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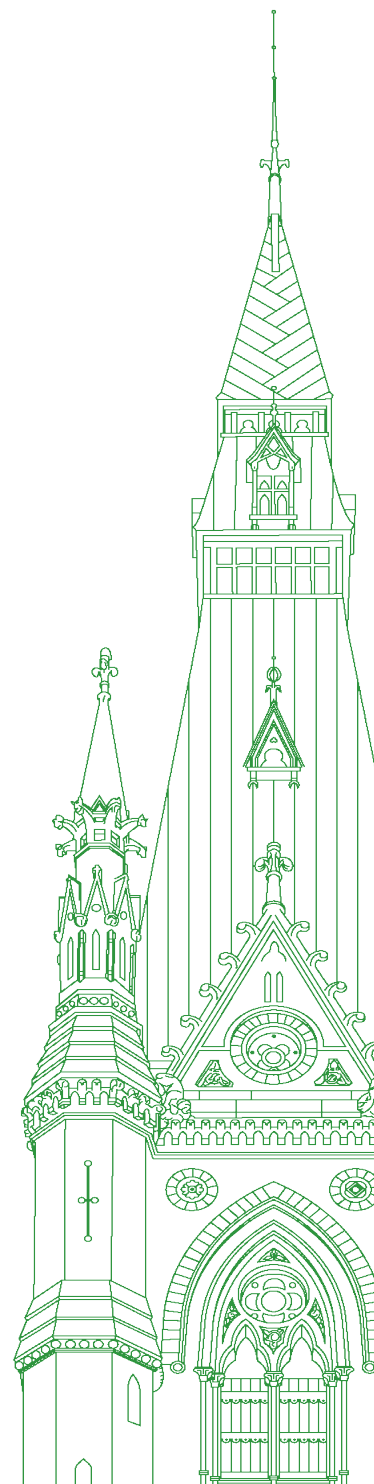
House of Commons Debates

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Tuesday, April 30, 2024

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 30, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1005)

[Translation]

COMMISSIONER OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Speaker: It is my duty to lay upon the table, pursuant to subsection 7(5) of the Auditor General Act, the spring 2024 reports of the commissioner of the environment and sustainable development.

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), these reports are deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

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[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I have the honour to table a notice of ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 16, 2024.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in relation to Bill C-316, an act to amend the Department of Canadian Heritage Act and the court challenges program.

The committee has studied the bill and, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(1), requests a 30-day extension to consider it.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, May 1, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-387, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am extraordinarily proud to stand today and bring forward a private member's bill that would protect not just Albertans' but all Canadians' pensions. The pensions that Canadians deserve through the Canada pension plan, they have earned. Seniors across this country have earned those pensions.

In Alberta right now, those pensions are under attack. I have heard from so many constituents across Alberta who are deeply worried about the Danielle Smith plan to take Alberta out of the Canada pension plan.

I am honoured that my colleague, the hard-working member of Parliament for Edmonton Griesbach, is seconding my bill. I look forward to discussing this bill with all members of this House and getting the support from all members.

This bill would strengthen the Canada pension plan act to give millions of Canadians who contribute to and receive benefits from the CPP a say in the future of their CPP. It would protect the CPP from politicians who would gamble with their retirement security.

Canada needs and deserves financial security in retirement, and the Canada pension plan is a critical component of financial security. However, we know it is under a threat by the Conservative Party. Danielle Smith is threatening to withdraw Alberta from the CPP, and this will harm Albertans, but it will also harm all Canadians.

Given the leader of the official opposition's clear attacks on the CPP for a number of years, back to when he was in high school, in fact, we have to be very clear that protecting the pensions of Canadians needs to be a priority.

Routine Proceedings

This bill would allow every province to have a say in the health and the security of the CPP, and it would in fact give the power back to Canadians to protect their CPP. The NDP will continue to fight for pensions.

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

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to introduce such legislation does not come along very often for members, and I find it extremely disrespectful when Conservative members are yelling at this member to “do her job”.

Could you please ask that—

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his intervention, but the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona continued and the Chair gave her the space to continue with her statement.

The hon. member for Vancouver Granville is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, I had risen earlier to table a document. The Chair may not have seen me.

I would like to seek consent to table the document.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, Canada's official report as part of its fourth universal periodic review, as well as its official response to recommendations received from the United Nations member states.

The universal periodic review is a peer-reviewed process before the United Nations Human Rights Council. Through the universal periodic review, the human rights record of each country is reviewed by other United Nations member states. This provides an important opportunity for countries to discuss their domestic human rights frameworks, as well as measures taken to promote and protect human rights in their country.

Canada is strongly committed to the universal periodic review process and has engaged closely with provinces and territories, indigenous partners and civil society to prepare these documents, which I am pleased to refer to the House.

* * *

● (1010)

PETITIONS**AIR TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from constituents in Abbotsford and also in the broader Fraser Valley region of Surrey. Constituents in British Columbia are seeking a direct flight to Amritsar in India. Canada has a large diaspora population from the

Punjab region. The petitioners are calling for a direct flight so that they can pursue business and see their family much more quickly than they currently can.

FIRST RESPONDERS TAX CREDIT

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

I rise to present a petition, and I would like to recognize the member for Courtenay—Alberni, my friend and colleague, who provided me this, because it relates to people in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

These are people who have requested an increase in the tax credit, from \$3,000 to \$10,000, for volunteer firefighters.

I appreciate the member for Courtenay—Alberni bringing this to me. On behalf of the people in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, I present this petition.

AQUACULTURE

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank my colleague for the kind words and for his advocacy.

It is an honour to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine from Tofino, Ahousaht and Clayoquot Sound.

They are citing concerns around migrating juvenile wild salmon stocks, which are under serious threats from pathogens, pollutants and sea lice originating from open-net cage farms. They cite that wild salmon support first nations' cultural traditions and complex ecosystems, including contributing to coastal forests, which produce the oxygen we breathe.

They are calling on the federal government to remove open-net pen fish farms from B.C. waters by 2025, including with legislation aimed at immediately stopping the transfer of PRV-infected smolts into open-net pen fish farms and completing the transition of open-net pen fish farms to land-based closed containment by 2025.

They are also calling for a transition plan that includes a conservation financing package that compensates first nations and businesses that would be impacted by the removal of open-net salmon farms in their territories, as well as the local businesses that would be impacted.

Pacific salmon runs on British Columbia's coast are in a state of emergency. It is very important that the federal government listen to these petitioners.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

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

The first is actually from constituents in Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston; I am not sure why they have asked me to present it. In any event, it calls the government's attention to the abattoir located at the Joyceville Institution. The farmers who have signed this petition are concerned. They used to be able to bring their livestock to this abattoir at the Joyceville Institution, but the abattoir has been closed because the last individual who was running it cancelled their contract. Farmers now have to take their products out of the local area.

They are asking that the federal government open up the RFP process to allow individuals to access this abattoir, so it can continue to be used and support local options. They are asking the government to reopen that abattoir.

I do not know why the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston did not present this, but I will do it on behalf of his constituents.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands is very much aware that when we are presenting petitions, we make no comments about any other members, precisely because members are not in a position to defend themselves.

I will ask the hon. member to withdraw that part of his comments.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reference to the member.

• (1015)

CANADA-UKRAINE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have one more petition signed by Canadians. This is about an issue that has already been dealt with, but I nonetheless see the need for their voices to be heard.

The petitioners call to the attention of the government that the Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement will assist Ukraine in rebuilding after it defeats the illegal invasion by Vladimir Putin. They bring to the attention of the government that the Conservative Party of Canada is not supportive of Ukraine. I am just representing the words in the petition.

Therefore, they are asking the Government of Canada and all parliamentarians to reaffirm their unwavering commitment to Ukraine by swiftly adopting the updated Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement, which we know has already occurred.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Mr. Marcus Powlowski (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been truly blessed in life to have been able to have six children. They are absolutely one of the best parts of my life, but unfortunately not all Canadians have the same good fortune. In fact, one in six Canadians, at some point in their lives, has some sort of fertility problem.

I would like to present a petition on behalf of Fertility Matters Canada, with 5,300 signatures. The petition calls on the government to develop a national fertility strategy and, in collaboration with provinces, to build a more equitable future for fertility care in Canada.

The Budget

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 29 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to rise and speak today to the ways and means motion, budgetary policy. More specifically, I appreciate this opportunity to comment publicly on yet another awful budget tabled in this place by the Liberals, which shows just how out of touch they really are.

We have had nine years of deficit budgets, which have led us to the mess Canadians are facing today. Budget 2024 also shows that the Prime Minister has learned nothing from his mistakes over the past nine years. He continues to push inflationary deficits that drive up interest rates and that make life more expensive for Canadians. By continuing to add to his massive debt, he is endangering jobs and social programs like health care and education. In fact, after nine years of disastrous governance, Canada will now be spending more on its debt than on health care for Canadians.

The failures of the Liberal government are clear in this budget. It pushed off issues, kicking the can down the road, and now, those issues have come home to roost. Housing, crime, immigration and inflation, to name just a few, are the issues created by the government. These issues did not materialize overnight, but they were well known to the government years ago, yet the Liberals stuck their heads in the sand and were content to spend more money on their pointless policies to support their divisive and destructive ideology. Now that these issues have become full-blown crises, they have conceded that there may be a problem. However, rather than address the problem, they have decided to repackage their old policies in an attempt to fool Canadians into believing they are taking action. It is hard to know whether they are simply overestimating the positive impact of their policies or are completely disingenuous in their intent.

The Budget

In this budget, the government's plan to repurpose federal properties to provide thousands of homes has come up short. As reported by Blacklock's, the Liberal government has found less than 400 vacant federal properties, many of which cannot be used for housing. Some of those properties include Parks Canada parking lots, a former National Defence firing range and an empty lot near a remote Coast Guard lighthouse. The review of federal lands has been a promise of the Liberal government since 2015. In that election, its platform stated, "We will conduct an inventory of all available federal lands and buildings that could be repurposed, and make some of these lands available at low cost for affordable housing in communities where there is a pressing need."

In 2024, after the Liberals created a housing crisis, they decided to go ahead and to finally start the review. Their budget states, "The federal government is conducting a rapid review of its entire federal lands portfolio to identify more land for housing." Perhaps I should have included the definition of "rapid" here in my speech. They are hoping Canadians have forgotten that this is a nine-year-old promise they are attempting to repackage as a new initiative. Putting aside the fact that this is an old promise in a new package, this measure is not a solution to the housing crisis.

The Prime Minister is asking Canadians to believe that he will build thousands of houses in old parking lots and in firing ranges. This is a sign of desperation. He wants Canadians to believe that, after nine years of ignoring the problem or introducing policies that have made the problem worse, he will now make the housing market fairer. He is the one who stole the dream of home ownership from a generation. He is the one who broke the system. Now, after breaking everything, he wants Canadians to believe that he will somehow find the capacity to magically fix it all. However, he has had more than enough chances to make life more affordable, which he has failed to do at every opportunity.

Conservatives gave him a chance to cut taxes or to avoid raising taxes on all Canadians, but he carried on his plan and raised the carbon tax. He also continues in his efforts to gut and block Bill C-234, which would take the carbon tax off for farmers. He continues to ramp up spending in the hopes that Canadians will not see it for the pitiful attempt at buying votes that it is.

• (1020)

Canadians are not fooled and are fed up with the irresponsible spending of the NDP-Liberal coalition that is driving inflation. Instead of using this budget to demonstrate that the government understands the effect its disastrous policies have had on Canadians, it is doubling down on those same failed policies. Adding \$40 billion in new spending will only add more fuel to the inflationary fire. The repeated promises from the government for fiscal restraint have gone by the wayside as it continues to spend unsustainably, trading away Canadians' futures for its own short-term political gain.

Like many of my colleagues, I had the opportunity this past week to speak with constituents. Three main themes were raised following this budget. I outlined in my speech the first concern I heard: deficits and overspending. The cost of government has skyrocketed under the NDP-Liberal coalition, while it spends on its pet projects. This is going to have serious repercussions for our children's and

grandchildren's futures. The Prime Minister is not worth the cost for any generation.

I also heard about the wasteful spending. Many are watching what is happening in parliamentary committees and, more specifically, in the government operations and estimates committee, of which I am a member. Canadians are shocked at the massive outsourcing contracts for Liberal insiders and at the historic levels of corruption being uncovered by Conservatives, all while the NDP-Liberal government tries to cover it up.

Favouritism by the Liberal government is rampant, funnelling of tens of millions of dollars to Liberal insiders and their companies. This is particularly insulting to Canadians as they struggle with a cost of living crisis created by the Prime Minister. While Canadians are asking for too much, it is clear that the Prime Minister's friends can never get enough.

Finally, a major concern brought to me is the government's underlying commitment to the carbon tax, which does nothing for the environment, but it adds to the cost of everything. As we enter spring, my constituents are seeing the full cost of the carbon tax across a winter on the prairies.

The carbon tax drives up the cost of gas and home heating, which are vital for Canadians living in rural Canada. These increased costs also extend to food and other goods, which businesses pass on to the consumer. This passing on of the cost of the carbon tax from businesses to consumers is a simple idea to understand, but it seems that only those outside of the government benches can wrap their heads around it. These added costs are putting more pressure on Canadians who are struggling with the Liberals' cost of living crisis, and this budget does nothing to alleviate that pressure.

In conclusion, it will come as no surprise that I cannot support this budget. It is more of the same failed policies from the NDP-Liberal coalition, which refuses to acknowledge its failures. Instead of having the humility to acknowledge its shortcomings after nine years, it refuses to take any responsibility and continues to blame everyone except itself. Canadians are suffering, and the government is refusing to help them.

Conservatives will bring common sense back to government after the next election, and that next election cannot come soon enough for Canadians.

• (1025)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the topic of acknowledging shortcomings, would the member agree that the Leader of the Opposition should not be hanging out with Diagon?

The Budget

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, as we debate this budget today, we are seeing the results of the government's disastrous spending addiction.

After nine years of the government, as I have said, we have had nine deficit budgets. Canadians are struggling, and the government has no solutions. That member and his party should start listening to Canadians to understand what they need.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's speech.

Of course we do not agree on many things, but we were told that the Conservative Party would be a decentralizing party. Yesterday, when it had the chance to prove it, the Conservative Party unfortunately voted against an amendment proposed by the Bloc Québécois that simply called on the House to respect the Canadian Constitution and the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

My question is very simple. Why vote against a Bloc Québécois amendment that simply calls for the Canadian Constitution to be respected?

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, Conservatives do believe that the federal government should respect the jurisdiction of provinces. What we have seen from the current government are repeated attempts to override provincial jurisdiction. We know Canadians deserve a government that does not overextend itself in an attempt to micromanage their lives.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I like the hon. member, but of course, she lived through the dismal decade, as all Canadians did, with the Harper government, where the fiscal management was basically thrown out the window: \$116 billion in liquidity supports for the banking sector to prop up their profits; \$30 billion a year, according to the PBO, given to overseas tax havens because of the notorious Harper tax-saving treaties that have basically eliminated the fiscal capacity of the federal government, which is \$300 billion over a decade. The Conservatives have no lessons to give anybody in terms of fiscal management. They were terrible.

However, I want to ask my colleague a very simple question about pharmacare. There are 17,000 people in her riding who have diabetes and who are paying up to \$1,000 a month for medication. As members know, the risk of stroke, heart attack or death is four times greater for people with diabetes than for other Canadians, yet Conservatives are blocking, at every single step, the pharmacare supports that would mean a difference of up to \$1,000 a month in supports for 17,000 people in her riding. My question is simple this: Why are the Conservatives blocking this life-saving medication that would make such a difference in the lives of her constituents?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I will simply say this. The New Democrats, in my estimation, have sold their souls in the desperation for power. They have abandoned their constituents for the vanity of their leader. The NDP has a big decision to make when the time comes to vote on this particular budget. Will the NDP stand up for Canadians and be an opposition party, finally holding the Liber-

al government to account for its abysmal record, or will it continue on with their coalition?

• (1030)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps our hon. colleague could tell the House, Canadians and those on the other side who might be listening, though chances are after nine years they still are not, about the pain that her constituents are going through because of the insane policies that the current government has levied against hard-working Canadians in her riding.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to perhaps repeat some of the things I noted in my speech. As I said, we are seeing the results of the government's disastrous spending addiction. After nine years of the Liberal government and nine deficit budgets, Canadians are struggling. The government has no solutions. We see millions of Canadians going to food banks. Housing costs have doubled. Rent has doubled. Canadians are desperate for change.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, spending last week in and around my riding of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, two things were abundantly clear. The first was that spring has finally sprung. People are out enjoying outdoor activities and righting their lawns and gardens. Farmers and ranchers are busy seeding and calving. The second thing was that, despite the spring bloom, the economic outlook for most people was absolute gloom. The reason for that was the state of our nation's finances after nine years of the Liberals and the troubling path of wasteful spending and ever-increasing debt.

Let us talk about deficit spending. That is when the government spends more money than it brings in revenue from Canadian taxpayers. Governments have nothing, unless they have taken it from us first. The government's insatiable appetite for spending means it seeks to tax and increase taxes on most everything, even our carbon footprint. That footprint got 23% more expensive this year, as we know, and the Prime Minister and his radical environment minister are hell-bent on continuing to make it even more expensive.

Even with all these extra taxes, the Liberals still overspend. Under the current Prime Minister's leadership, Canada has seen its deficit spending increase significantly. In 2015, our federal debt was \$616 billion, accumulated since the country was formed in 1867. Today, it has doubled to \$1.2 trillion, which is over \$30,000 per Canadian, thanks to the current Prime Minister's borrowing more than all of Canada's previous prime ministers combined.

The Budget

In fact, it will cost Canadian taxpayers \$54.1 billion in interest just to service our national debt this year. That interest payment is more than the government spends on the annual provincial health care transfers. It is also about the same amount as the government collects in the GST, and maybe the GST's name should be changed to the DST, the debt servicing tax.

The alleged intention behind this spending was to create sunny ways, to grow the middle class and to create fairness for all generations. These are all nice-sounding words, but in reality, when a prime minister does not think about monetary policy, nice words quickly get replaced by nasty results.

Housing costs have doubled. Interest rates have risen faster than at any time in our history. Mortgage payments, down payments and rents have doubled. The cost of gas, groceries and home heating have skyrocketed, and people cannot afford to eat, heat or house themselves.

This growing debt means that future generations of Canadians will be burdened with higher taxes and higher interest payments. That is why I, along with most Canadians, shook my head when the title page of this mess of a budget read, "Fairness for Every Generation".

There is absolutely nothing fair about the Liberals wasting Canadians' money to buy the support of the NDP. It is a way of spending their own way to feed their addiction to power. There is nothing fair about running up scandal-ridden bills, changing an election date to secure pensions on their way out and then leaving that bill for our children and grandchildren to pay.

Conservatives are not the only ones who are critical of the Prime Minister's years of deficit spending. Economists and the financial sector have warned the Liberals that their spending is the major contributor to Canada's high inflation. Current Governor of the Bank of Canada, Tiff Macklem, cautioned that this excessive spending will make it harder for the bank to lower interest rates. Even former Bank of Canada governor and Liberal supporter David Dodge says that the federal budget hurts the fight against inflation and that budget 2024 has the potential to be the worst budget since 1982.

Who was in charge back then? It was another Trudeau.

Speaking about inflation, more than 40 years ago, American economist and statistician Milton Friedman had something to say. It still holds true today, and maybe our Prime Minister and finance minister need to listen. He said:

Inflation is just like alcoholism. In both cases, when you start drinking or when you start printing too much money, the good effects come first, the bad effects only come later. That is why, in both cases, there is a strong temptation to overdo it—to drink too much or to print too much money. When it comes to the cure, it is the other way about. When you stop drinking, or when you stop printing money, the bad effects come first and the good effects only come later. That is why it is so hard to persist with the cure.... Every country that has had the courage to persist in the policy of slowing monetary growth has been able to cure inflation and at the same time achieve a healthy economy.

● (1035)

Besides the inflation problem that the Prime Minister and finance minister have created in Canada, we also find ourselves confronted by the concerning trend of decreasing productivity. What is more,

while the government continues to spend, our productivity as a country is not keeping up. Our productivity is effectively how we efficiently produce goods and services. High productivity is key to improving our quality of life, increasing our wages and maintaining a competitive edge globally. However, Canada's productivity has seen a decline, which is a sign that we are not maximizing our potential.

