada is aware of growing concerns related to extortion across the country and, indeed, the government has heard directly from the mayors of Surrey, British Columbia; Edmonton, Alberta; and Brampton, Ontario, about how this is impacting their communities.

The recent increase in the number and severity of extortion attempts, particularly targeting members of Canada's South Asian community, is alarming. The Government of Canada and the RCMP encourage anyone experiencing or witnessing extortion to report it to their local police of jurisdiction and discourage anyone from complying with demands for money.

Rest assured, the Government of Canada is committed to protecting the safety of Canadians and Canadian interests against these threats. We are taking concrete action to protect all affected communities across Canada.

As Canada's national police force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is mandated to prevent, detect and investigate serious organized crime, in order to protect Canadians and Canadian interests. In doing so, the RCMP works closely with domestic and international law enforcement partners to share information and target shared threats. The RCMP and its law enforcement partners across the country have observed an increase in the number of extortion crimes taking place and are working collaboratively to investigate these incidents.

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While the RCMP cannot comment on specific investigations, I can confirm that significant coordination is under way across the country to address similar types of extortion attempts directed at the South Asian communities in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario. While many investigations remain ongoing, a number of arrests have been made, and information sharing across agencies, I would say, is imperative, as coordinated efforts are under way to identify cases that may be related to one another.

To this end, the RCMP is actively sharing information with local law enforcement to support their ongoing efforts.

Rest assured, law enforcement agencies across the country are utilizing the required tools and resources to combat these serious incidents in order to keep Canadians safe.

• (1835)

Hon. Michelle Rempel Garner: Madam Speaker, the bill that my colleague opposite mentioned, with regard to child online sexual exploitation and extortion, requires that social media operators submit plans to a yet-to-be-created bureaucracy about how they will protect children.

Why would, at a minimum, the government not require these plans to be posted for everyone to see or for law enforcement to inspect? Why not have maximum transparency on it and why not do it now?

Also, why not close loopholes in the Criminal Code and strengthen the Criminal Code to prevent this from happening right now? Why a bureaucracy?

Why tell people to go to a complaints department instead of the police?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, as I have said, the Government of Canada is committed to taking a collaborative approach to address the ongoing threat of extortion in Canada.

Nationwide collaboration is under way to address similar types of extortion attempts directed at South Asian communities and others across the country. Investigators have access to the resources, tools and supports necessary to advance these investigations and hold those responsible accountable. We know that the Conservatives have voted against \$80 million in support of the work of the RCMP, which is truly tragic when one considers what the member is asking for, which is greater enforcement of the law.

Clearly the RCMP now have the resources as a result of our government's work, and the collaborative efforts they are making are having a positive impact.

FINANCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Canadians in the frugal riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Recently I asked the NDP-Liberal coalition if they would adopt a dollar-for-dollar rule for this week's budget. It is a common-sense rule where a government finds a dollar in savings for every new dollar of spending. It would allow government to focus resources where they are most needed without stoking inflation. The response

from the President of the Treasury Board was embarrassing. More than embarrassing, it was sad and pathetic.

Her response was the parliamentary equivalent of the classic schoolyard taunt, "I know you are, but what am I?"

There is something about this so-called feminist Prime Minister's government that takes smart, accomplished, professional women from the private sector and turns them into shallow, glib bobble-head dolls in Parliament. If they are lucky, like Jane and Jody, they get out before the Prime Minister demands they shred their integrity. If they are unlucky, they work hard in a given portfolio, only to be demoted when they start getting better press than the Prime Minister.

I imagine that is why the President of the Treasury Board decided to ignore a policy question and reply with a lazy partisan attack. She needs to get back into the good graces of the inner circle. Any display of independent thought by any minister in the government risks bringing down the wrath of Katie, but falling in line and following orders is something the minister is especially skilled at. How else could we explain that someone could serve as defence minister, receive a first-hand look at the dire state of military readiness, then go on to cut billions from the defence budget?