I will read what the deputy governor of the Bank of Canada, Carolyn Rogers, noted in a recent speech in Halifax. She said, "Back in 1984, the Canadian economy was producing 88 per cent of the value generated by the U.S. economy per hour. That's not great. But by 2022, Canadian productivity had fallen to 71 per cent."

Further, a recent Financial Post article observed that, over the current government's time in office, labour productivity has declined by an average of 0.8% per year. How can the government, based on the entirety of the budget, plan on strong labour productivity growth by recent standards? In reality, it is a "fudge it" budget, where they make up the numbers to try to make the budget work.

The Liberals are treating productivity as just a number that they can manipulate to make their budget look slightly less horrible. However, productivity is not just a number; it is about how well we can sustain our quality of life. We must confront these challenges head-on, and it starts with demanding accountability and prudent financial management from our leaders in government. It starts with treating our proud resource development sectors and all the family-supporting jobs they provide with respect, instead of using them as a scapegoat.

For example, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Germany asked Canada to be a trusted supplier of LNG. Other countries have also made that request. What is our Prime Minister's response? In effect, it is, "Oh, sorry folks, there is no business case for that here in Canada." We can look at what has happened with that. Our American neighbours stepped up and are reaping the benefits. Their productivity went up 2.6% last year, while the Liberals were happy to see ours decline.

Since 2019, the American GDP per capita has grown 7%; Canada's has fallen 2.8%. This is the single largest underperformance of the Canadian economy in comparison to the United States since 1965. Stats Canada recently published a report confirming that Canadians have gotten poorer under the current government. Our GDP per capita is now 7% lower than it should be, meaning that Canadians are \$4,200 poorer per person. With the Liberals in charge, we should not be surprised by these numbers.

The Budget

We also need to be investing efficiently in areas that genuinely boost productivity, such as skills training, technology and innovation. We need to ensure that spending will bring about real, sustainable growth, not just a temporary quick fix. It is about finding balance in terms of supporting our current needs without compromising the ability of future generations, and Canadians, to meet theirs. We need a balance between investing in our country and ensuring we are not reckless and recklessly adding to a mountain of debt that would be impossible to climb down from.

Mr. Speaker, the path forward requires courage, leadership and discipline. By advocating for responsible spending, investing wisely in our future and boosting our productivity, we can ensure that Canada remains a prosperous, vibrant place for generations to come. The time to act is now. The time to fix the budget is now, to ensure that Canada's financial health, productivity and the hope of Canadians are not just restored but allowed to flourish. Conservatives are ready and able to make that happen.

• (1040)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that the member has a history in policing and has received numerous awards for his work in policing prior to coming to the House. I think that is a great accomplishment, and I applaud him on that. However, how does he feel about that the fact that the Leader of the Opposition associates with Diagonol?

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, quite honestly, the question does not deserve an answer, because it is not true.

To spread misinformation and disinformation, which seems to happen on the other side a lot, is not helping our dialogue. It is certainly not answering the questions that Canadians have about what the government is doing with the economy and how we are going to climb out of the hole and the mess it has created for the rest of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since 2019 the Bloc Québécois has always voted against Liberal budgets, and the same will be true for this budget, since it contains no plan to reduce subsidies for an industry that is making massive, record profits. I am speaking about the oil industry.

Will my colleague vote against the budget, since, like us, he opposes funding oil companies with taxpayer money?

[English]

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that my colleagues and I will be voting against this budget unequivocally, but not because of what the member suggested. All anybody in Canada has to do is look at the amount of revenue that the energy sector creates for this country to sustain our growth for infrastructure and the spending that we need to do to keep our country going. Therefore, the reason the member suggested is a fallacy.

The truth of the matter is that the energy sector is a major contributor to our GDP and the revenues that our government currently enjoys spending.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also know that my colleague was an esteemed police officer. We heard from the B.C. chiefs of police and chiefs of police across this

country. When it comes to the toxic drug crisis, the chiefs of police see it as a health issue. They do not want to go back to criminalizing people in my home province; however, they have asked for tools to deal with public use. They cited that it is not diversion, but actually toxic fentanyl, that is killing people. They have called for more safe consumption sites. In Alberta, deaths have skyrocketed, with a 17% increase in toxic overdose deaths. There has been an increase of over 5% in British Columbia.

We had Petra Schulz from Moms Stop the Harm here in Ottawa yesterday, again asking for a meeting with the leader of the Conservative Party. She lost her son Danny 10 years ago today.

Will my colleague urge his leader, the only leader in this country who has not met with Moms Stop the Harm, to meet with the mothers of loved ones lost because of the toxic drug crisis? Does he support the chiefs of police in British Columbia?

Mr. Glen Motz: Mr. Speaker, what I support is an effective plan that actually makes a difference for the well-being of Canadians. That plan would not include the term “safe consumption sites”; there is no such thing as a safe consumption site.

Some time ago, I went to the Downtown Eastside and East Hastings Street to talk to addicts. They are killing themselves right in front of people. I asked them questions. They said that people do not want them to get healthy, that the system does not want them to get healthy. They call the people driving around looking after them “poverty pimps”. Why? It is because they do not care. They said they do not go to consumption sites, as they are not what people thought they would be like.

The reality is that we have an overdose crisis in this country. In B.C. alone, 2,511 people died last year. That is unacceptable. Why did this happen? It was because of drug policies. We need a balanced approach, treatment and addiction services. We need all those things that happen. Wasteful spending on a government budget such as this one does not allow us to spend that kind of money. It is being misdirected to services that the government thinks will help, but safe supply is not the answer to this problem.

• (1045)

Mr. Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to share with Canadians, especially my constituents of Richmond Centre, the significance of budget 2024. I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver Granville.

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Budget 2024 is a road map that outlines the path toward a more prosperous, fair and sustainable future, a future that is not only for young adults but also for future generations. The budget has four main focuses: building more homes faster, lowering the cost of living, being fair to every generation and building a climate-resilient generational economy.

Through budget 2024, our government is introducing a bold, fiscally responsible Canada housing plan to unlock 3.87 million homes by 2031. Housing is a necessity and is the foundation of the stability and well-being of individuals and families. As our communities in British Columbia and across Canada are growing, Canada is expected to experience the most growth among G7 countries in 2025. The federal government is taking concrete steps to support the growth of our community and economy. In budget 2024, the federal government is unlocking homebuilding on public lands to utilize our federal resources and address Canadians' housing priorities. We are proposing \$1.1 billion in federal funding to convert underused spaces, public land, into homes.

We are also proposing an additional \$15 billion in new loan funding for the apartment construction loan program, bringing the program's total to over \$55 billion. This investment 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 2032. While we are spurring housing construction across Canada, we are providing over \$6 billion to launch a new Canada housing infrastructure fund. This fund would not only accelerate construction but also upgrade and enable infrastructure for water, waste water, stormwater and solid waste, which would directly enable housing supply and help improve densification. That also means more housing near transit, equivalent to accessibility. Through budget 2024, we are leveraging the federal public transit fund to take action that directly unlocks the housing supply where it is needed most. To build all of this, we propose to increase the number of construction workers by creating new opportunities for apprentices and recognizing foreign credentials.

In budget 2024, we are also making it easier for Canadians to rent or own homes, by introducing initiatives such as the tenant protection fund, the new Canadian renters' bill of rights, the Canadian home buyers' plan and an updated version of the Canadian mortgage charter. We are making sure that renters in Canada have better rental protections while enabling them to use their rent records for credit, and much more.

An important initiative that our housing plan is moving forward on is to establish a national flood insurance, a subsidiary of the CMHC to deliver flood reinsurance. This would help communities in my riding of Richmond Centre by improving flood prevention and insurance. It would also help put many Canadians and their families at ease in Richmond.

Most importantly, we all have seen the significant impact the housing accelerator fund has brought to communities across Canada. I am quite proud and pleased that in January of this year, I was able to announce with the City of Richmond bilateral agreements to fast-track more than 1,000 housing units over the next three years and 3,100 homes over the next decade. These agreements provide \$35.9 million to eliminate barriers to building the housing we need, faster. In budget 2024, we are providing an addi-

tional \$400-million top-up to further even more the impact of the housing accelerator fund.

• (1050)

The budget is making housing more accessible and affordable for Canadians across the country. It is also equipping Canada to compete even further with respect to its economy, including the highest growth among the G7 countries in 2025. Furthermore, budget 2024 is also a plan to lower the cost of living for Canadians, and we are continuing our leadership in making sure every generation has the support it needs in order to succeed.

The Canadian dental care plan continues to roll out, providing oral health care access to over nine million uninsured eligible Canadian residents. In budget 2024, we are building an even stronger social safety net. We are introducing the first phase of the national pharmacare plan, providing immediate support to over three million Canadians living with diabetes and over nine million women and gender-diverse Canadians with free coverage for medications.

For parents in Canada the national school food program will deliver nutritious meals to over 400,000 children across Canada each year, saving the average participating family as much as \$400 per year per child in grocery costs.

For Canadians with disabilities we are providing \$6 billion, for the first time ever, through the Canada disability benefit, to provide additional support that will impact over 600,000 low-income Canadians with disabilities.

As we continue working with provinces and territories to better our health care and our social care system, in 2024-25, we have provided for over \$7 billion through the Canada health transfer and over \$2 billion through the Canada social transfer to British Columbia. These two transfers will help B.C. strengthen its health care system and further the impact of social programs like \$10-a-day child care.

Budget 2024 is about fairness for every generation. It is about making life cost less and ensuring Canada's social safety network for every generation. We are helping youth in Canada with more support in student grants, loans, housing, mental health, employment and young entrepreneurship. For seniors in Canada, through the ongoing old age security program, we are delivering over \$80 million in benefit payments to over seven million seniors this year alone.

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Budget 2024 introduced a tax change on capital gains to make Canada's tax system more fair. We are increasing the inclusion rate on the capital gains that will impact only the wealthiest 0.13%. Personal income tax on capital gains will not increase for 99.87% of Canadians. Through our lifetime capital gains exemption, 88% of businesses in Canada, especially small businesses, will be exempt from tax on capital gains.

Budget 2024 is about fairness for every generation. That also includes our economy and a global earth where our children and their children and grandchildren can succeed and thrive. This is where we continue to build a climate-resilient generational economy, and we are securing the future of the Canadian economy in innovation sectors such as artificial intelligence, electric vehicles, research, renewable fuels and green infrastructures. We recognize the urgency of combatting climate change and building a climate-resilient economy. Budget 2024 seeks to minimize the impacts of climate change and safeguard the well-being of future generations.

Budget 2024 takes a team Canada approach, which has always been a core belief of our Liberal government. We will work together with provinces, territories, municipalities, the private sector and indigenous communities. We will not marginalize anyone who wants to do the right thing for Canadians; rather, we will be there to support them. As we continue on this transformative journey, let us seize the opportunities and work together to build a better future for all Canadians.

● (1055)

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the Justin Trudeau government—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member knows full well he cannot use the name of anyone sitting in the chamber. Maybe he could retract that and start again.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I recognize that I am not allowed to use proper names here.

After nine years of the Prime Minister, the budget is just more of the same mess. We have seen housing prices double. We have seen the carbon tax make everything more expensive. We have seen how crime and chaos have been unleashed across this country. When will the Prime Minister step aside so that we can have a carbon tax election?

Mr. Wilson Miao: Mr. Speaker, our country has gone through a pandemic, and many lives were lost, not just through the pandemic but also through the opioid crisis that we are still experiencing.

I have a question, though I know this is not how this works. What can we do better? If this is a messy situation, as the opposition party is claiming, how could we work together in the chamber to deliver more for Canadians so they could have a better life ahead of them?

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries Minister and colleague of the member from Richmond-Centre mused to our local media that I have not read the budget.

Not only have I read the budget, but I even read the mini-scenarios the government uses in its budget to explain a budgetary measure it is announcing. My colleague spoke about a measure proposed by the government to create a subsidiary of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to deliver a national flood insurance program. He wants to inject \$15 million into it.

The scenario the government uses to explain this measure in the French version of the budget strikes me as particularly insensitive. It offers up the example of Josh and Fiona, a couple who own a home in an area with a high flood risk. As we know, “Fiona” is the name of the recent hurricane that tore through hundreds of homes and harbours in Canada, especially in the Maritimes and the Magdalen Islands.

It seems to me that by using the name of this storm to present a scenario in the budget, the government is showing how out of touch it is with the reality of families that may have lost their home to a flood.

Does my colleague agree that this could have been handled with a bit more sensitivity?

[English]

Mr. Wilson Miao: Mr. Speaker, in recent years we have seen many devastating impacts of climate change on our country, and not just with the floods that we are experiencing on the Atlantic coast. In B.C. right now it is not wildfire season, but wildfires have been starting. The member's question is a good one that we could explore when the budget is debated in committee, to better help Canadians with recovery and rebuilding in case of a devastating situation like the Fiona flood.

● (1100)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have much to say about the budget. I am going to focus on one area, the issue around lifting people out of poverty, more particularly for people with disabilities.

I am absolutely disappointed with the budget. For people with disabilities, the budget includes only a \$6-a-day level of support. That is what the disability benefit amounts to. It would not lift people with disabilities out of poverty; it would make them marginally less poor.

Meanwhile, the government does not take on big corporations and put forward an excess windfall tax so that it could take those resources and ensure that the people who are most vulnerable in our community are supported.

Will the member tell his own government to step up for people with disabilities and make sure that they are indeed lifted out of poverty, and not just with the \$6-a-day support in budget 2024?

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Mr. Wilson Miao: Mr. Speaker, in this budget, we have seen a \$6-billion investment in Canadians with disabilities. This is not the only part that our government is working on. There is more to be done, and this is the first our government has put toward supporting Canadians with disabilities.

It is important for us to really look into this funding and how it impacts people, and also to not have the provinces or territories claw back that amount. There is definitely more work to be done, and I am here to fully support Canadians with disabilities.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in the House at all times and particularly today to speak to budget 2024. As we are hearing and seeing from our fellow Canadians, budgets are not just numbers. They are commitments to the well-being and prosperity of every Canadian.

I want to begin by talking about the impact of this budget on my riding of Vancouver Granville. We all know that Vancouver stands as a beacon of diversity, innovation and opportunity, and it is heartening to see that reflected in this budget in the commitments that are being made for Vancouver Granville, for Vancouver and for British Columbia.

When I was first elected, I received a phone call from a board member of the Hellenic community centre in my riding. Vancouver has long been home to one of the largest Greek communities in Canada, and the Hellenic centre complex in my riding is an incredible place that has brought together Canadians, not just from the Greek community but from all different communities, as a place of gathering on the west side of the city. It is a community centre, and it is a place of worship. I have been advocating on the community's behalf to see what we can do to improve that centre because it is a place that allows Canadians from all different walks of life and backgrounds to gather.

The board members are interesting. They are not fierce partisans. There are some who are Liberals, and there are some who are Conservatives. Two of the leaders are Tony Papajohn, a Liberal, and Alex Tsakumis, a well-known Conservative. These two individuals care deeply about their community. They came to me, as their member of Parliament, and said they wanted to work together to find a way to work with the government to make sure that their community, and those who come to this place, have access to a fantastic facility.

In March, the Minister of Finance came to visit and she agreed that the community centre is a local institution that must continue to serve the community, and that is exactly what budget 2024 proposes to do. It proposes to give \$5 million to ensure that the Hellenic community of Vancouver has the space and the resources it needs to keep thriving.

The two individuals, one Liberal and one Conservative, who are part of that leadership team have been very vocal in their need for this building. They have also been vocal and supportive of governments that stand up for their community. I am so proud to know that those two individuals, and the community they represent, stand behind this budget and these measures to help their community.

It is a shame that the members opposite are choosing to vote against an institution that is not just necessary but a critical part of the fabric of the community of Vancouver Granville. I hope that every single voter in Vancouver Granville remembers that. How we deal with people in their communities when the chips are down is what people will remember.

That is why I am so grateful that, as we think about ensuring that we are lifting up diverse voices, budget 2024 also proposes to be a funding partner for a museum in British Columbia. It will highlight the histories, cultures and contributions of Canadians of diverse South Asian backgrounds.

The South Asian community in British Columbia, and in my riding of Vancouver Granville, is an important part of the fabric of our community. Having those stories told, those voices heard and that history told as a part of the history of this country is critically important to the story our young people and generations thereafter will come to understand about the communities around them and with whom they live.

We are also committing, in this budget, to being a funding partner of the Filipino cultural centre. The Filipino community is a vibrant, thriving part of Vancouver's ecosystem, and for too long, its members have not had a voice at the table. I want to thank the member for Vancouver Kingsway for his advocacy as well, because he has been a big part of this conversation for many years. Our government is stepping up to make sure that the community has a place where it can gather and come together, so it can celebrate and tell its story to the rest of us in a way that lets the story be told in its members' voices as a part of the story of this country.

The arts are a big part of the story of Vancouver Granville and of Vancouver. The Vancouver Fringe Festival is a great part of the story of culture in our city. Earlier this year, I met with the executive director of the Vancouver Fringe Festival and he told me about the challenges that the festival is facing in trying to ensure that its operations can continue. I am so pleased that this budget is going to step up and help that organization and organizations like it to maintain, thrive and advance the critical work they do to bring incredible theatre to our citizens.

Vancouver is also an innovation hub. As somebody who grew up in the tech industry, it is important for me to know that our government continues to invest in that innovation, not just in Vancouver Granville but across the country. Our commitment of \$2.4 billion toward research in AI includes building companies in AI, supporting start-ups that are going to be there for the future, maintaining and growing Canada's advantage in AI and ensuring that workers who are affected by AI have support. That is what budget 2024 is going to do.

It was important for me, and I think a lot of Canadians, to hear the former leader of the opposition, Erin O'Toole, stand up and talk about how this measure is a critically important part of maintaining and growing Canada's lead in the field of AI. These are the things that members opposite intend to vote against.

• (1105)

So far, members opposite are voting against communities, against diverse communities, against technology, against growth in leadership of Canadian technology sectors and against the interests of Canadians.

I say that because one of the most important issues facing Vancouver and many cities across this country is housing affordability. Housing affordability is not just a matter of shelter. It is a foundation for stability, well-being and dignity for individuals and families, and current and future generations need to have that stability. The government's work on housing has been working and it continues to work. Since I was elected, I have seen 5,500 units of housing funded in Vancouver Granville alone.

Let us think about that: It is 5,000-plus units of housing in Vancouver Granville alone. Let us contrast that to the six units of housing that the current Leader of the Opposition built when he was the minister of housing during his time. That is 5,000-plus versus six, and that is in just one riding.

We want all of our kids to have a level playing field. However, the investments we are making in housing, in working with non-profits and with other community organizations to ensure that affordable housing is built not just in Vancouver Granville but across this country, are what members opposite intend to vote against. I do not know how they look their constituents in the eye and say that they are going to vote against things that actually support the well-being and the health of their citizens and the security of their citizens to have a home. By investing in housing affordability, we are not just addressing immediate needs. We are setting a foundation for a more equitable and prosperous future for generations to come.

I want to talk about the issue of hate as well. Over the course of the last number of weeks and months, we have seen an alarming rise in hate in this country. We see leaders, like the Leader of the Opposition, cavorting with individuals who support Diagonol and who support white supremacist movements. Therefore, it is no wonder that the Conservatives want to stand against the funding that we are putting forward, such as \$7.3 million for the special envoy in the fight against anti-Semitism and \$7.3 million for the envoy in the fight against Islamophobia. The Conservatives want to vote against \$5 million for a Holocaust museum in Montreal. They want to vote against \$5 million for Holocaust remembrance. The Conservatives have already voted against funding for the Jewish community centre in my riding, and they have already voted against funding for the Holocaust education centre in my riding.

As for this idea that they care about communities, they care about themselves. If the Conservatives cared about fighting hate and if they cared about the rise in anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and anti-Asian hate in this country, they would not be voting against the almost quarter-billion dollars of provisions we have in this budget to fight hate. In this country, we need to stand up for each other. We need to stand up for those whose voices are being diminished. We need to work together to do that.

It makes me really nervous when the Leader of the Opposition talks about his laws, the laws he would pass, and that he would be the judge of what is constitutional and what is not. This is a country that depends on the rule of law, trusts in our Constitution and trusts

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in our institutions. Canadians from across this country, from coast to coast to coast, value and care about our institutions. They care about public safety. They care about making sure that communities feel safe.