That is right, the President of the Treasury Board is leading a program review. They are cutting spending from national security priorities so they can increase spending on Liberal re-election priorities. It is not quite a dollar-for-dollar policy. It is more of a "borrow \$10 for a dollar" policy or, more accurately, a "borrow a trillion dollars" policy. They have borrowed so much money that the cost to finance their mountain of debt is more than what we spend on health care. The interest payments are more than all the tax collected through the GST. Incredibly, as if to fulfill the prophecy of *Oedipus Rex*, the Prime Minister has done in nine years what it took his father 16 years to accomplish.

Pierre Trudeau left Canada in such an economic hole, it took another 16 years to dig us out. Because of the government's historic levels of secrecy, utter lack of transparency and deceptive book-keeping, Canadians do not know how deep this hole is. That is because, more and more, it appears as if this socialist coalition has adopted a kamikaze strategy.

They know Canadians want a change. They know Canadians are tired of the corrupt, arrogant, preachy, self righteous Prime Minister. They know no amount of new spending is going to improve their poll numbers. They know this, yet their strategy is damn the torpedoes and full speed ahead. The socialist coalition started us on a slow run to insolvency, but now they are in a full sprint. This reckless spending is not achieving positive results. The more they spend, the less Canadians can afford.

Before the parliamentary secretary rises to read Katie Telford's latest talking points, I just want to remind them that the question I asked was not a partisan question, but a straightforward policy one. All the experts Liberals love to quote said that more spending fuels inflation, so I ask this again: Will the government cap spending with a dollar-for-dollar rule to bring down inflation?

● (1840)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the very entertaining diatribe she went on. The member opposite claims that she is not being partisan, but every part of her comments today seemed like a partisan attack. I know she specializes in conspiracy theories on her nightly news show, but I will endeavour to answer her question. Before I do, I will just clarify something on the defence spending. Obviously the member has not taken the time to read the document yet, but budget 2024 includes considerable increases to defence spending.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the work our government is doing to address affordability issues in Canada, while continuing to manage our country's finances responsibly. First of all, I would like to remind my hon. colleague that Canada has the lowest deficit and net debt-to-GDP ratios in the G7, which is recognized in our AAA credit rating. Canadians know how important it is to manage a budget responsibly in the face of rising costs, and that is exactly what we are doing. As noted by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance when she tabled the budget earlier this week, we are maintaining our fiscal anchor. Our federal debt-to-GDP ratio will continue to decline over the medium term.

In budget 2024, our government is moving forward with measures that foster the kind of economic growth that will enable every generation of Canadians to reach their full potential. For example, budget 2024 includes many ambitious measures to address the housing crisis. We want to ensure that people, especially young people, are better able to pay their rent or mortgage. To do this, we are investing in building more rental apartments and more affordable housing from coast to coast to coast. We are topping up the housing accelerator fund and making it easier for Canadian homeowners to add a basement suite or a laneway house so middle-class Canadians can be part of the housing solution too.

For first-time home buyers, we will be extending the maximum amortization period of a mortgage to 30 years on new builds, including condos. We are also making changes to ensure that renters who pay on time can have the rent payment count toward their credit history when it comes time to get a mortgage. This means lower monthly payments and greater opportunity for young people to buy their first home.

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We are also moving forward with measures to make life in Canada cost less. Inflation is now way down, and in fact, it now has been back within the Bank of Canada's target range for three months in a row. We said we would continue to invest in Canadians, reasonably manage our finances and control inflation, and that is exactly what we are doing.

We understand that many Canadians, especially younger people, need support. That is why we are making transformational enhancements to Canada's social safety net. That social safety net is being increased through \$10-a-day child care, the Canadian dental care plan, a national drug insurance plan and, now, a national school food program, which I am very proud to see in the federal budget.

These are just a few of the measures we are putting forward to help Canadians.

● (1845)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, the Liberals' gaslighting is endless. If they were forced to pay the carbon tax on all that hot air, we could pay off their \$2-trillion debt tomorrow.

As these far left radicals grow even more desperate, Canadians can expect a flood of misinformation and disinformation of biblical size. Their favourite tactic will be the classic accusation in the mirror. They accuse everyone else of doing exactly the thing that they are doing. They will shamelessly claim that all we have are slogans.

This comes from the party so infatuated with round numbers that every environmental policy has the same 30 by 30 slogan. They said they would reduce emissions 30% by 2030. They said they would render 30% of Canada's land and seas unusable by 2030. Their Soviet-style car sales mandate goes even further, forcing 50% EVs by 2030.

After nine years, all the Liberals have are empty slogans, broken promises and a mountain of debt. The Prime Minister and his socialist coalition are just not worth the cost.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, our government has a plan to drive the kind of economic growth that will ensure every generation of Canadians can reach their full potential. It is a plan to ensure that everyone gets a fair chance to build a good, middle-class life in Canada.

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The government believes in investing in Canadians and in creating economic growth, not in cuts and austerity as the Conservatives do. We are building a modern economy with jobs for the future and are investing today so the generations of tomorrow can have a fair shot at success.

Canadians can count on our government to make life more affordable, while continuing to manage our public finances responsibly, and that is what we are proposing in budget 2024. It is about fairness for every generation and an economy that works for all Canadians.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, burning coal for electricity is the dirtiest source of power generation. It produces the most greenhouse gases globally. The IPCC states that the world must dramatically reduce its consumption of coal by 2030 to avoid the worst outcomes of the climate crisis. When thermal coal is exported to be burned in other countries, it has a devastating impact on global emissions. However, here in Canada, the government is choosing to ignore the facts when it comes to coal.

In 2021, the Liberals ran on an environment platform that promised they would phase out thermal coal exports. When they formed government, the Prime Minister ordered the Minister of Environment to phase out thermal coal exports in his mandate letter. What actions has the Liberal government taken since then? Nothing. In fact, since the Liberals took power in 2015, thermal coal exports have tripled. How can the Minister of Environment look at himself in the mirror? How can the Liberal members look at themselves in the mirror and call themselves climate champions?

Canada is ignoring its own climate commitments and sending millions of tonnes of thermal coal across the globe. We are shipping the dirtiest fossil fuel to be burnt in faraway lands where we can close our eyes and pretend that everything is fine. Everything is not fine.

Greenhouse gas emissions do not know international borders. Rising temperatures hurt us all. Increased natural disasters are happening around the globe, but especially here in Canada in my home province of B.C. Even if the thermal coal that originates from Canada or the U.S. is burnt in China, it is the same greenhouse gas emissions that fuel the conditions for the dry forests that light up in flames across this country, displacing thousands of people.

Why has the government not fulfilled its promise to Canadians to end thermal coal exports? Why does it continue to mislead Canadians and promise climate action, but continually fall short? It is no wonder that Canadians are cynical. This last year alone, Canada exported 19.5 million tonnes of thermal coal. In 2022, 40 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions were burnt from Canadian thermal coal exports. That is roughly the same number of emissions as 16.7 million cars. Every year, air pollution contributes to roughly one million deaths around the world. Burning coal is a big factor in this.

Canadian coal should not be playing a role in polluting the air we breathe. This is one of the many reasons I tabled my private member's bill, Bill C-383, to phase out thermal coal exports, work with

unions to ensure sustainable job transitions and fulfill our international climate commitments.

My question for the member is this: Will you fulfill your promise to Canadians and phase out thermal coal? Why have you broken this promise?

• (1850)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member knows that she is to address all questions and comments through the Chair and not speak directly to the member.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, that is quite rich of the NDP member. Even though I align with her in terms of our commitment on fighting climate change and doing what is best for our economy and environment, I think it is a bit rich for her to say that we are misleading Canadians when the NDP is flip-flopping on the most effective market-based mechanism for reducing carbon emissions, which is carbon pricing. Their leader seems to have recently supported the Conservatives and others around the country who are making that an issue and trying to back off from carbon pricing.