We have budget provisions that are there to make this country safe around the fight against hate, around supporting our military and around funding to ensure that we are strong players within NATO in the fight against Russia and in support of Ukraine. When we are standing up for those types of measures at the same time as we are putting money in the pockets of average Canadians, funding school lunch programs and working on building more homes, I do not understand how Conservatives can stand up and vote against a budget that really is about fairness for all.

I would encourage all members of the House to really take a look at whether they are voting in the interests of Canadians or voting to support a leader who cares nothing about Canadians. Instead, I would encourage members across all parties to look at the budget we have put forward and vote for a budget that is about fairness for all Canadians.

• (1110)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how does my colleague across the way feel about the GST being now dubbed the DST and that, every time a Canadian goes to the till to buy anything, every cent of the GST that goes to the government would pay for debt servicing?

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, I remind the hon. member that, when the Conservatives were in power, they chose to reduce the GST as a popular measure rather than think about the financial consequences. While the Conservatives will say that was many years ago, the thing that I would remind the hon. member across is that decisions that were made then to gut housing, to gut health care and to gut all of the things that Canadians care about, when Conservatives were in power, are what we have had to reverse over the course of the last number of years. Therefore, the investments that we make are in Canadians, not in preserving and lining the pockets of the richest 1%. That is what members across want to do. We are going to stand up for all Canadians.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just yesterday Canada hosted the fourth round of the INC discussions on plastic pollution to try to get traction. We know that Conservatives put forward a bill to bring back the plastic straw, because they said it is good for the environment and it is healthy for us. I cannot make this stuff up. I did not read it on The Beaverton. It is actually a bill here in Parliament.

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We know two garbage trucks of plastic are getting deposited into our oceans every day. We are choking on plastic, yet in the budget, the Liberals would get rid of the ghost and derelict fishing gear fund, a \$10-million fund that was actually getting traction on our coast, especially in British Columbia. It was supporting the restoration economy and employing indigenous people from coast to coast to coast. It was a world-class program.

Maybe my friend from British Columbia can explain why the government would cut this really important program, which was also critical to protecting the blue economy.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his tireless work as a member of Parliament for British Columbia and for his advocacy on many of the issues we have worked on together.

The budgets that this government has put forward over the last number of years, including this one, make tremendous provisions to take care of our oceans and to take care of our environment. I do not know about others, but I am perfectly fine using a paper straw or drinking without a straw, which seems to be the most important thing that members opposite are preoccupied with.

However, to my friend's question about the importance of protecting our oceans, absolutely we all need to be doing more. We would do that through provisions in this budget in a variety of different ways. We have put forward, through B.C. SRIF, provisions to help protect our waterways as well. That work is going to continue. I am looking forward to working with the member opposite and others to ensure that we keep working hard to protect our oceans, not just across the coast of British Columbia but from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has covered many important points that are in the budget. I would like to ask him to comment on the things that this budget would do to spur the economic growth of Canada and how this budget would provide investments in advanced manufacturing and advanced technologies, like artificial intelligence, so that Canada continues to be ready for the new knowledge-based economy that is happening in the world today.

• (1115)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Mr. Speaker, there are two things I want to touch on. The first is the important funding that we have put forward for research. Universities across this country need funding for research. They need to keep innovating, and the funding that we would be providing would ensure that our institutions of higher learning are able to do the advanced cutting-edge research that they need to do to make sure that young Canadians can look forward to a future where our institutions are providing the thought leadership in science, math, technology and social sciences that allows Canada to continue to be a thought leader.

When it comes to AI, as I mentioned, \$2.4 billion is on the table for start-ups, for innovation, for retooling companies and for growth, as well as for workers who are going to be affected by the arrival of AI in this country and in the workplace. These investments are not trivial. These investments are serious. They are thoughtful. They work with the private sector to enhance Canada's current role as a leader in AI. This ensures that Canada will contin-

ue to be a global leader in AI and the positive use of AI, not just for economic growth but for social development as well.

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and pleasure to bring the voices of Chatham-Kent—Leamington to this chamber. Today I am rising to address budget 2024.

A common definition of insanity is to do the same thing over and over again while expecting a different result. This budget is, again, a “tax more and spend even more” budget. It is this government's ninth budget, or more correctly, eighth budget, since it did not bother coming to this chamber during the pandemic. It just kept spending.

I do not personally claim to be a financial expert, but I have run and have been part of businesses. I have borrowed funds, and I have been expected to pay them back. I have also had the privilege to be involved with and chair several organizations, so I have had the experience of being accountable to others for their money and for stewarding organizations to their collective goals. Responsible stewardship of one's own funds and, even more importantly, of others' funds, leads to growth and prosperity of one's business, one's organization, or, as we are discussing today, one's country.

Please do not take my word for it on this budget that it is evidence of insanity. Let us look at what others have to say.

Across the country, many people are sounding the alarm bells over the budget. Aaron Wudrick and Jon Hartley from the Macdonald-Laurier Institute state that the growth expectations and projections for Canada are “an anemic 1.2%” for Canada versus 2.7% for the U.S., largely driven by declines in the level of business investment. The OECD supports this severe prognosis as it projects that Canada will have the lowest real per capita GDP growth among advanced economies between now and 2060.

Our very own Parliamentary Budget Officer has projected that economic growth will remain “sluggish through 2024” due to restrictive monetary policy resulting from rising budgetary deficits. Furthermore, Yves Giroux, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, states that the math simply does not add up on the expectation that the federal public service will shrink due to natural attrition by 5,000 FTEs over four years. He says that the Liberals have made too many promises, pledged too many things and made too many announcements for that to even have a shred of credibility. He says that we can expect the public service to grow, not shrink.

Here is another perspective: The former Liberal Bank of Canada governor David Dodge has warned that he believes that this budget will be the worst since 1982, and I will not say who was in this chamber then.

Canada will not reach par growth with other developed countries until 2060. Why is that? It is because this government's out-of-control spending has created an economic black hole that we will not be able to dig out of for 36 years, according to others' words. Again, members need not take my word for it.

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Let us move to a more recent Bank of Canada representative's statement. Carolyn Rogers, senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada, noted, in a recent speech in Halifax, "You know those signs that say 'In an emergency, break the glass?' Well, it's time to break the glass." She cited the lagging Canadian productivity rates as one of the contributing factors. She went on to say that one of Canada's main issues dragging down our productivity rates is the lack of business investment.

While business investment has declined in Canada since 2014, in other countries, including the U.S., it has continued to grow. As a result, Canada's GDP per hour worked, the key measure of productivity growth, is among the lowest in the OECD. This budget will only continue this trend, as it does not incent business investment.

Another Bank of Canada guy, Tiff Macklem, our present governor, agrees and states that this budget has not significantly changed the government's fiscal path and it is unlikely to affect the government's macroeconomic trajectory in the near term. Why is there all of this discussion about economic growth? Why is it important? Should we not just focus on helping people?

Economic growth is what allows a government to responsibly and sustainably deliver social programming. Irresponsible fiscal management is exactly what jeopardizes a government's ability to maintain a strong social safety net and create the fiscal conditions for Canadians to thrive, in mainly low, predictable inflation and lower interest rates.

• (1120)

Even the often touted future Liberal leader, Mark Carney, stated that there is not enough focus on the net economic growth in this budget. Former Liberal finance minister Bill Morneau, in his book related to the Prime Minister, would routinely announce bigger numbers for more spending because bigger numbers sound good. I agree that bigger numbers sound good within one's own bank account, but not so much when they add to the public debt.

Former Liberal Finance Minister John Manley said that, while the Bank of Canada was trying to press on the brakes of inflation with higher interest rates, the Prime Minister was pressing on the inflationary gas pedal with his spending, which had ballooned interest rates in the first place.

The Prime Minister seems hell-bent on destroying the economic fabric of this nation for his own political gain, with no regard for the future generations he is fiscally handcuffing. He refuses to listen to reason, and here is the main point of my speech, he refuses to even listen to his fellow Liberals. He has added more debt than all previous prime ministers combined. It now stands at \$1.255 trillion, and there is no plan to bring that in balance or to control inflationary deficits.

Doug Porter, a chief economist with the Bank of Montreal, put it best when, in describing the value of growth, he cautioned that higher government spending is perhaps not where we want to see that growth. However, what does budget 2024 do? It includes \$40 billion in new spending, which will continue to drive up the cost of goods we buy and the interest rates we pay.

This year, the Prime Minister and his Liberal government are forcing Canadians to spend \$54 billion just to service his debt. That is the same amount that the GST brings in in government revenues. Sometimes, when we talk about millions and billions, and debt and deficits, it is hard for us to comprehend what that means in our everyday lives. Let us think about it this way: The GST has now become the DST. Instead of the GST raising funds for social programming, every single cent of it now goes to service the Prime Minister's debt. The goods and services tax has become the debt servicing tax. It is these very deficits and debts that have contributed to higher inflation and the resulting higher interest rates necessary to try to tap down inflation.

According to Scotiabank, the Bank of Canada would have only had to raise interest rates to 3% if government spending had not stoked inflation, meaning that rates are a full 2% higher than they need to be. Why is this important? The Liberal government's mismanagement has directly affected the lives of Canadians. Housing costs have doubled, as have mortgages and rents.

The Financial Post reports that 3.4 million Canadians will renew their mortgages by 2025, and a total of \$900 billion in mortgages will need to be renewed in the next three years. More Canadians are going to have to sacrifice the basic necessities, such as food or clothing, to afford their rent or mortgage payments.

In 2015, the Liberals were elected on the promise of small and temporary deficits, less than \$10 billion per year. They were elected on the promise of stable inflation and low interest rates forever. They were elected on the promise of sunny ways. Do members remember? After nine long years, it is clear the Prime Minister is definitely not worth the cost, and the budget does nothing to solve the problems that Canadians face.

Despite all the negativity that I have referenced in this speech, largely voiced by Liberals and independent officials, I do have hope. I have hope in Canadians because we have come back from disasters like this before, and we can do it again. After World War II, many families had suffered personal loss, and many soldiers either did not come home or came home wounded, but many came home after rescuing democracy and set to rescuing our economy, which was heavily indebted after the war effort. Record government surpluses that followed the war addressed the debt and a long period of economic prosperity followed.

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Today, there is also hope on the horizon. A Conservative government would axe the tax on farmers and food by immediately passing Bill C-234 in its original form. We would build the homes, not more bureaucracy. We would also cap spending with a dollar-for-dollar rule to bring down interest rates and inflation. Under a Conservative government, my children and grandchildren would know that, if they worked hard, home ownership would be a reality. It is their home, our home, my home. Let us bring it home.

● (1125)

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite talked a lot about the importance of making wise financial decisions, which I would agree with. As a former business person, I know that is something that we should all care about, so the question I would ask is the following.

In this budget we have set aside \$2.4 billion for innovation around AI, something the Conservatives' former leader said was an important investment to make in ensuring Canada's leadership in AI.

This budget also sets in course a reversal of the damage they had done to our NATO commitment when it dropped to below 1% of GDP with the \$73 billion that we are putting on the table to ensure our military has what it needs. Those are two critical components of this budget. Can the member simply tell me if he supports those provisions in this budget, yes or no?

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, the government has a long track record of announcements of budgets, etc. Often that leads to more spending, but it does not lead to the good outcomes. Every family and every business knows that they have to make priorities and have to sacrifice some things, even though they might be good measures, for long-term health and to bring about balance. This is what the government has not done. It has been phenomenal at photo ops and announcing good intentions.

I am a numbers guy. I come from business. What do the numbers say? The numbers tell me we are spending \$54 billion now on servicing a debt built on good intentions and poor outcomes. We have ballooned the public service. There are so many places where priority decisions need to have been made, and the government has not done that. It is the very people the government purports to help who are being hurt the most.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Since 2019 the Bloc Québécois has voted against every Liberal budget, including every Liberal budget update.

Once again, the Bloc Québécois will vote against the Liberal budget. One of the reasons is that despite the oil industry's record profits, the government continues to subsidize it with taxpayer dollars. Does my colleague not find it indecent that the government continues to use taxpayer money to subsidize oil companies that are making record profits?

[English]

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, I am a Conservative. I believe the market mechanism is the most efficient way of transferring the values of goods and services, but markets only work when there is a

balance of power. I come from the agriculture sector, but that accounts for a whole host of sectors. The best way to have proper levels of profit, which drive further innovation, is having a functioning market system that incents competition. Sometimes we do not have that in this country, given our size. We have oligopolies, oligopsonies and monopolies, and I will not get into all the rest of it. However, there are structures needed to keep a functioning market going. We need to do more work in some areas on that in the country, particularly in the sector I come from, which is agriculture and food.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member is, of course, challenged by the fact that he is carrying the party's record from the dismal Harper decade, where we saw record deficits every single year, including \$116 billion given to the banks and \$30 billion every year that were given to overseas tax havens through the infamous Harper tax haven treaties. The reality is that Conservatives cannot give fiscal lessons to anybody. Their record is absolutely deplorable.

The issue of pharmacare and the supports that would go to people with diabetes in his region, 17,000 in his riding, is that Canadians who suffer from diabetes are paying up to \$1,000 a month for diabetes medication. They are struggling to make ends meet. If they cannot pay for the medication, they have a four times greater risk of a heart attack or stroke. Conservatives are blocking this important life-saving medication, which the NDP has pushed the government to put into place.

My simple question to my colleague, who I respect a lot, is this: Why are Conservatives blocking this important life-saving medication, which could make such a difference in the lives of 17,000 of his constituents?

● (1130)

Mr. Dave Epp: Mr. Speaker, I was at breakfast this morning with members of the insurance industry, who outlined exactly their view of this pharmacare program. They said that the monies committed just in this budget alone would provide the full formulary for all the drugs missing by those not covered under other drug plans. They then outlined all of the risks of people dropping their other plans and switching to a public plan. The dollars are going to go into the public purse as opposed to actually helping the people who do not have coverage. If the definition of deplorable is handing the government a balanced budget when it took power, I will take deplorable every day.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people of Edmonton Manning have been very clear in the emails I have received in the past two weeks.

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Franks says, “Stop spending our money like a drunken sailor, we cannot afford the debt.” Trevor tells me, “It is absolutely ridiculous as to how much tax Canada is being charged, where does it stop?” David asked me to “Please put pressure on the P.M. to start cutting Canada's debt and balancing the budget.” Mariette says, “This budget puts our kids further into debt.” Michael writes of his “utter disgust with the latest Federal Budget.”

The feelings are unanimous: This budget is a disaster. I can only conclude that no one in the government actually considered the contents. Maybe they were too busy watching television to think about managing the country.

I must confess that I do not watch much television. When I do, I watch documentaries or live sports events. Two of the things that I avoid completely are reality television and game shows. To me, there is very little reality involved, and the games do not seem to be all that real to me.

As a result, I have to admit that I have never watched the show *Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?*, which aired more than 15 years ago. It was a short-lived program with only five episodes made. The idea was to have a panel ask questions from elementary school textbooks to see if the contestants were smarter than a fifth grader. The top prize was a million dollars, tax-free. The idea probably offends the Liberal members opposite. They do not believe that anything should be tax-free, ever.

Contestants on the show have to answer questions about Canadian history, Canadian geography and Canadian culture. However, history, geography and culture were not the only categories covered on the show. There was also mathematics, which may be the reason no Liberal MP ever appeared on the program. When it comes to math, budget 2024 shows very clearly that the Liberals are nowhere near as smart as a fifth grader.

When children are in fifth grade, math is pretty simple: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. It is not rocket science. Fifth graders know that if they receive a weekly allowance from their parents, they must spend that money wisely. Common sense tells them that they cannot spend more than they have. There is no such thing as deficit spending to a ten year old.

If they spend all their money, Mom and Dad will tell them that they have to wait until next week to get any more. They are not made of money. They have to live within their means and they expect their children to learn how to do that also, especially as they feel financially stressed by all the extra taxes the government has piled on them.

If children want some shiny toy that costs more than their weekly allowance, then they have to learn to save until they can afford to buy it. Stores are reluctant to extend credit to a ten year old, especially one who has not learned the value of saving.

As I look at this budget, I wish the Minister of Finance could go back in time and become a fifth grader once again. It is apparent that she and the Liberal Party failed to learn some important lessons in childhood, and now it is all Canadians who are paying for their inability to understand basic math.

A fifth grader could tell us that money does not magically appear. It does not grow on trees. We cannot just pick up loose bills on the sidewalk. A fifth grader could tell us that spending more money to pay the interest on the national debt than we have for health care is a recipe for disaster. Adding more debt does not fix the problem.

I will not delve deeply into economic theory here. However, the Prime Minister has asked Canadians to forgive him for not thinking about monetary policy, and it would probably be wrong of me to expect his caucus to have any more interest in such matters.

I must say, though, that there have been some changes over the past eight years in the way the government approaches its responsibility to manage the nation's finances. No longer does the government think it is possible to pluck numbers out of thin air, put them in a spreadsheet and magically produce a budget that balances itself.

• (1135)

Fifth graders could tell us that a deficit is not just a line on a piece of paper. It is a debt, borrowed money that has to be repaid at some point. They would also tell us that until that debt is paid interest will be charged.

In simple terms that even a Liberal could understand, running a budgetary deficit costs money. If interest has to be paid on a debt, then there is less money for the things that government is supposed to do for Canadians, things like health care.

Where does the government find money to pay its debts? It raises taxes. In other words, it charges Canadians for something they did not ask for and for some reason expects them to be happy to pay.

Parents who explain to their fifth graders how important it is for individuals and families to live within their means are being undermined by a government that spends and spends, while expecting someone else to pay its bills.

This budget would increase government spending and taxes and would bring us no closer to a balanced budget than we have been at any time in almost nine years of Liberal fiscal mismanagement. Apparently the Liberals' coalition partners in the NDP approve of this highway of economic ruin. This budget would bring in \$40 billion of costly new spending that Canadians cannot afford.

In 2022, the finance minister said that the budget would be balanced by the year 2027. In 2023, the date was revised to 2028. Why do the Liberals not just admit that they have no idea how to balance the budget, since magic is not working?

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Before the Liberals were elected in 2015, their leader suggested that perhaps his government would run modest deficits, about \$10 billion annually before returning to the balanced books that he inherited from the previous Conservative government. We all know what happened. Record deficits followed record deficits to create a national debt never seen before in the history of Canada. With this latest budget, the Liberal-NDP government is farther than ever from doing so.

What we have now is a government that will spend more money next year servicing the debt than on health care. There is no sense in that, except perhaps to the members opposite.

Canada's per capita GDP is now lower than it was six years ago. While other countries have grown their economies, Canadians are poorer. The government's solution is inflationary spending and more taxes. It needs to go back to the fifth grade.

There is a glimmer of hope. Soon we will have a Conservative government with members who are indeed smarter than a fifth grader. Conservatives will balance the books, making the spendthrift finance minister and her fiscally unaware boss a bad memory.

The common-sense Conservative plan will axe the carbon tax, balance the budget and build homes, not bureaucracy, to bring lower prices to Canadians. Even a fifth grader knows that the Liberal government is not worth the cost.

• (1140)

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, like most members of Parliament, when I am home for the week, I usually get out and do a couple of school visits. Last week, I was lucky enough to go to Martin Street Public School, and I heard from some really smart fifth graders. To hear the member opposite suggest that fifth graders are not intelligent or do not have any business, suggesting that we should engage with them, I strongly disagree—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Conservatives seem to have taken offence to that and are now heckling the member on his assertion that fifth graders do understand a lot and can contribute. Perhaps you could ask the Conservatives to keep the heckling down so the member can properly ask his question.

The Deputy Speaker: That is getting into debate.

The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, the point made by my colleague was that the fifth graders were smarter with financial decisions than the government. That was the point.

The Deputy Speaker: We are descending into debate.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni is rising on the same point of order.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, it is so hard to speak at this end of the House without getting heckled by Conservatives. It is next to

impossible to even hear someone next to us. This really needs to be addressed.

The Deputy Speaker: I appreciate that, but I am also hearing a lot of heckling from all corners in the chamber. I will remind everyone who happens to be in the chamber, including Conservatives, the NDP, the Liberals, the Greens and the Bloc Québécois, on occasion—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: If we want to talk about heckling in the House, I will remind people that they should not be heckling the Speaker. I would also remind people to be judicious in their discussions and, of course, to keep the chatter down in the chamber.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Mr. Speaker, my point is that an average fifth grader knows that it is unproductive to heckle, name call and denigrate people on the basis of how much one person knows or another person knows.

Does the member not know that it is the job of the Bank of Canada and the Governor of the Bank of Canada to think about and consider monetary policy? It is not so much the role of government to talk about and think about monetary policy. I know the Conservatives have made much hay out of the Prime Minister's statement that it is actually the job of the Bank of Canada to talk about and think about monetary policy and that it is the federal government's job to make economic policy, fiscal policy and decisions on spending.

The fifth graders of Martin Street Public School know the difference and perhaps the Conservatives could learn fifth grade civics, because that is where we learn about the jurisdictions of the various institutions in our government and country.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I would excuse the hon. member opposite. It is like the Prime Minister asking him to sell a radish as a strawberry. They are trying to convince Canadians of their mismanagement and inability to balance the budget whatsoever. This is the situation. Philosophically, if the Prime Minister does not think about fiscal responsibility and fiscal or monetary policy, what does he think about? This—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: The problem is that members are still heckling everybody all the time.

The hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are complaining about the Conservatives heckling. They are heckling because they do not accept any logic, reality or truth. This is the shape of a government with which we are dealing. If their Prime Minister does not think about monetary policy, that means we are in trouble and we are, indeed, in trouble because of that type of thinking.

• (1145)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, grade 5 students certainly know a lot. The students in the member's riding of Edmonton Manning asked me a simple math question, which I will ask the member.

The member said that the Conservatives were going to axe the carbon tax. Let us do the math on some of this tax in Alberta when it comes to fuel. Three cents is the Government of Canada's carbon tax. Four cents is the United Conservative Party of Alberta's fuel tax, but gas went up 20¢. Therefore, who gets rich from the 13¢ that the member never talks about? Who is getting the 13¢? Could the member do the math on that?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, I do not think we are speaking of two types of residents. I receive so many complaints from Canadians, from Albertans, from my riding and from his riding, my neighbour riding, about the carbon tax.

The hon. member needs to convince his own constituents about the carbon tax and explain how crazy life has become since it was increased. He and his party have supported the government in increasing the cost of living for Canadians, as well as the cost of groceries. If the member can convince his own people in Alberta, then I will be satisfied.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have also received many letters from my constituents about the same issues. They talk about how disgusted they are with this budget. The reality is that they see it as unfair. Part of what they talk about is how the government is promoting fairness, yet the Liberals have failed to mention that when they came into power, the national debt was \$600 billion. Now, it is \$1.2 trillion, and when looking at the budget, it says that in five years the national debt will be up another \$280 billion. That does not seem fair to the gen Z and the millennial Canadians as they progress five years down the road because they are going to have to pay for it.

Could my colleague comment on that?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Mr. Speaker, there is no fairness in making people's lives miserable. There is no fairness in making people's lives unaffordable. There is no fairness when people cannot buy food to feed their kids. There is no fairness in what the government is doing, and they must stop. This is what Canadians are asking us for. This is what my constituents are asking me for.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to stand today to give some comments on this very important budget, which really is a framework as we are moving forward.

I am very pleased to share my time with the member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, a former member of our international trade committee, who we miss at the committee now, but she has moved on to other things.

I have been speaking over this past weekend, especially with my constituents, with other community leaders and with family and friends, about the budget because—

The Deputy Speaker: I know there is some debate going on in the chamber. I would ask those individuals who are having an extra debate or a continued debate to take it outside into the lobbies. Of

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course, they are not listening to me because they are into that debate.

Maybe the hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach and the hon. member for Edmonton Manning would take their conversation outside. That would be great because we do have somebody chatting.

The hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, in these discussions, very often we all feel very strongly about different positions we take on something as important as this budget. This budget would be the playbook for the next several years in our country and would make significant headway in trying to improve the lives of all Canadians.

As I indicated earlier, I have been speaking with my constituents and my community leaders. Many of them feel that the budget is going in the right direction and that it would make a difference in the lives of Canadians. At the end of the day, we have to think about why we are here and what this is all about.

Budgets are laying out the future, and the future reflects the needs of Canadians. That not only means investing in social programs, but also means investing in entrepreneurs and in small and medium-sized businesses, giving them the tools they need to grow their businesses and to do everything possible to grow our country.

There were announcements last week about Honda, and those kinds of investments are going to create thousands of jobs. We could reflect back on years when things were very tough. People were out of work and were just begging to find jobs so that they would be able to contribute to their families and would not have to use unemployment insurance. Now, we talk about such an abundance of jobs that we are going to have, not only today, as our economy is doing very well, but also in the future, with the investment in Alliston for the Honda EV plant. It is really the future for Canadians.

This will create jobs for so many Canadians so that they can buy houses and grow their families. It means a successful Canada, so Canada is in a very good position. In spite of what we hear from the official opposition about Canada being in a terrible place, Canada is in a very good spot. We are still in the top in the G7, and we are still doing very well, but there is much more to do. I think this budget is laying out that platform for exactly what we need to do to move it forward.

I am glad to see all the initiatives in this year's budget that directly address concerns Canadians throughout Canada have, but especially the residents in my riding of Humber River—Black Creek. I have often spoken about my constituents and the messages they want me to pass on here in the House of Commons, whether they are the need for social programs or for increases in Canada child benefit.

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I hear a lot from seniors about how difficult it is. Even with the increases, which have been significant, that we have contributed to since 2015, seniors are still struggling, and as the cost of living goes up, through our various programs, we have been able to make the kinds of changes that assist and help them, like the carbon tax rebates that all the seniors are receiving.

The Conservatives continue to say that it is not acceptable, that it should not be there and that we should scrap the carbon tax. However, we cannot stop the wildfires that are happening, and we need to make sure that people are taking whatever steps are necessary to make our country safer and to make the effective changes we need to protect our systems.

Budget 2024 would help make life more affordable for every generation of Canadians by creating access to more affordable housing, lowering everyday costs and growing our economy. I am sure anyone who watches question period or watches what is going on in the House knows that we have talked about investing millions and millions of dollars in housing, and it is long overdue. This should have been done a long time ago.

I recall, back in Paul Martin's days, when we were going to have a national minister for housing, and that was one thing that was greatly debated. It was announced that we were going to establish a minister of housing to get back into the housing business. Unfortunately, our government at that time was defeated on a budgetary motion vote of confidence, and we did not resume the opportunity to introduce that until we started to get back into power in 2015.

I would have liked to see, as the very first thing we did, the establishment of a minister of housing to get right into the housing file. However, everything takes time, as all of us in government know, and it took quite a while until we finally got a minister of housing and got the focus put some of the things we needed to do, which was to make sure that there was more affordable housing being built, that it was housing everybody could afford and that it would increase the availability in the housing stock.

• (1150)

One thing we would do in this budget to help with that housing need would be to introduce a 30-year amortization for first-time buyers. Yes, we have thousands of buyers. I have several grandkids who are looking to buy homes, and they are looking at an interest rate that we do not control. I had a 25-year amortization, as some people in the House currently have. This is a 30-year period, which would significantly lower it, and the interest rates will help my grandkids, as well as many others, buy homes. Making it easier for Canadians to buy their first homes is really important.

We are also launching a \$1.5-billion Canada rental protection fund to protect affordable housing and apartments. We all hear about it when we go back to our ridings, and we hear stories about apartment buildings being converted into expensive condos. It is a real loss of what we call affordable housing and affordable rental housing. Not everybody wants to purchase housing. Some people want good, affordable rental housing.

Many properties, especially the older stock in ridings like Humber River—Black Creek, are often redeveloped, and they come on the market at a very high price. That is a loss of affordable rental

housing. The \$1.5-billion Canada rental protection fund is meant to prevent that from happening. It would protect that level of affordable housing so that we would have more apartments for seniors, for families and for students.

We have also introduced flexibilities for the federal community housing initiative. It would ensure access to funding to maintain affordability for low-income tenants and for co-op members. I have, I believe, four co-ops in my riding. They are extremely successful. I often talk to the people there. There is a long wait-list to get into those co-ops. Once people are there, frankly, they are very comfortable. They like their neighbours, and they do not want to move. The answer is not that they have to move; the answer is to have more co-op housing on the market.

When there is a range of different incomes sharing housing, it builds better and stronger communities. It also provides a housing level that is affordable for a lot of people. There are some who would never be able to afford the kind of housing market that exists now. If somebody is paying millions of dollars, it must mean that they are doing extremely well, and we would hope that they have the opportunity to do that. The federal community housing initiative would provide \$150 million for 47,000 homes and would make sure they will be there as we move into the future.

As members can tell, I am focusing on housing, and these investments are extremely important for Humber River—Black Creek. People do not have anywhere to move. Seniors want to sell their homes, which would provide nice, affordable housing for first-time homebuyers, but they have no where to go. They do not want to go to a retirement home. They just want to go into safe rental housing that would give them a chance to continue to enjoy their remaining years.

I am very proud to have York University in my riding, where many students call Humber River—Black Creek home. Over 3,000 students actually live on campus at York University. There has been a huge amount of housing built there. It is all meant to house students, but as the university grows and expands, there needs to be more opportunity.

I have covered a few issues, mostly on housing, but I would like to talk about this further. I will be glad to respond to questions about pharmacare and about the new dental program, which is being received so well in Humber River—Black Creek. These are exciting times. It is a challenging time for the government to manoeuvre the proper way, but I believe this budget is a good step forward, and I am looking forward to answering questions.

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• (1155)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member talked a lot about housing and the incredible number of photo ops, billions of dollars of photo ops, which the NDP-Liberal government has had with respect to housing. I have a really simple question for the member, and I am sure she can provide an answer to the House and to all Canadians.

As of today, how many houses has the NDP-Liberal government actually built for the billions of dollars of photo ops?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his support for the national eye strategy, which is now in the Senate. I would urge him to talk to the Conservative members in the Senate and ask them to please pass Bill C-284 for the national eye strategy.

I will move on to the question he asked me about housing. It is no secret that housing takes years to build, but we have been building housing for several years. About a thousand units have gone up in the west end of Toronto in the last two years. This housing is up now and available. There will be much more, but we all know it takes time to build housing.

• (1200)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's presentation.

No one here will deny that there is a housing crisis, to be sure. We have been talking about it for a long time, and we have been providing examples to highlight the issues for a long time. The government had a national housing strategy. Is the fact that we are talking about it now an admission of failure about its own strategy? In fact, it is the provinces, cities and municipalities that are in charge of housing.

The main thing I want to say about the budget is that you can list all the measures you want, but it will not do well in the polls. You did not wow anyone. There is no wow factor.

There is a lot of interference in provincial and Quebec jurisdictions. However, when it comes to your own areas of jurisdiction, such as pensions, old age security and employment insurance, there is nothing. There is no commitment from the government to finally eliminate discrimination against seniors aged 65 to 74. There is no commitment from the government to reform the EI system, which leaves behind thousands of unemployed people.

What does the government have to say about not investing in its own programs?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member has just begun to speak directly to the government, and I would like to remind her that she should direct all comments and remarks to the Chair.

The hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek.

[English]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, when we talk about housing and why the housing file is so complex, it is the responsibility of municipalities. It is their job to work with developers to see that

housing gets built. For far too long, too many municipalities have put up as many roadblocks as possible against much of this housing. People say that they do not want it in their backyard or that they do not want apartment buildings or condos in their backyard. They want to keep the same kind of community they have always had. It is admirable to want that, but the world is expanding. Immigration is a huge tool for Canada, and we need it to happen, but we need to have housing built. It takes the municipalities to do that.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Harper Conservative government members were terrible fiscal managers. They gave away \$30 billion a year to overseas tax havens, massive subsidies to oil and gas CEOs and bank bailouts. Unfortunately, the Liberal government has continued many of the bad financial management practices we saw under the Harper government.

The massive corporate subsidies that are going out started under the Conservatives and seem to be continuing under the Liberals. Why will the Liberals not rein them in?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for supporting the national eye strategy bill.

We all know that corporations need to do well in this country. They employ thousands and thousands of people. They need to make money. I am glad they make money, because we use that for all the programs we talk about and all the investments that go into Canada. It comes from corporations. It is not coming from the government.

[Translation]

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to speak today about the 2024 budget, our plan to ensure fairness for every generation.

Our government firmly believes that everyone deserves to get ahead, including our young people. Unfortunately, we find that too many young Canadians are struggling to be as successful as their parents. It is clear that young people are not being rewarded for their hard work the way previous generations were and that their paycheque is simply not enough to keep up with the current increase in the cost of living.

Obviously, this means that our young people are finding it increasingly difficult to save enough to make their dreams a reality. Needless to say, this is very concerning to our government. That is why we are moving forward in budget 2024 with numerous measures to ensure that our young people have a fair chance at success and to give them the means to make their dreams come true. To ensure fairness, we must support one another at every stage in life and invest in one another. We feel that children deserve to get off to the best possible start in life.

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However, today, nearly one in four children in Canada do not have enough to eat, which harms their health, their learning and their development. That is obviously a serious problem. That is why, in budget 2024, we are proposing a new national school food program. With an investment of \$1 billion over five years, we aim to provide meals to 400,000 children every year, in addition to those served by existing school food programs. I am very happy that we are able to give our children a helping hand as they make their start in life.

It is precisely because we wish to offer children the best possible start in life that we have also created a Canada-wide early learning and child care system. Right now, all of Canada's provinces and territories are already offering or on the verge of offering \$10-a-day child care. Before the Canada-wide system was implemented, child care costs were on par with monthly rent or even mortgage payments, making it difficult to start and support a family. It forced many parents, mothers in particular, to make the impossible choice between pursuing a career and staying at home with the children. It was heartbreaking.

It is interesting to note that women's participation in the workforce reached record levels after the system was implemented. However, even today, too few families have access to affordable child care. That is why we are building more spaces, as well as taking measures to ensure that even more will be built.

In the budget, our government proposes launching a new child care expansion loan program, which will provide \$1 billion in low-cost loans and \$60 million in non-repayable contributions. This program will allow public and not-for-profit child care providers to build new child care spaces and renovate their existing child care centres. We propose offering student loan forgiveness for rural and remote early childhood educators. This represents a \$48-million investment over four years.

Again with the aim of making sure that our young people have a fair chance of succeeding, we also propose measures to train young Canadians and enable them to acquire a rewarding work experience. For example, we propose increasing, for another year, the Canada student grant for full-time students, raising it from \$3,000 to \$4,200 annually, as well as interest-free Canada student loans, which will increase from \$210 to \$300 per week.

• (1205)

Also, we propose to invest over \$207.6 million in 2025-26 in the student work placement program to help create more work placement opportunities for students. This is an excellent way for post-secondary students to launch their career and get their first professional experience.

When we talk about rewarding hard work, we are also talking about housing, of course. We fully understand that housing is one of the key concerns facing young people today. This is particularly true for renters, who feel that the deck is stacked against them. That is why budget 2024 proposes measures to support and protect tenants. For example, we want to launch a new tenant protection fund worth \$15 million to fund legal aid and tenants' rights advocacy organizations.

We want tenants' credit ratings to reflect on-time rent payments. Renters deserve to have their credit rating take into account the money they have spent on rent over the years, particularly when they submit a mortgage application to buy their first home.

This brings me to the dream of many young Canadians to purchase their first home. While this dream may seem out of reach today for too many young Canadians, we fully understand that the difficult struggle to pay for a down payment and obtaining an affordable mortgage is among the greatest pressures weighing on young Canadians right now. That is why we would like to enhance the Canadian mortgage charter to make home ownership easier.

The budget also proposes to increase the home buyers' plan withdrawal limit from \$35,000 to \$60,000 for those saving for a down payment on their first home. This increase will enable first-time home buyers to use the tax benefits of an RRSP to save up to \$25,000 more for their down payment. This enhanced version of the plan will operate alongside the tax-free first home savings account, or FHSA, which allows Canadians to make contributions of up to \$8,000 annually and save up to \$40,000 for their first down payment. I am pleased to note that over 750,000 Canadians have opened this type of savings account since it was launched only a year ago. Together, these two plans will make it easier to save for a down payment and will improve access to home ownership.

We also want to allow 30-year mortgage amortizations for first-time buyers of new builds, starting on August 1, 2024. We will enhance the Canadian mortgage charter, including expectations for permanent mortgage relief measures, where appropriate, to further assist those struggling with their mortgages. Also, to further assist first-time homebuyers, budget 2024 proposes that people who have withdrawn or will withdraw an amount from their HBP between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2025, will be entitled to a three-year extended repayment grace period. These homebuyers will now have up to five years to begin the repayment process.

Our government has a plan to build more housing faster, make it more affordable, develop community housing sectors and make it easier to rent or buy a home.

• (1210)

[English]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government will now spend more money servicing our debt than it does on health care transfers.

Our hon. colleague spent a lot of time in her speech talking about youth. The leading cause of death for youth in my province of British Columbia is overdose. Would the government not be better off fighting overdose and the opioid crisis than spending billions on its failed drug policy?

• (1215)

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Speaker, our government is investing in Canadians. We are investing in our youth. We are investing in the future for everybody. Part of this investment is also to fight against drug overdoses. Our government has invested significant funds to help fight this scourge on our society. We will continue to fight and to provide for Canadians, going as far and giving as much as we can.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed my colleague's speech.

It is clear that this budget is mostly about interfering in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

Now, let us talk about something that strictly concerns the federal government. I am talking about tax evasion. We are often told that the government will seek to collect as much revenue as possible, yet tens of billions of dollars are being lost to government revenues because of tax evasion right here in Canada.

I have a very simple question for my colleague: What measure is in this budget to recover the money lost to tax evasion?

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question.

As he knows, many programs have been put in place to combat tax evasion. We will continue to work to prevent tax evasion so that everyone pays their fair share when it comes to paying taxes and contributing to Canadian society.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, here we are, on the eve of the Day of Mourning. Every year, we honour those who have died or been injured at work. I want to give a shout-out to United Steelworkers in Port Alberni, which hosted Sunday's event in my riding, as well as to the others from labour who hosted in communities in Courtenay and Parksville.

As we honour those workers, it is critical that we support workers who are injured. We know that if workers who have been injured in the workplace do not return to work within 12 months, they have a 1% chance of ever returning to work. Right now there are 1.2 million Canadian workers who are not working. We need to unlock their potential and support them by accommodating them when they are injured at work, to get them back to work immediately.

The Budget

We have a historic program for returning to work through Pacific Coast University, a disability management program that the government started, but the government did not renew it. Is the government going to renew the disability management program with Pacific Coast University, or is it going to abandon workers?

Ms. Anju Dhillon: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, budget 2024 is proposing a new Canada disability benefit to supplement provincial and territorial benefits in order to increase the financial well-being of over 600,000 working-age persons with disabilities. This is just the start. We will continue to put more programs in place so we can help workers in this situation, as well as people with disabilities, so that they too can have an equitable chance at life in Canada in their future.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and to talk about Budget 2024.

It is interesting that what we often hear from our colleagues across the aisle is, "Who made this mess? Whose fault is all of this? What is the problem here? When we figure out who did all this, there is going to be big trouble." We know clearly that after nine years of the NDP-Liberal coalition, it is their fault. They did this.

I have three children, who are grown now, and two grandchildren. When my children were growing up, there was a kids' show, and maybe this is where the Liberals get their ideas, called *The Big Comfy Couch*. The female character would say, "Who made this big mess?" and look around, wondering who did it. Of course we all knew who made the big mess. The show went on to have a "10-second tidy", and maybe that is what the Liberals are trying to do here: tidy up their mess. However, on the TV show, of course, what they did was stuff things under the couch cushions, etc., but everybody knew the mess was still there, and I think that is where we are on behalf of Canadians. Canadians know who made the mess and that there is still a mess, even though the Liberals have just hidden things here and there.

Canadians know that the debt is now over \$1.2 trillion, which is a number that is hard to understand for most of us. What is a trillion dollars? What does it look like? One of my great colleagues, the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies made a fantastic video, which I would encourage every member of the House to have a look at, to put it in perspective. What is \$100,000? What is a million dollars? What is a billion dollars? What does it look like? What is a trillion dollars? What is the difference?

The Budget

Perhaps it is easier to understand that the debt on a per-Canadian basis is almost \$31,000. We have heard this multiple times this morning from many of the eloquent speeches that have been given here, and we know that the cost to service the debt now is \$54 billion. On a radio show this morning, I said that, of course, that is more than \$1 billion a week. People often think that we are saying it is \$54 million, but no; it is \$54 billion, which is more than we spend as a federal government on Canada health transfers to the provinces to attempt to pay for health care, which I will talk more about. The budget talks about another \$40 billion in new spending in a government that has its foot firmly on the gas pedal of the inflationary fire. Continuing to spend is costing Canadians.