At the committee that I have been on in the past, the NDP members have supported giving a free pass to farmers to burn fossil fuels on farms, so it is a bit rich for the member opposite to—

Ms. Laurel Collins: I have a point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are no points of order. The hon. member will have a chance to do a rebuttal. If she had a question of privilege that would be different, but at this time there are no points of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, the government is not breaking any promises. On the contrary, Canada is playing a strong leadership role in phasing out thermal coal, both domestically and internationally.

The science is very clear about coal; it is one of the largest contributors to climate change. We know that we need to go further and make coal history for good if we want to give the world a fighting chance to hold global warming to 1.5°C.

I am proud that Canada was among the first movers on this issue. At COP26 in 2021, Canada was the first country in the world to commit to banning the export of thermal coal by no later than 2030, and we will make that happen.

Right now, the government is considering a range of possible options to implement the ban. There are several factors to take into consideration, from socio-economic impacts to environmental and trade impacts, and we must make sure the ban aligns with other federal, provincial and territorial policies. However, alas, we will get there. Moving away from exporting thermal coal is a must, and it makes good economic sense over the long term, too, as more affordable, clean energy options are becoming available in many countries around the world.

Meanwhile, we are already seeing significant progress in the retirement of coal in Canada. Our government has already put in place regulations to accelerate the phase-out of coal-fired electricity in Canada by 2030, and we are on track to meet our goal, with the four remaining coal-burning provinces all making excellent progress in their transition to cleaner electricity.

We are also providing economic support of \$185 million for coal workers and their communities. We have put a price on carbon pollution. We have committed to greater support for clean technology. We have committed to emissions reduction across the economy from all traditional sectors, and we are developing a plan to phase-out public financing for the fossil fuel sector by fall 2024, which is this year.

Supporting the switch to clean energy is a priority for this government. It is something that I have spent my career and my life advocating for, and I am very happy to see us making strides in that direction. We want to make sure the coal phase-out translates into new jobs and economic opportunities for Canadian families as we respond to the ever-urgent climate crisis.

• (1855)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do apologize. There are no questions of privilege or points of order that can be raised during Adjournment Proceedings, unless there is an issue with interpretation or something like that.

The hon. member for Victoria.

Ms. Laurel Collins: Madam Speaker, it is interesting to me that the member initially answered my question about why the govern-

ment is tripling its thermal coal exports by talking about carbon pricing and by accusing the NDP of not having strong climate action, when it is this government that continues to use carbon pricing as a political wedge and to hold it up as proof of its climate credibility.

The consumer carbon price makes about 8% to 14%. However, thermal coal exports are having a detrimental impact on global emissions. Coal exports are one of the biggest reasons that global emissions are rising. When I uncovered that thermal coal exports had tripled, I was shocked. I am used to the Liberals breaking promises, but they did not just delay this promise, and they did not just delay climate action this time. They said they would phase it out, but the exports tripled. After this was revealed, one would think it would prompt action, but no, they have done—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull: Madam Speaker, obviously the member and I will respectfully have to disagree.

However, I have yet to speak about Canada's leadership in driving the coal phase-out around the world, which is crucial.

Since 2017, Canada has rallied almost one-third of the world's governments to take action through its co-leadership of the Powering Past Coal Alliance with the United Kingdom, and the world has made progress. Over 75% of the coal power capacity in member countries of the OECD has been retired or is scheduled to close by 2030, which is real progress. More than seven out of 10 proposed new coal projects have been cancelled globally.

However, more needs to be done; there is no doubt. That includes supporting developing countries to transition from coal to clean power. To that end, Canada has invested \$1 billion in the climate investment fund's accelerated coal transition program. At COP28, Canada called on countries to recognize the need to accelerate a coal phase-out and not just a phase-down, and to scale up support for clean energy. Our future depends on it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 6:58 p.m.)

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