When we look at it, there are problems here that the Liberals refuse to address. The Prime Minister stood in the House and talked about 7,500 new doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners in the sunny ways budgets of days gone by. We now know that almost seven million Canadians do not have access to primary care. We know that wait times are the worst they have ever been in the last 30 years. In 2015, the average wait time from seeing a family doctor to receiving specialist care was 18.3 weeks. 2015 was a milestone year, I might add. In 2017, the wait time went up to 21.2 weeks. In 2019 it was 22.6 weeks, and in 2022, 27.4 weeks. As I said previously, those are the worst wait times Canadians have seen in the last 30 years.

People in Canada have died while on waiting lists. In spite of the fact that my Liberal colleagues do not want to believe facts, by which I am not surprised, last year 17,000 Canadians died while waiting for a procedure or diagnostic test, and not all provinces report these numbers. If we extrapolate from that, one would understand that it could be more than 30,000 Canadians who died waiting for a procedure or diagnostic test in this country.

The numbers do not get any better for gynecological surgery, for which the acceptable wait time is 9.9 weeks. In 2015, it was 16 weeks' waiting, and in 2022 it had doubled to 32.1 weeks. Wait time for neurosurgery in 2015 was 27.6 weeks, and in 2022 it was 58.9 weeks. ER wait time in 2013 was 2.5 hours, and in 2021-22 it was a minimum of four hours.

• (1220)

We also know that many people have suffered while waiting in emergency rooms. Certainly I know that I and my colleagues on this side hear from people who support us. We hear from them almost every day in person, by email and by phone that they are fed up with the system we have, and that it is not working for them. Nonetheless the government continues to spend on other priorities.

The Liberals talk about pharmacare. What they have announced, much to the joy, I am sure, of their NDP masters, is a completed house, when they have yet to even consult an architect. People are presenting themselves to pharmacies and saying, "I am here for my free medications." Of course, what we know is that the NDP-Liberal government will create a new agency at the cost of \$90 million, and over \$30 million a year, and do a consultative process. Sometime down the road there could possibly be a plan, which we know is inferior to the plans that exist at the current time.

Our NDP colleagues often are wanting to say, "Tell us about the coverage that this wonderful plan will have." We know that even

with the supposed formulary that has been announced, it would actually cover less than half of the insulin types that a place like B.C. already does cover. As my Bloc colleagues know very well, health care is within the provincial jurisdiction and not that of the federal government.

We can look at another program, the dental care program, which the Liberals have made multiple attempts with their photo ops to announce how great it is. The Ontario Dental Association has made clear to Canadians, with multiple ads now, a warning that this is not another free program as announced by the NDP-Liberal coalition, but that Canadians would be responsible for 40% to 60% of costs out of their own pocket. Certainly we know that there are many newspapers out there that have stated that this program is toothless, shocking from a government that tried to roll out a program in six months that should have taken seven years.

When we look at this, we see that Canadians are being misled by the current government and not understanding that the program would cost them out of their pocket. We are also very well aware, from multiple consultations with provincial dental associations, that dentists are refusing to sign up for the program because of the significant administrative burden that the government has attached to it.

Sadly, we know that two million Canadians are going to food banks every month. We know that the cost of housing has doubled. In spite of the billions of dollars announced, no houses have been built by the federal NDP-Liberal coalition. We know that higher taxes and more inflationary spending are driving up the cost of everything, and we also know that former Liberal governor of the Bank of Canada David Dodge says that this is the worst budget in 40 years. Again, as many of my colleagues have pointed out, it goes without saying who was in power in 1982.

We know very clearly that there are options out there for Canadians, and we know that Canadians need to make their voices heard, which they do to us on this side of the House every single day. We know that Canadians are dissatisfied. We know that they are hurting. We know that they do not have enough money coming in every month to pay their bills. We know that Canadians are ready for a change, and for that we are forever thankful for their support.

It comes as no surprise that for all those reasons I have outlined, there is absolutely no way I could possibly support the budget. I am quite happy to say that I will not support budget 2024.

• (1225)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is very critical of the government, trying to attribute doctor waiting times to it, but then, toward the end of his speech, the member said that we do not have jurisdiction over that, so it seems to be a bit of a conflict. It is nothing new. There is a lot of conflict within the Conservative Party of Canada.

The Budget

I think of the Diagonal group, a far extreme, right-wing grouping of individuals. The Diagonal is something which the leader of the Conservative Party meets with, and then the Conservatives wonder why Canadians see the Conservative Party as going so far to the right. At the end of the day, it is going to be about chopping government services. When the Conservatives say they are going to fix the budget, let us keep in mind that what they are really going to do is cut programs, including health care. I take exception to a lot of the things that the member has said when he tries to demonstrate that he cares about—

• (1230)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, I did not talk about cutting anything in my speech.

The words that I reflected to the member opposite were those of the Prime Minister, not my Prime Minister, but his, who said that they were going to bring 7,500 doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners. They did not do any of that. They have done none of the things that I outlined in my speech.

I think that Canadians, as I said in my opening remarks, know the difference. Canadians know when one announces things and takes pictures but does nothing; Canadians are tired of that.

Canadians are ready for a change, and we know that this side of the House will be ready to provide that change.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I would like his opinion on a certain budget matter. Nothing in this budget addresses the situation facing our seniors by trying to correct what was done before. In fact, the government created two classes of seniors: Those aged 65 to 75 and those 75 and over.

Bill C-319, however, was studied, unanimously passed in committee and sent back to the House last March. It is awaiting a third reading, passage through the Senate and royal assent. I would like to know whether my colleague and his party plan to vote in favour of Bill C-319 so that it can be passed quickly.

Otherwise, if the Conservative Party were to form the next government, what position would it take on the situation of seniors?

[English]

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, we know that the Liberal-NDP coalition is out of time and out of ideas. One thing that has happened on this side of the House multiple times is that, when Conservatives put out fantastic ideas, the coalition wants to take those ideas and incorporate them into its own budgets.

This is exactly what happened in last year's fall economic statement, when Liberals took an idea that I had and incorporated it into the fall economic statement.

Granted, it was a great idea. We know that the NDP-Liberal government, as I said, is out of ideas and out of time. If we go ahead and suggest what we are going to do in the future, there is a very

good likelihood that it would co-opt the wonderful ideas that we have on this side of the House to help support Canadians.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, we continue to hear Conservatives rise in the House and tell us that people in British Columbia are covered for diabetes medication.

Becky, from my riding, wrote, “Our out-of-pocket costs for my son's insulin and devices come to just over \$11,000 per year. It is so expensive sometimes that the pharmacy calls me to give me a heads-up about how much an order will be, as if we have an option. Without it, he will die. Something like national pharmacare would be a game-changer for us.”

Why are the Conservatives trying to block pharmacare and insulin for Becky and her kid?

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, what Conservatives are pointing out to voters is that the NDP-Liberal coalition, and specifically the NDP part of that coalition, has sold itself out to help support its leader. All it has done is continue to support the Liberal government over the last nine years and ongoing difficulties—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, as the Speaker has already ruled, false titles, such as that which the member is trying to put forward, are not appropriate for the House of Commons. There is no coalition and he certainly understands—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I understand that the hon. member raised some additional information. The Speaker has not ruled on it yet. He will be bringing forward a ruling.

The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, I think it is very clear, by the interventions attempted by the NDP of the NDP-Liberal coalition, that all it is doing is trying to support its own political future in Canada. Once again, Canadian voters know better than that. They can see clearly through the thin veil that the NDP part of the coalition has presented.

They are not going to fall for their shady tactics anymore.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There was a word in there that I would just be mindful of, which the hon. member used. I would ask him to be very careful with regard to the words that he uses in the House here.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is rising on a point of order.

• (1235)

Mr. Peter Julian: The member should withdraw and apologize.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would ask the member to withdraw the word that he used.

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, I am unsure which word you are referring to, but—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The one that started with the letter “S”.

The Budget

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, I am not sure what the “S” word is. I apologize for not knowing which—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Maybe the hon. member can approach the Chair. I am not going to repeat the word, but he can approach the Chair, I can tell him and then he can go back and apologize.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise in the House on behalf of the great people of southwest Saskatchewan.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. You have directed a member of Parliament to approach the Chair. I would hope that he would do that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will give him a couple of minutes to get over here.

The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, as a member from British Columbia, I want to let you know that I support you in your role and believe you can run the House as Speaker and do not need multiple reminders from other members from British Columbia.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate that.

I will ask the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester to come and see me.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, it is fantastic to be able to rise once again on behalf of the great people of the province of Saskatchewan, particularly the people in the southwest corner, whom I have the privilege of representing.

Right off the top, I want to just talk about the month of May, which is MS Awareness Month. One of the big asks of the MS community, in particular by MS Canada, is to have the government fund \$15 million towards research on the disease, as well as the prevention and repair side of things, for people who suffer with MS.

Normally, I do not get up to ask the government to spend more money, because we know the Liberals are fantastic at spending boatloads of money and accomplishing nothing with it. However, in this particular case, we know that there is over \$3.4 billion in costs to the government and in lost wages by people who suffer from MS. A \$15-million investment would actually result in a tremendous amount of savings for the government for the taxpayer. It would also result in a higher quality of life for people who suffer from MS.

I just wanted to start off my budget speech by mentioning that. If the Liberals were truly listening to what Canadians want and would like to see, this is something that they could have included in this budget to make sure that they are actually working to better the lives of people in Canada. Canada has the highest rates of people

who suffer from MS in the world, with my wife being one of those people as well.

I could not help but notice in the budget that there is a very small amount listed for agriculture. In fact, I believe that agriculture is first mentioned on page 131 of the budget, and it continues for the next page and a half.

One of the issues in the budget concerns the livestock tax deferral. I just want to talk about that briefly, because a lot of ranchers in my riding have been dealing with drought-like conditions for the last number of years, which is nothing new. We live in southwest Saskatchewan, a part of the country where rain has never been a feature. It is not something that we regularly get, so it is not new for us to have drought-like conditions.

There is a government program called the livestock tax deferral. What happens is that the local RM has to declare a state of disaster. Then the government takes a look at the rainfall and the forage percentage over the year to see if it has fallen below 50%, I believe. There is quite a process involved in implementing or triggering the livestock tax deferral. Clarification around that would go a long way to help producers to have more certainty in their industry. An issue too, though, is that the livestock tax deferral can only be used for one year. We know that, in Saskatchewan, it sometimes takes more than one year for one's pasture to regenerate. A lot of producers and organizations, such as the Canadian Cattle Association and the Saskatchewan cattle association, are saying that allowing the livestock tax deferral to be used over a period of three years would actually be a lot more beneficial. It would allow for better environmental protection and for pastures to be able to regenerate.

My riding name is Cypress Hills—Grasslands. The “grasslands” part of the name comes from the fact that we have some of the largest amounts of still untouched native prairie grass in my part of the country. It has not been broken up. It has been grazed for years. Buffalo used to be the keystone species there; they have since been reintroduced to the grasslands. Cattle have done a tremendous job of being the keystone species in the grasslands.

For ranchers who have native prairie grass on their ranch, in their rotation, it is of huge value to them to be able to preserve that grass. When ranchers sell their herd, they will get the one-year livestock tax deferral. If they are forced to rebuy and to spend more on cattle to get them back on the land, there will be a degradation of that land. Having a three-year window would actually allow for the pasture to properly regenerate. Even if there is only a small amount of rainfall, that three-year time window would allow for better regeneration of the pasture. The environment would be taken care of in a way that would allow producers to purchase cattle, regrow the land once again and keep that keystone species on the land as well.

• (1240)

That is something that would happen with the livestock tax deferral. If the government were truly listening to the producer groups it mentions in the budget, then that is something it would actually be talking about and looking to implement. After nine years, it definitely has not done that.

The Budget

One of the other parts about it, which actually took up about a page of the page and a half in that, is the government's commitment to starting consultations, once again, on interoperability. It is really funny that this is in there. I had the privilege to sponsor Bill C-294, which is an act to amend the Copyright Act for interoperability. There are many fantastic short-line manufacturers in Saskatchewan, and quite frankly all across this country, that make great agricultural products. They also make products for other industries, but I am going to focus on the agricultural side of it.

It is funny that this section is included in the "Affordable Groceries" section of the budget. The government is finally realizing that when agriculture is treated with respect and producers are allowed to grow food in the most economical way, if we let them have a choice, they will be able to grow food in a more efficient manner, which, in the long run, is going to have a positive impact on the price of groceries and hopefully lead to groceries being more affordable.

However, Bill C-294 was tabled over two years ago and still has not received royal assent. It did pass this House about a year ago now, and nothing has been done with it so far. In the 2023 budget, the government said it was going to start consultations then. It still has not done it. In 2024, it is once again committing to starting consultations, in June. It has a specific time frame in which it wants to start consultations, but given its previous track record of not doing it, we will wait and see what actually happens.

What would be even better is if Bill C-294 were able to get royal assent. My bill passed the House of Commons unanimously. When it went through committee stage, we were able to accept a friendly government amendment to the bill, which put it a bit more in line with some of the government's priorities but with the law as well. This is important because we want as much certainty as we can possibly get, even though we had done some legal work in the buildup to the bill. We accepted that friendly amendment. This is a bill that is non-controversial, but it is something that would get things done. It would have a whole-of-economy effect and impact.

If the government wants to go through consultations, I am going to make it even simpler. What the government can do is go back and read the report that was done by the government branch that used to be called Western Economic Diversification, which is now PrairiesCan. The government can go back and read the report, which was released in 2020, on this very issue. What it will find in that report is the economic impact that agricultural manufacturing has across the entire country. This is not just a southern Saskatchewan issue; this is a whole-of-Canada issue.

The government can read that report. It can see the dollar value assigned to it. It can see how every single province benefits from it. It is a nation-building exercise. It does not even have to do the consultations; that has already been done. The government department already did the report. The government can read it. The consultations are done.

We are counting on the Senate passing and giving royal assent to Bill C-294 as quickly as possible.

If the government wants to impact the price of groceries, what it could also do is have this House pass Bill C-234 in its original

form. It came back from the Senate with a huge amendment that gutted the original intent of the bill, which was to put an exemption in place for all on-farm buildings for all types of fuel, which is important when we consider greenhouses, dairy barns, chicken barns and pig barns. There is a huge level of cost that goes into running those facilities with the carbon tax, so passing Bill C-234 in its original form would have a huge impact on the Canadian economy. It would have a huge impact on the price of food.

Removing the carbon tax in its entirety would be beneficial as well, when we look at the transportation costs and the costs to the grocery stores. It is a huge detriment, so scrapping the carbon tax altogether would also be of huge benefit, and I do not see any of that in the budget either.

• (1245)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to questions and comments, I want to apologize to the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester. I asked him to withdraw a word. The sound of that word came over here and I thought he had said the S-word, but it turns out he said the word "shady" and not what I thought he had said. I had that double-checked and I apologize to the hon. member. He does not have to withdraw that word.

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, the Conservatives like to believe that they represent rural Canadians. What is interesting is that, within the fall economic statement, we have the doubling of the top-up for the rural carbon rebate. That is not passing because the Conservative Party continues to filibuster that legislation, the fall economic statement.

When we think of the private member's bill that the Conservatives constantly make reference to, with Senate amendments, it is the Conservative Party again that has the ability to bring that legislation before us, and it has chosen not to.

On the one hand, the Conservatives are being critical of the government; on the other hand, they are preventing rural communities from getting more breaks from Ottawa.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, we actually asked for unanimous consent to pass the bill in its original form, but the Liberal member for Waterloo denied that unanimous consent, so maybe the parliamentary secretary wants to talk to his colleague and find out why she would have done that.

When it comes to the doubling of the rural top-up, sure, it is fantastic that more money is going to people, but it still does not deal with the problem that the government is taking the money away from people and then giving it back to them. When we look at the buried-in costs of the carbon tax throughout the economy, it still does not add up to the amount of money that people are paying, particularly people in rural Canada. It was actually an admission of failure on the government's part that it had to double the top-up in the first place.

The Budget

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has never voted in favour of a Liberal budget or its updates since 2019, or even since 2015.

We intend to carry on as usual and vote against this budget. One reason why we are doing that concerns the ongoing subsidies paid to the oil and gas industries, which rake in record profits. Does my colleague not consider it indecent to fund the oil and gas sector, which is making record profits at the expense of Canadians, the same Canadians he claims to care about?

[English]

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, the natural resources committee actually did a study on subsidies for the oil and gas industry. We found that, with the exception of the government purchasing the Trans Mountain pipeline, which it did not need to do, because if it had allowed the private sector proponents to build it themselves, it would have come in way under cost compared to what the government had to spend on it, there are no subsidies. Of all the witnesses who were called before the committee, nobody could actually point to a single subsidy in existence.

It is important that we have a true, factual discussion on this. I know the Bloc does not like the oil and gas industry in Canada, and that is fine. It can be that way. When we look at the revenue that the oil and gas industry brings into our communities and small towns, the dollars raised from that industry in particular pay for our schools, hospitals, policing and infrastructure. Removing that industry from this country, as the Bloc wants to do, would be removing the funding model for schools, hospitals, infrastructure and policing. Why would we ever do that?

• (1250)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, first nations across Canada are facing a housing crisis, a crisis that did not just happen but is the result of years of Conservative and Liberal underfunding of housing on reserve. The Auditor General recently revealed that first nations in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta have been underfunded based on incorrect census information.

Does the member agree that significantly more money must be invested in housing by the federal government, housing on reserve in particular, and in the Prairies where chronic underfunding based on wrong census data has been identified?

Mr. Jeremy Patzer: Madam Speaker, we can spend months talking about that issue because it is a very important issue. In my limited amount of time, I will say that the fact that census data is incorrect shows that nobody trusts the government. Nobody wants to give the government accurate information because nobody trusts it. Maybe if the government spent more time trying to build trust rather than destroy it, we would have more accurate information so we can get programs like housing on reserve correct.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the very passionate and hard-working member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

I rise today to speak to budget 2024. This budget represents a significant step forward in achieving the goals set by our govern-

ment to uplift Canadians and build a stronger, safer nation. Our government's plan is to build a Canada that works better for everyone, but particularly those from the younger generation, so they can have a fair chance at a good middle-class life.

Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio is well below that of our G7 peers. Our deficits are declining, and we are one of only two G7 countries rated AAA by at least two of three independent credit experts.

In my speech today, I will touch on how our plan entails taking bold action to build more homes faster and help make life more affordable.

The urgent need for more housing in our country cannot be overstated. Every Canadian, regardless of their background, should have the opportunity to find a safe and affordable place to call home. Every generation deserves a fair, healthy future, from children to parents and grandparents. To make that future a reality, we are tackling a generational housing challenge. That is why we are providing a \$400-million top-up to the \$4-billion housing accelerator fund, which is already fast-tracking the construction of over 750,000 new homes over the next 10 years, thanks to agreements with nearly 180 municipalities, provinces and territories, including Surrey, British Columbia.

We will build more rental apartments faster, with an additional \$15 billion in new loan funding for the apartment construction loan program, bringing the program's total to over 131,000 new homes within the next eight years. In budget 2024, our government is proposing a new secondary suite loan program, which would enable homeowners to access up to \$40,000 in low-interest loans to add secondary suites in their homes, whether it be for a new tenant or a family member.

Through the new Canada housing infrastructure fund, our government will accelerate the construction and upgrading of infrastructure in support of building new homes. For first-time homebuyers, we will enhance the homebuyers' plan by increasing the withdrawal limit from \$35,000 to \$60,000, allowing individuals to use the tax benefit of an RRSP to save up to \$25,000 more for a down payment. We will provide incentives to Canada's educational institutions so they can build more student housing by ensuring they benefit from the removal of the GST on new student residences.

In order to build more homes, we must have the workforce in place and provide the human resources that are necessary. That is why we propose to streamline foreign credentials recognition in the construction sector and create more apprenticeship opportunities to help skilled trades workers build more housing.

This year's budget will drive our economy toward growth that lifts everyone up. We will launch a new national school food program to expand existing provincial and territorial school food programs so we can provide healthy meals to over 400,000 children each year. This will ensure that children do not arrive at school hungry.

● (1255)

With the implementation of the national pharmacare program, our government is taking the first steps toward launching a program that will ensure that cost is not a barrier for those needing medication for illnesses such as diabetes.

When it comes to public safety, every Canadian has the right to feel safe. No one should feel targeted for who they are or the religion they believe in. Freedom to practice religion without discrimination or persecution is a charter-protected right, and our government is taking action to uphold this right.

To help people feel safe in practising their faith, the security infrastructure program provides funding to organizations to protect communities at risk of hate-motivated crime by enhancing physical security at their gathering places. As part of Canada's action plan on combatting hate, budget 2024 proposes \$32 million over six years, and \$11 million ongoing, for Public Safety Canada to further enhance the security infrastructure program. We will cut red tape to make it easier and more efficient for organizations to access the security support they need.

Our government has been committed to investing in the middle class, and the budget continues to show that commitment.

Today is the last day of April, which also means it is the last day of Sikh Heritage Month. Because of an act I introduced as a private member's bill, which received royal assent five years ago today, Canada is the only country in the world to have Sikh Heritage Month enshrined in law. With that being said, I am extremely proud of the work being done by the members of the Sikh caucus, and particularly I want to mention the hon. member for Steveston—Richmond East.

The Liberal caucus has worked hard to secure funding for three projects across Canada that became a priority. This includes nearly \$20 million in funding for these three important projects throughout Canada, including \$1.8 million for Indus Media Foundation to complete its Canadian heritage short film that highlights the shared military heritage of World War I and World War II that sparked Sikh settlement in Canada. This project, led by Steve Purewal, will showcase contributions to Canada's settlement history and establish a proud patriotic identity for future generations to come.

Budget 2024 stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to the well-being and prosperity of all Canadians. It is a comprehensive road map that addresses the pressing needs of our nation by making life more affordable for individuals and families. When it comes to making life more affordable, when I go around to the annual Nagar Kirtan in Surrey or I go door knocking in Surrey—Newton, the people are always appreciative. Whether it is \$10-a-day day care, dental care or pharmacare, all of those policies we are bringing in to help the middle class and the ones who need them most are very well appreciated.

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I urge all members to support the timely implementation of this budget and to work together to ensure that the transformative vision outlined in budget 2024 is realized.

● (1300)

[Translation]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government's budget states the following: "To keep our streets safe today and tomorrow, the federal government banned assault-style firearms in 2020".

First of all, that is not true. The government banned certain assault-style firearms, but not all of them. There are still several models in circulation. Furthermore, it says it will invest \$30.4 million over two years to implement its gun buyback program, starting with those belonging to retailers and individuals. In 2021, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that the Liberal gun buyback program would cost a minimum of \$750 million. Even then, he said it was difficult to estimate. According to experts, it could cost \$2 billion.

I wonder what the government is trying to accomplish with that \$30 million. Can my colleague explain the government's thinking behind that investment?

[English]

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, when it comes to banning military-style assault rifles, our government has shown leadership.

This issue is very important to my constituents as well. It was much appreciated when we banned those assault rifles. Even though the Conservative Party never supported this or the buy-back program, we are committed to that. We are committed to buying those rifles back and to taking them off the streets so that people can be safe.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to point out that military-style weapons are only used by the military. I have no idea what the member is talking about when it comes to that.

One thing we absolutely do not support is the budget provisions around safe supply in British Columbia. The Government of British Columbia came to Ottawa to ask for changes to that particular agreement. Conservatives do not believe decriminalization is helping people. We see families affected. Nurses have lodged complaints about drugs in our hospitals that are putting their lives at risk. We are seeing disorder in our streets. People cannot stop at bus stops anymore, because people are using drugs there.

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I would like to know the member's position. Does he support safe supply? Does he want to maintain the current decriminalization, the exemption in the Criminal Code, for British Columbia?

• (1305)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member from British Columbia whether he supports banning assault rifles to make our communities safer. Does he support banning handguns to keep our communities safer? All police forces have come together in my part of the neighbourhood to support those initiatives.

I would also like to tell the hon. member that the safe consumption sites work. People who have mental health issues can go to those safe consumption sites and use them so that their lives can be safer. These are the things that first responders tell me, and I am sure the member is not listening to those first responders.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canada is faced with a housing crisis. The NDP forced the Liberal government to take some action with respect to that in budget 2024. However, that is not good enough. As the government gives with one hand, it is taking with the other. The rent-geared-to-income subsidies funded by CMHC to provinces and territories will end for many of those programs. That means we will lose thousands of homes because of the ending of these rent-geared-to-income subsidies.

Will the member call on the government to renew the rent-geared-to-income subsidies from CMHC for all non-profits?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Vancouver East for the passionate work that she does for her constituents, and not only for her constituents but for the people who need it most.

When it comes to investments in housing, this is the first budget that has ever made historic investments in housing, which we will continue to make so that affordable housing can be the dream of future generations.

[Translation]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to represent the people of Châteauguay—Lacolle, soon to be Châteauguay—Les Jardins de Napierville.

Budget 2024, tabled on April 16, proposes a suite of measures to make life easier for all Canadians. It addresses the needs of today while looking to the future as well. That is why we are talking about fairness for every generation. We heard from and listened to citizens from across the country, and budget 2024 reflects the needs that they expressed. After listening to my constituents, I am very proud to say that this budget puts housing, health and inclusion front and centre. It proposes a Canada where young people can get ahead, where young families can find affordable housing, where seniors can age with dignity and where everyone can succeed.

One thing we urgently need is housing. The budget proposes an array of measures that will help build more homes. As we know, the best way to make home prices more affordable is to build more housing faster. We are reducing red tape, fast-tracking development, converting public lands to housing and using innovative tech-

niques to build homes more efficiently. In other words, we are changing the way homes are built in Canada.

More than 1,700 post offices could be leveraged to build housing while maintaining Canada Post services, for example. We are making it easier for renters, especially millennials and gen Z, to buy a home. We will help them save for a down payment tax-free. We are giving renters credit for rental payments so they will have a better chance of qualifying for their first mortgage. We are protecting affordable housing while creating thousands of new units across Canada.

These measures are in addition to the FHSA program, which we announced last year and which has already enabled tens of thousands of young Canadians to begin saving for a down payment on their first home. This program allows participants to save up to \$8,000 a year, which is tax-deductible. After five years, they can take the money out without having to pay tax on it. It is a fantastic program. I encourage all of the young people tuning in today to open an FHSA at a financial institution near them. The program will make a huge difference for young families who, until now, have been unable to purchase a first home because of difficulty raising the down payment.

Building more homes also requires building more water, waste water and stormwater infrastructure. We understand that building these new homes will create considerable additional costs for municipalities. Budget 2024 launches the new Canada housing infrastructure fund, which will provide \$6 billion to Infrastructure Canada over 10 years starting in 2024-25 in order to accelerate the construction of this infrastructure. That is great news for our region.

• (1310)

[English]

Our commitment to fairness for every generation is also seen in our fight against homelessness. I am sure I am not giving members any news when I say that it is not a level playing field for everyone here in Canada. That is why Reaching Home, Canada's homelessness strategy, is a community-based program that is so important. It is aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada. This program provides funding to urban, indigenous, rural and remote communities to help them address their local homelessness needs.

Budget 2024 proposes to provide more than \$1 billion in supplementary estimates over four years, starting in 2024-25. It also provides \$250 million over two years to address the urgent issue of encampment and homelessness.

Reaching Home supports the goals of the national housing strategy, in particular to support the most vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable and affordable housing and to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by fiscal year 2027-28. That is equity.

[Translation]

We are making life cost less and strengthening Canada's social safety net for every generation. Ten-dollar-a-day child care, which we have had for a long time in Quebec, is already saving parents thousands of dollars a year and giving young Canadians the security they need to start a family of their own.

New programs like dental care and the national school food program will also help Canadians. By the way, just this morning, the Conservatives were talking about fifth graders. I wonder if they are prepared to say no to these children who go to school hungry in the morning. Perhaps we should ask them why they will be voting against our budget, which will enable these kids to eat well every day.

We are also very proud of our pharmacare program, especially for insulin and contraceptives, which will help Canadians save even more money. I recently had the opportunity to tour my riding and talk about the Canadian dental care plan, and I saw first-hand how badly this program is needed in our communities. People have signed up in droves. This program will make a difference for many seniors, people like our parents and grandparents, who often unintentionally neglect their oral health because they cannot afford to go to a dentist. People tend to underestimate the impact that poor oral health can have on overall health. This program will also ease the burden on emergency rooms, since many ER visits are related to oral health.

• (1315)

[English]

Scientific research has recently linked poor oral hygiene to certain health problems, including periodontal disease, gum disease, and diabetes, heart and respiratory diseases. These findings highlight the importance of good oral hygiene.

[Translation]

We are using innovation and fairness to grow the economy. We have a plan that will increase investment, enhance productivity, and encourage the kind of game-changing innovation that will create good jobs and keep Canada at the economic forefront. This includes expanding and implementing key economic investment tax credits to help build the green economy, cement Canada's position as a leader in the field of artificial intelligence and invest in improving enhanced research support. All of this is really important. We will help people enhance their life's potential while creating an economic environment that is full of opportunities for them. We need this young generation, there is no denying it.

I see that my time is nearly up. In closing, I would just mention one very important thing for farmers in my region. We have announced measures to help farmers by increasing the interest-free limit on loans under the advance payments program. I look forward to taking my colleagues' questions and discussing this at further length.

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Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for her remarks. For nine years, the government has been pumping money into programs and constantly driving up the debt. Moreover, productivity is in free fall in Canada. The government spends, spends, spends, but we see that people are lining up at food banks, that grocery costs have doubled, and that people are unable to put a roof over their head or pay their mortgage.

I have a question for my colleague. When are we going to see results?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Speaker, I am a bit surprised to hear this coming from a member from Quebec, because we went through years of austerity, service cuts and additional costs for social programs and infrastructure for municipalities. We know how that turned out: Quebec went through a very difficult period.

It is the role of a government, especially the federal government, to invest in the economy to ensure that all Canadians across the country have a desirable quality of life.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, people in Manicouagan have a lot of needs in the fisheries sector.

We have been hit hard lately, and I would say that the future looks bleak. Of course, there was the issue of Mexican temporary foreign workers, who could not come over because of government measures. The government does not think there is a fishing industry here, so it forgot that this would be detrimental to the fishery. Of course, there is the whole issue of shrimp and the fact that shrimpers cannot go out this year. The Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard does not even want to buy back their licences and does not want to compensate them in any way.

In short, the budget is obviously very thin when it comes to fishing. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about her government's plan for fisheries. I would like her to analyze it and to tell me what the government is doing right with this budget and whether she really believes that it is thinking ahead in this area. Personally, I think it is all improvisation and half measures and this government is going nowhere. The fishing industry continues to suffer.

• (1320)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Speaker, I really appreciate the question from my Bloc Québécois colleague, because she is asking how the federal government can help producers in Quebec's fishing industry.

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We are here to support the industry and help it. We have set aside money in the budget to facilitate the arrival of temporary workers. We know there are still problems, but I have confidence in our Minister of Fisheries, who represents the Magdalen Islands.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals promised that their disability benefit would end poverty for people living with disabilities. We have heard my good friend, the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, advocate very hard for the disability community.

As New Democrats, we were expecting a disability benefit that would actually lift people out of poverty. Instead, what they are offered is \$200. That is \$6 a day. It is not even a bus pass in many areas.

Could my colleague maybe explain to people living with disabilities why they could not even offer a disability benefit that would meet the poverty line in our country, to ensure that people living with disabilities could at least have a \$2,000 minimum income a month to try to make ends meet?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Madam Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member that I am an avid advocate for the disability benefit.

Having worked somewhat in this field, though, I am painfully aware that just putting in a benefit at the federal level will not solve the problem. We need to work closely with the provinces and with the other plans that are in place. The worst thing we can do is put in a federal benefit and then have provinces and other private plans withdraw their support.

I am confident that, with this new plan, it is a great start and it is a great day for the disability community.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by stating that I wish to share my time with my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères to speak on this budget.

It is a budget that is a little difficult to characterize and a little difficult to describe. I was going to say that it demonstrates once and for all that there is a deep abyss between Quebec's expectations, Quebec's needs and respect for Quebec's jurisdictions, which Quebecers hold dear, and the expectations of the other nine provinces and three territories as to what the federal government should do, but the federal government gives us plenty of opportunities to demonstrate this over and over again. One example of this deep, historical cultural abyss between what we Quebecers expect and what the rest of the country expects in terms of federal action is the media's treatment of the budget. When we look at how this budget has been treated in English Canada, we see that analysts have focused mainly on the issue of the capital gains tax inclusion rate.

As everyone knows, some people realize huge capital gains. One example is someone who buys a property, sells it several years later and makes more than \$500,000 in profit. Yes, some people do make a lot of money in certain cases. Anyone who makes over \$500,000 in profit has been told that they will have to contribute a little more. Obviously, this is one way for the government to bring in a good

chunk of revenue. This cash grab will help the government keep its promise on the debt-to-GDP ratio, although artificially. Analysts in English Canada are talking about this and wondering whether this is a good tax or a bad tax. What effect will it have on investment? Is it fair? Did the Liberal government do the right thing? Analysts in all the major media outlets have been talking about this.

As an economist, I too asked myself that question. I read the English-language media and I fell into the trap. As members, we are discussing whether it is a bad tax or a good measure. However, at some point, our intellect as Quebecers will lead us in another direction. Regardless of the new sources of revenue the federal government has found, we will start wondering what it is going to do with the money. We will realize that the billions of dollars that the federal government is raking in with a tax measure that may indeed be effective are being used not to balance the budget after the extremely expensive pandemic measures or to restore fairness between generations, but purely to trample on Quebec's rights, to interfere in Quebec's affairs and to meddle not only in areas that are none of the federal government's business, but in jurisdictions in which it is notoriously incompetent, such as health care, dental care and housing.

It is not all that hard for a Quebecer to prepare a speech about the budget because it contains wall-to-wall interference. Let me give what I would call a historic example: In the budget, the federal government has decided to interfere in Hydro-Québec's rate setting. When it comes to housing, we are basically used to it, because it happened gradually. We know about the punishing impact of the health conditions on patients. We know about the consequences of the agreement with the NDP. Now, however, the federal government is placing conditions on Hydro-Québec. How did that happen?

It happened because, in the past, when the federal government was giving out subsidies for energy and for clean energy, it excluded Quebec. It said Quebec was being shut out because Quebec had a Crown corporation that supplied almost 100% of its electricity. It said Quebec would not receive one red cent. Now that there are lots of Bloc Québécois members here, the Liberals know that Quebecers are going to speak in the House. The Conservatives, the Liberal backbenchers and the lone NDP member from Quebec are not going to do it. The federal government said, in last year's budget, that the Quebec government or Hydro-Québec would be able to apply for subsidies for green energy. It was the first time that had happened, so we were surprised. However, the conditions were not met, so not a penny was paid out.

What do we see in this budget? We see conditions. In exchange for subsidies to help Hydro-Québec with its wind and solar projects, the federal government is demanding that it adjust its rate schedule so that 100% of the subsidy is passed on to the consumer.

• (1325)

That is impossible. When I buy electricity, when I receive my bill from Hydro-Québec, I do not know whether it comes from La Romaine or a wind farm in the Gaspé. We do not know where it comes from. It is impossible to enforce, which means that Quebec will very likely once again be excluded from the program.

I see the parliamentary secretary looking at me with one eye wider than the other, as usual, thinking that that was not the intention and that he and his colleagues do not want to hurt Quebec. However, it is once again symptomatic of the fact that they do not understand, because they are not good at this. They are not competent when it comes to energy. Why, then, did they design the subsidy the way they did? They figured they were going to ask polluting provinces to implement green projects. There are a lot of private companies involved, but the government wants to make sure that they do not pocket the money. Consequently, they tell them to develop projects, but to make sure that the green energy is less expensive in order to encourage people to switch over. That is essentially the plan. Then, since the government wants to apply uniform measures and does not recognize that Quebec is different, we have a program that is no good for Quebec and that is literally a violation of Quebec's areas of jurisdiction.

However, that is nothing. What the government calls clean in the rest of Canada is nuclear energy. It believes nuclear energy is clean. The small nuclear reactors that refine oil sands using less oil sand so that they can export more oil sand, that is green. That is what they want to subsidize and facilitate. They will make sure that consumers pay less. This government believes that natural gas is green. Subsidies will go directly to natural gas, as long as there is a carbon capture strategy and technologies that do not exist, except in the Liberals' minds. Here are more measures that are bad for Quebec, and they keep coming.

There is still no health transfer agreement with Quebec. The federal government used to manage a hospital in Quebec. It was a military hospital on Montreal's West Island. When management was transferred to the Quebec government, we heard through the grapevine that managing a hospital cost the federal government three times more than it did the Quebec government, yet the federal government has the gall to come tell us how to manage our health care system. Why? Because they want to be seen doing something and they want a maple leaf on the corner of the cheque. It is the same story with prescription drug insurance, since 100% of Quebecers already have prescription drug insurance. We already have a plethora of programs in Quebec. The money should be given to Quebec. The same applies to dental care, since all Quebec dentists who treat children are registered in Quebec's automated system. If it wanted to implement these programs quickly without making people pay directly, the federal government would have given Quebec the money so that it could do what it is good at. However, that will not happen, because the federal government always wants to be seen to be doing something.

It is the same for housing. The federal government may well have good intentions, but the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Every time this government has gotten involved in housing, there have been fewer units. When it came up with its national housing strategy, it ignored the fact that Quebec was the only

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province that had had permanent social and co-op housing construction programs, among others, for years. The terms and conditions of those programs were familiar to everyone in the field. What did our excellent programs get us when the federal government failed to recognize them? They got us three and half—almost four—years of negotiations, lost years during which people were sleeping in their cars, people in the regions where the housing crisis is spreading. The Liberals keep telling us that the federal government should get involved and impose all kinds of conditions. In my riding, there is a collective dwelling program that has been on pause for eight years because of these complex conditions.

What is the Bloc Québécois asking for? We are asking for the right to opt out with full financial compensation. I will close with that. We are asking that Quebec get its money in areas under its own jurisdiction.

Any member who works for Quebec should agree with that. We have been good sports. Yesterday, we asked for it by means of an amendment to an amendment, but the entire Quebec Conservative caucus said no to Quebec. They turned their backs on Quebec. That is what the members of that caucus are willing to do to one day get a ministerial position. They are willing to grovel. The same goes for the NDP and the Liberals. There is only one party that will consistently defend Quebec's interests and jurisdictions, and that is the Bloc Québécois. People will remember that on election day.

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked on many points, but he forgot to mention the one key thing for Quebec, and that is the knowledge-based sector in Quebec and Montreal. For example, the Montreal-based artificial intelligence industry is leading the world. This budget, to give a couple of examples, would provide \$2 billion toward the AI compute access fund and \$200 million to help sectors like agriculture, manufacturing and minerals to use artificial intelligence in their operations.

Does the member not recognize that this budget would provide for the growth of Quebec's knowledge-based economy and knowledge-based corporate sector so it can be a leader in technology in the world?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, my colleague has the nerve to extol the virtues of a so-called industrial policy that will benefit Quebec, after Honda used massive amounts of federal funding to concentrate the auto industry in Ontario, after a battery plant in Ontario received six times more federal funding than Quebec and after the Liberal Party's life sciences supercluster put our pharmaceutical sector at a disadvantage.

He has the nerve to talk about artificial intelligence when the Minister of Industry introduced a bill that was so inadequate that we are up to about two inches of pages of amendments put forward by the minister himself two years later.

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If that is the centrepiece of the budget that he is trying to sell me, I have one more reason not to buy it.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have seen over the last nine years that our country cannot afford the Prime Minister's budget. I am wondering if the member has any comments on the deficit spending. The Conservatives have noticed that all of the GST that will be collected in the coming year will go only to pay down the interest that is being accumulated on our national debt. I wonder if the member has any thoughts on that.

• (1335)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, during the pandemic, we had to help all sectors, however imperfectly, to prevent them from collapsing. Where were the Conservatives when these expenditures were incurred? They were sitting around the table with Minister Morneau, spending tens, if not hundreds of billions of dollars. If I were the hon. member, when he talks about the nine years of the current government, I would be a bit embarrassed.

He is right about one thing, though, and that is that the federal government will be looking for additional revenue. For me, it is not so much the debt servicing that bothers me, although that is problematic, it is the fact that they are using these revenues to violate Quebec's jurisdictions, to violate the Constitution, to trample on Quebec and interfere in just about everything and nothing, rather than transferring the money to Quebec and letting Quebecers be responsible for their own programs. That is what the members of the official opposition should be outraged about.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member spoke about taxation and the issue around taxes. What I do not see in budget 2024 is a windfall tax, an excessive profit tax, for example. We know there is a high rate of inflation and people are struggling with food prices. We also see a free pass being given to the corporate sector. In fact, the Conservatives and Liberals have aided and abetted this practice and refused to increase the corporate tax rate. If the government increased it to 15% to 20%, that would bring \$16 billion a year into the treasury to support a variety of different measures.

Would the member call for the government to do what is right for all Canadians, which is to put forward an excessive profit tax?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, it is funny. The way the New Democrats talk, one would think that the revenue they want to find would be used to buy virtue.

Every dollar that the NDP is calling for in new taxes will be used to buy a new shoe to better walk all over Quebec, to implement programs that infringe on Quebec's jurisdictions, including health and education, lunch, dental insurance and pharmacare programs. I get the feeling that the member does not understand what the Constitution is all about.

Sadly, I did not bring a copy of the Constitution in both official languages, because otherwise I would have tabled it, after highlighting section 92, which clearly states what the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces are. That way my colleague could read up on that.

I am not sure what I think about these additional revenues to walk all over Quebec.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I am rising on a point of order.

I understand that people are not always happy with what is said in Parliament. That is the nature of our work. However, I just heard the member use the word "disgusting" after my speech. I think that is unacceptable and that she should withdraw her comment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I did not hear what was said. Of course, we can review the tape to see whether it was recorded.

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I do find it offensive for the member to suggest that I do not know about the Constitution. I am a Canadian. I have read the Constitution, and I am proud of the Constitution, and to suggest that I do not know about it—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate. I will certainly ask that we review the tape to see what was actually said, because I did not hear it from this end. I will certainly take it from here.

On another point of order, the hon. member for Drummond.

[Translation]

Mr. Martin Champoux: Madam Speaker, I do understand that what my colleague from Mirabel was saying may have been offensive to the member. However, I think it was entirely within parliamentary standards to say that a member does not seem to understand provincial jurisdictions.

That being said, when the member for Vancouver said the word "disgusting", her microphone was off. That is what my colleague from Mirabel's point of order was about. My colleague from Vancouver, standing up to defend her point, repeated the word "disgusting". I think the very nature of the word should be the subject of this debate.

• (1340)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): As I said, I did not really hear the word. I understand what the member is saying. If that is the word that was used, I want to ensure that people are using words that are acceptable in the House. I can ask the hon. member to withdraw that word, and we can continue the debate.

[English]

I would ask the hon. member for Vancouver East if she is willing to take back the word she had used.

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The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, no, because I do find it offensive for someone to suggest that I do not know anything about the Constitution. I think it is patronizing to suggest that. I think that in suggesting that, it is also disgusting to me.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members to be extremely careful. I will have the tape reviewed just to see how the word was used.

Again, I would remind members to be very careful with the words being said. I do not know the context. I understand what the word was, but I do not know if it was used to say that the member was disgusting or whether it was that what he was proposing was disgusting. I will listen to what was said and then I will come back to the House.

The hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin: Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I do not think that it is necessary to listen to the recordings because we all heard the member repeat the word three times.

The question is whether or not, in your opinion, the word “disgusting” is acceptable in the House. If it is unacceptable, then you must take immediate action. Every time you give the member the opportunity to explain herself, she says, rightly or wrongly, that it is up to you to decide, that that is what she said, that she believed it and that it was appropriate in the circumstances.

I would ask you to take what she said and decide whether in your opinion it is acceptable in the House for someone to say that what they are hearing is “disgusting” or if it is unacceptable—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the hon. member and the other members who made interventions.

The word in and of itself is not unacceptable. What matters is the way the word is used. As I said, using that word to describe an event is not the same as using that word to talk about an individual. That is what I said earlier. The word in and of itself is not inappropriate for the House; it is the way these words are used in the House that matters. As I said, I will listen to the recording to determine how this was said and I will come back to the House if necessary.

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

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, since we are talking about the budget, my speech today will focus on the most recent budget, which was tabled by the Liberal government exactly two weeks ago today.

Before I talk about the budget itself, I want to take a moment to give a little background. I want to talk about the context in which this budget was introduced. I would imagine that the government was aware that the polls were not in its favour during the period leading up to the tabling of the budget. Members of the Liberal Party were surely aware that the Prime Minister's popularity was plummeting. In such a context, I would imagine that people got together to have a discussion and figure out what they could do about it.

They came up with a solution. They realized that the situation was so dire that they had to make people forget just how dire things were, so they decided to create a diversion. They decided to talk about something else, to make people look elsewhere, so that they would not look at the government's track record, or the current situation, and instead look at what was being announced and proposed.

As we know, the Liberals are not going to reinvent the wheel. Their solution was to encroach heavily on areas under Quebec's jurisdiction, just to be original. Perhaps we can say they were indeed original, in spite of everything, because they had never gone as far as they did in this budget.

They decided to promise so many billions of dollars that everybody would be happy and nobody would notice anything. It would be so much money that people would not even notice anything else. Well, it did not work. Liberal strategists saw that selfies were not working anymore and decided to try a budget striptease to change things up. We are here to speak out against all of this.

The Bloc Québécois has submitted proposals to the government. For example, rather than the approach it has taken, we would have liked to see money for seniors aged between 65 and 75, who do not receive the same old age security benefit as those aged 75 and over. We believe that everyone should receive a decent pension that covers their expenses. Everyone has rent to pay and food to buy. All retirees have similar expenses, regardless of their age.

However, the Liberals went a different way. We proposed other things. For example, we suggested putting an end to funding oil companies. The Liberals say that they will do it eventually. When they were elected in 2015, that promise was part of their platform. It is still part of their platform today. Maybe it will still be part of their platform in 2050 or 2100.

Unfortunately, in spite of everything, we were realistic. When we proposed these things, we suspected that the Liberals would go in a different direction. Still, we took a chance and hoped they would listen to us and do as we asked.

At the very least, we wanted them to do one thing. We know the Liberals have a habit of encroaching on areas of jurisdiction that are not theirs. We told them that if they did that, they had to give Quebec the right to opt out with full compensation. Again, the answer was no. I think the vote itself was even more telling: It looks as though the other parties in the House agree with the Liberal position.

The reason they said no is not hard to understand, because the only jurisdictions the Liberals are interested in are the ones that do not belong to them. In fact, they solved that problem with their budget: Jurisdictions no longer exist for the Liberal government. The solution was simple. They just made daddy's Constitution go poof.

The Budget

Being Prime Minister is not enough for the member for Papineau. He decided to become premier of all 10 provinces and three territories and mayor of all municipalities across Canada to boot. Not bad, eh? That is what this budget is all about. We have a Prime Minister who is Canada's new self-proclaimed king. He is the one who will run Quebec's health care system. He is going to show up at long-term care facilities and tell them how to run a long-term care facility. He is going to show up at dental offices and tell them how to run a dental office as well, even though Quebec already has programs to help people. He is going to show up at hospitals to tell people how to run their hospitals, while also telling them that he is not going to give them any more money.

• (1345)

In fact, he is going to show up practically everywhere. He will show up in cities and decide what new urban planning rules they have to follow. He will even decide how land is taxed, which is a big deal. He will tax land in the cities, even though it is a municipal jurisdiction. He will even go so far as to manage school cafeterias. Just imagine.

His own affairs hold no interest for him. What interests him is our affairs. It reminds me a bit of the know-it-all kid at school, who always told everyone else how they should do things, even though nothing he himself did ever worked out right. Do not ask Ottawa to print a passport. Ottawa is not interested in doing it and not capable of doing it. Do not ask Ottawa to manage borders either, because it is not interested or capable. If something is Ottawa's responsibility, Ottawa is not interested. It is that simple.

In fact, for years, I had a hard time understanding the Prime Minister's fascination with the monarchy. Now I am starting to understand it a bit more. The king is someone who is not accountable to the public. He is not accountable to anyone but himself and God because it is God who made him king. It could be Allah, Buddha or Yahweh, or whatever we want to call it. He is accountable to a higher power, hence the idea of fighting secularism and Bill 21 and the idea of Islamic mortgages in the budget. In the Liberals' postnational world, every religion has its own banks with their own rules. It is not up to the government to establish the rules. No, it is up to the religions. If someone is Christian, they will go to the Christian bank. If they are Muslim, they will go to the Islamic bank, and if they are Jewish, then they will go to the Jewish bank. Living together in harmony is wonderful, is it not? This will be called positive segregation: a monarchical and theocratic postnational state.

Obviously, I am being facetious, but I do not think this government is headed in a very good direction. The sad thing is that it is not a joke, because it is in the budget. That is the direction this government is heading in. Naturally, any Quebecker who reads this budget and sees that will want to get out of here, because it makes no sense. It is clear that we need independence. Without independence, soon we will not even have provincial jurisdictions. There will be no more Government of Quebec, no more municipal governments. Ottawa will be the last one standing. Ottawa will call all the shots.

Does nobody care about jurisdiction? That is what we really need to ask ourselves, because that is what the Prime Minister is telling

us. He says people do not care about jurisdiction, but I do not buy it.

Let us look at how the government manages its affairs, and take the ArriveCAN app as an example. It should have cost \$80,000 to design, but it ended up costing \$60 million, and we are not even sure if that is the real figure yet. Two guys in a basement managed to rack up \$250 million in government contracts and line their pockets at taxpayers' expense. Soldiers are being forced to go out and buy their own boots because the government cannot supply them. The Phoenix payroll system cannot pay public servants. Federal wharves and train stations are going to rack and ruin. I think people do see these things, and I think they do care about the government's incompetence. The polls are starting to show that pretty clearly.

We can see that the government's attempt to divert attention away from its pitiful track record is not working at all. What we see, in fact, is a government that is completely disoriented and that has lost its way. If we gave it a compass, it would not even know what to do with it.

That is why we are going to vote against this budget. That is why the Bloc Québécois will keep fighting. That is also why we, the members of a separatist party, insist that Quebec needs to be respected, that its jurisdictions are its own and that it can make its own decisions without constantly having another government's decisions imposed on it. It is not for Ottawa to decide how Quebec will run its cities and hospitals. It is not for Ottawa to decide these things. The government's own Constitution says that it must not run these things. The government does not care, but we do. We are going to create our own country.

• (1350)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am disappointed that the Bloc has made the decision to vote against the budget and the budget measures. The best I can tell, from listening to the member across the way, is that the federal government cares enough to develop a pharmacare program, to provide \$200 billion over 10 years to health care and to provide food for hundreds of thousands of children. Does the member not recognize that there is a role for the national government to play in Canada, with respect to education and housing?

I am very proud that the Prime Minister came to Winnipeg and met with the premier and the mayor to make a wonderful announcement on housing. There is nothing wrong with governments working together for the betterment of Canadians. Why is the Bloc so insistent on not having the services Canadians want, and why does it not want the federal government to contribute to them?

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, the member across the way just provided an eloquent demonstration of his government's position, which is to run away, not face reality, not mind its own business, and then tell others how to conduct their business. The reality is that we have child care in Quebec. We have schools in Quebec. We have hospitals in Quebec. They are not perfect, but we are taking care of them. The federal government has none of these things. It is not the one taking care of these things. It is not the one managing these things.

Who are the Liberals to come tell us how to manage our business? Why would a Canadian be better than a Quebecker at managing this?

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

• (1355)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If the hon. parliamentary secretary has another question, he should wait until it is the appropriate time.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, my good friend, Joshua Charleson from Hesquiaht nation, the former elected chief of Hesquiaht nation, who works for Coastal Restoration Society, is here in town to talk about the importance of a restoration economy when it comes to cleaning up our waterways and our oceans.

We had a historic program, a ghost gear fund, that was world class, and the Liberal government cut it out of the budget. It was critical in removing things like polystyrene and fishing gear that infect and that impact our ecosystem. In terms of food security, it had a really big impact on indigenous peoples in particular, on their traditional and cultural needs, and on the blue economy. I know that my colleague lives on a waterway and that he cares deeply about the environment. Is he also disappointed that the Liberal government cut this historic program? Just after we finished an international convention with the United Nations on combatting plastic pollution, what did the government do? It cut historic programs. That is not leadership.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, I do not get the impression that my colleague's question is about the budget. I am not familiar with the program he referred to, but I will be happy to discuss it with him after my speech and this debate, if we get the opportunity.

The question I am asking myself is why we always have an NDP government—or rather an NDP party, but this one is practically a government—that decides to ask the government in power to intervene more and more in Quebec's jurisdictions.

[English]

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the debate that we are having today, but I would ask my colleague specifically if he could provide some re-

The Budget

flections on the fiscal state of our country. Increasingly, we are hearing leading economists around the world suggest that if we continue on this trajectory, it is going to lead to significant pain for future generations of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Madam Speaker, while I share my colleague's concern about the government's colossal deficits and the fact that it may not have a plan for returning to a balanced budget, that does not necessarily make the debt-to-GDP ratio more frightening.

I can understand why my colleague is concerned, but I am more concerned about seeing federal money used for things that are not federal responsibilities and spent in areas of jurisdiction that are not those of the government. Ultimately, my concern is that Ottawa will keep tightening its stranglehold on us and that Quebeckers will not get more for their money.

[English]

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think I have about a minute or so before question period begins. I would like to say first that I will be sharing my time with the member from Saint-Laurent.

Before I get into my budget remarks, which I will save for after question period, I wish to acknowledge someone in the Italian Canadian community, who unfortunately passed away a few weeks ago. Corrado Paina, from the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Ontario, was someone our community held dear to our hearts. He did so much for our community. He was a friend, a mentor and someone I very much enjoyed spending a lot of time with. Corrado Paina was one of a kind. We went to his celebration of life on Friday morning, and several hundred people were there from our community to celebrate a remarkable person who gave back so much to our community.

In 2017, Corrado Paina helped to organize a trip for Italian Canadian businesses to Italy, which I was a part of when the Prime Minister went to Italy for the G7. Much more than that, he was somebody I would stroll with along College Street in downtown Toronto, and we would talk about politics, economics and philosophy. For the last nine years, he always provided a word of advice and always was a great friend. He is missed by myself and by many others.

[Member spoke in Italian]

[English]

I know that Corrado Paina is looking down on many of us, telling us to continue the good work for our community and for all Canadians.

I look forward to resuming the budget debate after question period.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

● (1400)

*[English]***DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the painful events unfolding in Gaza are taking a deep emotional toll on many in Canada, particularly members of Muslim and Jewish communities. We must find ways to disagree peacefully, while respecting the rights of free speech and protest and the right of people to feel safe in their schools and places of worship.

I have heard from many people who are concerned that their charter rights are under threat. There is an effort in our country to marginalize and silence pro-Palestinian voices, as well as to redefine and mislabel cultural symbols, such as the kaffiyeh, as terrorist symbols. This is wrong. It is dishonest and shameful to conflate support for the Palestinian people with support for a terrorist organization.

Like most Canadians, most protesters want to see a ceasefire, humanitarian aid and the return of hostages and prisoners. As the government updates its anti-racism strategy, I urge it to address and define anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab racism.

* * *

POLISH CONSTITUTION DAY

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today as an MP with Polish heritage to join with the Canadian Polonia diaspora to celebrate Polish Constitution Day. This day commemorates the adoption of the constitution on May 3, 1791, which was one of the first modern constitutions on the planet. It shows that, despite occupation, war and Communists, Poles' stand for freedom and democracy has persisted through the centuries.

Last week, Canada and Alberta had the honour of welcoming the President of Poland, who expressed his country's excitement in partnering with Canada, including in our energy future. From LNG to hydrogen and nuclear, the future is certainly bright. When I spoke with President Duda, we both reflected on how our peoples prosper when we simply get the job done.

As we celebrate Polish Constitution Day, and for the first time in Canada, Polish Heritage Month, let us remember the principles of democracy, human rights and the freedom that the constitution of 1791 symbolizes. Happy Constitution Day to all those of Polish descent in Canada and around the world.

* * *

OPIOIDS

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Ottawa and other cities are witnessing unprecedented fatalities from opioids and designer benzodiazepines. These novel substances necessitate an updated approach to our response strategies.

Our children are more than mere numbers. Each increase in overdose fatalities represents someone's child, a family member, a friend. It is crucial to hold to account the drug dealers responsible

for these tragedies. Without facing consequences, they will persist in flooding our streets and endangering our youth.

I would like to recognize Natalie Bergin, Jayne Egan and Janet Tonks for taking the lead and organizing on this important issue. They have set up an organization, Trace the Lace, to find justice for the children who have died from laced drugs. Let us do our part to support Trace the Lace.

* * *

*[Translation]***FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF ÉCOLE CHAVIGNY**

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this year, my high school, École Chavigny, is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

The school welcomed its first student in the 1974 school year. At that time, it was still Polyvalente Chavigny and it was located in a field, far from everything, at the very edge of what was then still known as Trois-Rivières-Ouest.

These days, nearly 2,000 students attend the school each year and a neighbourhood in the city of Trois-Rivières bears the same name. The school is known for its drama program, in which students develop their skills in appreciating, creating and performing a variety of theatre productions. Every year, the theatre graduates have the honour of representing Quebec at a theatre festival abroad. In the same spirit, École Chavigny, a member of the ArtDraLa network, also hosts the Festival international de théâtre francophone AQEFT. A major celebration will be held on May 4 to mark the school's 50th anniversary.

I want to congratulate principal Jonathan Bradley and I hope that he never finds my disciplinary records.

* * *

LOUISE BOURGAULT

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the words that best describe Louise Bourgault are committed and dynamic.

Louise has been at the helm of Sherbrooke's chamber of commerce and industry for 18 years, and anyone who crossed paths with her at a professional event could tell that she never felt obliged to be there simply because of her role. The pleasure she took in her work spoke volumes about the importance she placed on her mission of fostering economic development in Sherbrooke.

We collaborated on various files on several occasions, and her professionalism was second to none. She was always open to suggestions for initiatives, and I specifically remember her involvement in the economic recovery forum we organized together after the first months of the pandemic.

*Statements by Members***WORLD MALARIA MONTH**

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April marks World Malaria Month. Malaria continues to ravage the world and, unfortunately, our country is not spared. Indeed, malaria still claims nearly 500 Canadian lives each year.

When tragedy strikes, some individuals transform hardship into advocacy. This is true of Olugu Ukpai of Halifax, who is on a mission to end malaria after losing his 16-month-old daughter, Miss Goodness Olugu Ukpai, to the disease.

Olugu plays a pivotal role in raising awareness about malaria using drumming demonstrations to engage the public on this pressing issue. He and his family, Goodness's siblings, are famous at home as the uplifting Halifax Multicultural Drummers and they led the commemoration of World Malaria Day on April 16 in Halifax, featuring special guests and drummers from various parts of the African continent. Artists and community members came together to support the cause and engage Halifax in battling this disease.

Awareness of malaria is increasing, and we must maintain momentum. I want to extend my gratitude to Olugu Ukpai for his unwavering dedication.

* * *

● (1410)

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Branden Leslie (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, it has never been more expensive to eat, heat or put a roof over one's head.

The Prime Minister pretends everything is fine, but it is not. He is in complete denial.

We can look at the costs of groceries and homes. No one can afford to live anymore. His record deficits have driven interest rates sky-high, and the dream of home ownership is simply dead.

Canadians are struggling to stay afloat, and what does the Prime Minister offer? He throws them an anvil by raising the carbon tax a whopping 23%. This has increased the price of gas, of groceries and of everything else.

In Canada, millions of people are using food banks. This is not the country I grew up in. It is hardly even recognizable.

It is clear that the Prime Minister is simply not worth the cost. It was not this way before the Prime Minister. It will not be this way after, because Conservatives will bring home lower prices by axing the tax and fixing the budget.

She recently stepped down from her position to enjoy a well-deserved retirement. I wish her every success in her personal projects and I thank her, on behalf of Sherbrooke residents, for her dedication to Sherbrooke's economic development.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following quote is tragic. These words should never be spoken, yet far too often this sentiment is shared: "I'm not angry with my sweet boy, I'm not angry with those who caused him extra suffering. I'm saddened for those people because they don't understand mental illness and I hope they become aware. I'm heartbroken and frustrated we don't have the resources needed for people suffering mental [illness] and for those people watching loved ones suffer. I struggle daily with the fact that my best wasn't good enough. I was unable to keep my son alive."

Faced with the worst situation a mother could imagine, Louri decided to honour the memory of her son Mark by raising awareness of the terrible disease that took her son.

Mental illness, mental health and suicide affect all ages, all professions. These things hit home and touch all of us, often when we least expect it.

It is incumbent on each and every one of us elected to this place to give the tools necessary to our health care providers to combat mental illness in all its forms.

* * *

JEWISH FEDERATION OF OTTAWA

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the remarkable 90-year journey of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa. The roots of the federation can be traced back to 1934, amidst a backdrop of rising anti-Semitism and economic adversity caused by the Great Depression.

From the outset, the congregations of Agudath Achim, Adath Jeshurun, Mackzikei Hadas and B'nai Jacob recognized the power of unity, understanding that they are indeed stronger together. Through the leadership of visionaries, such as Rabbi A. H. Freedman, Casper Caplan, Archibald Jacob Freiman, Thomas Schwartz, Norman Zagerman and Rabbi Reuven Bulka, the federation has made an incredible mark on our Ottawa community. Since 2005, the federation has raised over \$107 million for the Jewish community. It has distributed thousands of Jewish books for free in Ottawa, and there is much more.

The history of the Jewish Federation of Ottawa is a testament to the strength and resilience of the Jewish community in the face of adversity. In times of strain, such as the present, the federation continues to lead the fight against prejudice, discrimination and anti-Semitism.

I congratulate the Jewish Federation of Ottawa for their community building and service.

*Statements by Members***CANADIAN PARAMEDICS**

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know when they call for emergency medical assistance, there is a team of compassionate and competent paramedics nearby to help. Canadians expect robust and responsive health care, and paramedics are an integral part of our emergency response teams.

Today, we are honoured to welcome a delegation of paramedics from the Paramedic Association of Canada to Parliament Hill to discuss key priorities in ensuring that paramedics are recognized for the essential care they provide. Representing nearly 30,000 paramedics across Canada, who have answered over three million calls for service, the Paramedic Association of Canada advocates for the advancement of paramedicine to ensure that these services are accessible, responsive, proactive and safe.

Paramedics are key to keeping our communities safe. Our government looks forward to our continued work with the Paramedic Association of Canada to serve Canadians and deliver the first response services they deserve.

* * *

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of reckless spending, the only thing the Prime Minister and his NDP-Liberal government have succeeded at is making life worse for Canadians.

With families across the country struggling to make ends meet, the Prime Minister continues to spend more borrowed money than ever before. Gas prices have increased dramatically, with some areas of the country seeing the highest prices in years, due to the carbon tax, which adds nearly 20¢ a litre. Farmers, the very people who feed Canada and the world, are having to pay thousands of dollars more each year to run their operations because of the carbon tax, which increased by 23% earlier this month and will only continue to go up.

Given the Prime Minister's inflationary spending that drives up the cost of everything and keeps interest rates high, it is no wonder that Canadians are poorer. He needs to axe the tax on farmers and food by passing Bill C-234 in its original form.

Canadians need relief and, sadly, they will not get it from the current Prime Minister, who simply is not worth the cost.

* * *

DRUG OVERDOSE IN CANADA

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leading cause of death for children in British Columbia is overdose.

Overdose accounts for more deaths in B.C. than homicides, suicides, accidents and natural disease combined. Since 2016, over 42,000 Canadians have tragically lost their lives due to drug overdoses.

After nine years, the NDP-Liberal government's extremist drug policies have literally turned our neighbourhoods into war zones,

and statistics have tripled. Unbelievably, the government wants to go even further and make cocaine, meth, heroin, crack and fentanyl legal. Hard drugs are being used in playgrounds, parks, coffee shops and even hospitals.

David Eby's NDP have finally admitted that the Prime Minister's extremist drug policies have utterly failed, leaving ruined lives and grieving families in their wake. The Prime Minister must end his failed drug experiment, today, or better yet, step aside and let a common-sense Conservative government fund treatment and recovery to bring our loved ones home.

* * *

[Translation]

CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this last day of Cancer Awareness Month, I would like to share my personal history and that of thousands of people in Laval. Since February 2013, I have lived every day with gratitude for my remission. However, cancer continues to have an impact on lives, including that of my dear sister Nina, who is currently in treatment.

Laval's community is resilient, courageous and determined. Every year, families, friends and neighbours battle this devastating disease. In the fight against cancer, every story is a poignant reminder of our shared struggle. Every moment counts, every action has an impact, and the hope of a cure is a lifeline that we cling to. Let us make a firm commitment to a cancer-free future.

[English]

Nina, I love you, sis.

* * *

● (1415)

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the homelessness crisis in northern Ontario has become a social disaster.

Municipalities, agencies and health care systems are stretched to the breaking point, yet the government is telling frontline agencies to get ready for massive cuts. The Reaching Home program is an essential lifeline for northern communities, yet the government has told Cochrane District, which includes Timmins, to get ready for a 52% cut in funding. Sault Ste. Marie faces a 60% cut, while Sudbury and Nipissing will get whacked with a 70% cut. This will devastate our region and leave vulnerable people at serious risk.

In budget 2024, the Liberals bragged about how much money they would invest in housing and the homeless. Nice words will not keep people safe. In northern Ontario the government is ignoring calls from municipalities for clarity. This is not good enough.

People in the north are asking their Liberal MPs a simple question: Will they fight to reverse these cuts and ensure that more funding is brought to the table to fight the nightmare of homelessness in northern Ontario?

* * *

[Translation]

GILLES PERRON

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to acknowledge the remarkable contribution of one of my predecessors as the Bloc Québécois member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, the Hon. Gilles Perron.

When I decided to run, Gilles told me that if I did not wear out a pair of shoes during my election campaign, I did not deserve to win. What is more, he told me to enjoy the evening of my victory, because the very next day, we would be back on the campaign trail.

For more than eleven years, Gilles wore out many pairs of shoes to go meet his constituents. However, his greatest political contribution is that, thanks to him, post-traumatic stress disorder among veterans is finally recognized today. We are talking about a historic moment for the people who defended our democracy.

As the end draws near, I promise Gilles that I will honour his political legacy in the service of the invisible wounded. For Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, I will again wear out my shoes thinking of him.

Gilles, we love you.

* * *

[English]

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal government is not worth the drugs, disorder, death and destruction. In B.C., more people are dying as taxpayer-funded deadly drugs flood the streets. Kids' playgrounds are littered with needles and crack pipes, and it is impossible for law enforcement to do its job and keep communities safe.

A year after the Prime Minister made crack, heroin, fentanyl, meth and other drugs legal in B.C., a record 2,500 British Columbians lost their lives to addiction. Last year, the former minister of addictions assured us the government would end this deadly experiment if public health and safety indicators were not met. Both are failing, and B.C.'s NDP premier is now pleading with the Prime Minister to rescue them from this failed policy, yet the Minister of Addictions refuses immediate action.

Now the Prime Minister wants to expand his failed policy of deadly drugs to Canada's largest city, Toronto, despite opposition from the premier.

How many more Canadians must die before the NDP-Liberals will finally put an end to this failed drug legalization policy?

Oral Questions

COST OF LIVING

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2024 promises to deliver a vision for Canada that is fairer and more affordable for every generation.

In my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills, residents, especially younger generations, deserve a fair chance of purchasing their own homes. That is why budget 2024 proposes an ambitious plan to invest into more affordable housing initiatives to unlock 3.87 million more homes by 2031 for Canadians.

Budget 2024 is also investing \$1 billion into the national school food program to the benefit of over 400,000 Canadian children, so no child in this country goes to school hungry. As we know, full bellies lead to sharper minds.

There are so many aspects of budget 2024 that work toward strengthening our middle class, and I encourage all members in the House to support this budget.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[Translation]

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, this Prime Minister is not worth the crime and the drugs.

His extreme and radical policies on drugs, supported by the Bloc Québécois, have tripled the number of overdose deaths. In today's *Journal de Montréal*, we read "Syringes on the ground, degrading scenes and rowdiness: a chaotic setting near a supervised injection site steps away from a Montreal school".

When will he reverse his radical policies that are causing deaths?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opioid crisis is terrible and is wreaking havoc across the country. However, what is required in terms of a response is not more Conservative ideology. We need responses that are rooted in compassion and based on health care, science and proven processes.

We will continue to work in partnership with the provinces and the communities to respond to this public health crisis in a rigorous but compassionate manner. That is what Canadians expect.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the drugs and death. His extreme and radical drug policy has increased overdose deaths in British Columbia by 380%. In the year following his decriminalization of crack, heroin and other hard drugs in hospitals, transit buses, coffee shops and parks where children play, there has been a record-smashing 2,500 deaths.

Will the Prime Minister accept the B.C. NDP's demand to re-criminalize those drugs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question.

What has not been answered by the Leader of the Opposition is why he chooses to continue to court extreme right nationalist groups like Diagonol. He refuses to denounce these extremists who do not believe Canadians should coexist with each other. Instead, they call for war and tell people to follow their instincts accordingly.

The leader of the Conservative Party is actively courting the support of groups with white nationalist views. It is disturbing, and he needs to stand up and apologize now.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, so soon in question period, it is important that we try to control ourselves.

I will ask the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton to please allow members to ask and to respond to questions.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I always condemn extremism and racism, including from the guy who spent the first half of his adult life as a practising racist, dressing up in hideous racist costumes so many times—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition knows that to make an accusation directly at the character of a single person is not appropriate.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am going to ask all members to control themselves.

I will ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition to rephrase his question and to start from the top.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I also condemn the extremism of a prime minister who gives hundreds of thousands of dollars of anti-racism money to a Jew-hater who has proposed shooting Jews in the head. I condemn a prime minister who allows the IRGC, which murdered 55 Canadians, to remain legal. I condemn a prime minister who allows the open use of crack, heroin, meth and weapons in hospital rooms, which threatens nurses, and on school buses next to children.

Will the Prime Minister reverse his extremist policies and the death they bring?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader opposite is showing us exactly what shameful, spineless leadership looks like. He shakes hands with white nationalists and then actively courts the support of those members who—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1425)

The Speaker: Order, please.

If the hon. member for Lethbridge has problems with the Chair, she should challenge the Chair, but as the hon. member knows, challenging the Chair is against the rules of the House. I ask the hon. member to please withdraw her remarks.

Mrs. Rachael Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I stated that the Chair is acting in a disgraceful manner—

* * *

NAMING OF MEMBER

The Speaker: Mrs. Thomas, I must name you for disregarding the authority of the Chair.

An hon. member: She withdrew it.

The Speaker: Pursuant to the powers vested in me under Standing Order 11, I order you to withdraw from the House and from any participation by video conference for the remainder of this day's sitting.

[And Mrs. Thomas having withdrawn:]

The Speaker: Coming back to the original point, I am going to ask the Prime Minister to start again and to please, as I had asked the Leader of the Opposition to do, reframe his question in a way that does not call into question the character of an individual member of Parliament.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader opposite is showing us once again what he will do try to earn votes through personal attacks. He shakes the hand of a leader of a white nationalist group then goes to actively court the support of the group's members and thinks he can get away with it. It is a group that advocates for violence against 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians, against Hindus and Sikhs and against Muslims and Jews. Diagonol stands against everything we stand for as Canadians, and yet he will not denounce its members or what they stand for. That is shameful.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that, like everything else the Prime Minister says, is false. He uses fear and falsehood, and this latest distraction, because he does not want to face the fact that he has become so extreme and radical that even the B.C. NDP is distancing itself from his decriminalization of crack, heroin, meth and other hard drugs in hospital rooms, which causes nurses to have to stop breastfeeding their babies for fear the contaminated air might end up in the breast milk for the baby.

Why will he not ban these drugs?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition still will not condemn these groups. Any leader who needs the support of a far right, white nationalist group to fundraise and get closer to power does not deserve elected office. He is a 19-year career politician who knows exactly what he is doing and thinks he can get away with it. It was a choice to pander to white nationalists, not an accident, and it is a choice to continue to not condemn them and not condemn everything they stand for, in his quest for votes.

An hon member: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: For the second time, I ask the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton to please withhold his comments until he has the floor.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

• (1430)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a choice for the Prime Minister to implement extremist policies that have taken the lives of 2,500 British Columbians every single year. Since the NDP has asked him to reverse course on his and formerly the NDP's radical policy, 22 British Columbians have died of drug overdoses, but he continues to allow those drugs to kill the people in our hospitals and on our public transit.

When will we put an end to this wacko policy by the wacko Prime Minister?

The Speaker: No, that is not acceptable. There are a couple of things going on here today that are not acceptable. I would ask all members to please control themselves.

I am going to ask two things. The first is that the hon. Leader of the Opposition withdraw that term, which is not considered parliamentary.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I replace “wacko” with “extremist”. The Prime Minister is an—

The Speaker: I am going to ask the Leader of the Opposition once again to simply withdraw that comment, please.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I will replace it with “radical”. That is the Prime Minister's policy.

The Speaker: No, I am not asking that it be replaced; I am asking the hon. member to simply withdraw it.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I replace the word “wacko” with “extremist”.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition one last time to simply withdraw that comment, please.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I simply withdraw it and replace it with the aforementioned adjective.

* * *

NAMING OF MEMBER

The Speaker: Mr. Poilievre, I have to name you for disregarding the authority of the Chair.

Pursuant to the authority granted to me by Standing Order 11, I order you to withdraw from the House and from any participation by video conference for the remainder of this day's sitting.

[*And Mr. Poilievre having withdrawn:*]

• (1435)

The Speaker: The second matter I was going to bring up was the fact that I was hearing some catcalling from the far end of the House. I was not able to identify the person, but I will ask all members to carry themselves in a way that is dignified for the House.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

* * *

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about extremism, but a week ago he visited a Diagolon encampment. Diagolon hates that minorities in this country get the same protections as everyone else, and they are charter-protected rights.

Just yesterday, a week after the Conservative leader sat down with—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I will ask the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes to please take the microphone only when he is afforded the opportunity to ask a question.

The right hon. Prime Minister has 15 seconds remaining for his answer.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the association of the Leader of the Opposition with Diagolon and its disdain for charter-protected rights brought him, just yesterday, a week after he sat down with Diagolon members, to give a speech pledging to overturn the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the rights of Canadians and our justice system. That statement—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on showing some common sense.

Oral Questions

If the Chair wants more questions, we are ready to ask plenty of them.

It is clear that from firearms buy-back programs to the Phoenix pay system, issuing visas, McKinsey and GC Strategies, the government's management is very chaotic. Instead of interfering in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, why does the government not just make transfers with no strings attached?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Prime Minister, I have a responsibility to care for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast. As the member for Papineau and a proud Quebecker, I will certainly focus on the situation of my fellow Quebeckers as well. That is why we are working hand in hand with the provinces across the country to provide the services, care and support that Canadians need in these difficult times.

We will continue to be there to invest in communities, to invest in Canadians and to invest in their future in partnership with the provinces and municipalities.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will talk about “hand in hand with the provinces” in a bit. In the meantime, after some Pinocchio-like nonsense, the Conservatives are now voting with the Liberals. They are both obsessed with encroaching on provincial jurisdictions.

Despite a request from all premiers—so much for “hand in hand”—the Liberals and Conservatives are voting against a motion on respecting Quebec's jurisdictions.

Can I make a suggestion to both the Conservatives and the Liberals? If they are actually interested in Quebec, they should read the Bloc Québécois's agenda.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois's agenda is about stirring up trouble between Quebeckers and Ottawa.

On this side of the House, we are here to invest in the future of Quebeckers. We are here to invest in families, in seniors. We are here to offer dental care, starting tomorrow, to seniors in Quebec and across Canada. We are here to invest in more child care spaces and to work with the Quebec government on investments in green technologies and a more prosperous future for all.

We are here to work, not to quarrel, and that is what we will continue to do.

* * *

● (1440)

HOUSING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): What a day, Mr. Speaker. I am glad the grown-ups are still in the room.

One in four Quebeckers is unable to live with dignity. That is a big deal. That is two million people. Some 25% of Quebeckers scrape by on less than a modest income. Money is too tight for them to buy the things they need. Meanwhile, the Liberals are handing out gifts to oil companies.

Given that housing is the biggest expense for families, when will the Liberals build housing that Quebeckers can afford?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely why, in our latest budget, we focused on ensuring fairness for every generation.

A lot of the investments in budget 2024 are specifically focused on homes and affordable housing to ensure that young people, millennials and gen Z can envision someday buying a house and can have their rent actively count toward a credit score that will enable them to get a mortgage.

We are here to make those investments with the most ambitious housing plan Canada has ever seen.

* * *

[English]

PENSIONS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to retire with dignity, and they can with the world-renowned Canada pension plan. However, Danielle Smith is trying to pull Alberta out of the CPP, and the Conservative leader has spent his entire career attacking workers' pensions while he benefits from a public pension himself.

New Democrats are fighting back. Today I tabled a bill that would protect the CPP from Conservatives and give Canadians and Albertans a say in the future of their CPP.

Will the Liberals support my bill, or will they stand with the cut-and-gut Conservatives?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to see the NDP joining us in the fight to protect the Canada pension plan. Actually, one of the very first things we did in government, about six months in, was strengthen the Canada pension plan for future generations.

We will continue to stand against Conservatives, who for decades have been railing against the Canada pension plan. Indeed, the plan by Alberta to dismantle the Canada pension plan and put at risk the pensions of millions of Albertan seniors is absolutely irresponsible.

We will continue to stand in defence of the Canada pension plan and we look forward to standing with all members of the House in doing just that.

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us pray that the Prime Minister will remain with us on this Tuesday.

The Prime Minister said he was working hand in hand with the provinces and that his main concern was ensuring that everyone received good services from the Canadian government for people across the country. In a certain number of areas, those services fall under provincial jurisdiction.

Am I to understand that the Prime Minister is saying that when Quebec or the provinces deliver services, it is not as good as when Ottawa delivers the services?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am worried about my friends in the Bloc Québécois. In fact, I do not recognize them any more.

They initially told us that housing is important, but the Conservatives tell them to vote against it, so they vote against it.

They came here and told us that seniors are important, but the Conservatives tell them to vote against it, so they vote against it.

They say that fighting climate change is important. The Conservatives tell them to vote against it, so they vote against it.

I am worried. By listening to the Conservatives, the sovereignist party is losing its own sovereignty.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I understand that there was less time to prepare, but yesterday, the Conservatives, Liberals and even the NDP—I say “even” because it kind of goes together—voted against an amendment from the Bloc Québécois that said that the budget was okay, because we are not bad sports, but that the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces need to be respected.

All those here who call themselves federalists voted against the Bloc Québécois. I hope that even the minister understood that.

• (1445)

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at some point, the Bloc Québécois took Quebecers for a ride.

They were elected on a promise to come to Ottawa to fight for housing, but they are voting against it. They said they were coming to Ottawa to stand up for the fight against climate change, but they are voting against it. They came to Ottawa to fight for seniors and youth, but they are voting against them and with the Conservatives.

Does the Bloc Québécois realize that it has become a separatist offshoot of the Conservative Party?

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec just announced \$603 million to stop the decline of French. Most of that amount will be used to teach French to temporary foreign workers.

Oral Questions

This is good news for the vitality of the French language, but it will not be enough, because the majority of foreign workers are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government through the international mobility program, and the federal government has no language requirements. Since the Liberals recognize the decline of French, they must also do their part.

Will the government listen to Quebec's request and add French language requirements for the foreign workers under its jurisdiction?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously we want to support French integration. We have provided \$5.4 billion to Quebec since 2015, specifically for French integration classes in Quebec, and it is working well.

I know that the Bloc Québécois is perceived as a bickering machine, but I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the member opposite, who campaigned to ensure that spouses, partners, people who come here to study nursing will be able to stay here. This will increase the number of people who are here temporarily, but that is the good work we can do because the Quebec government demanded it.

We also worked with the Bloc Québécois to strengthen the health care system in Quebec.

* * *

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the priority processing for the lifeboat scheme for Hong Kongers has gone from six months to 21 months. Processing delays for their PR applications means that work permits and study permits are going to expire, medical coverage will end, and dependent children will no longer be able to access education. Hong Kongers will be sent back to face an escalation of arbitrary detentions and arrests because of the draconian safeguarding national security bill.

Will the minister resume the six-month priority processing average for Hong Kongers and automatically renew their work and study permits as they wait?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to stand with the people of Hong Kong. We will work on processing times. We continue to work with people who seek refuge in Canada, and we will continue to do so.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for decades, people in James Bay have struggled to overcome the systemically racist underfunding of health services. Every region deserves proper hospital services. We were finally on the verge of having a proper hospital built in the Weeneebayko health region, but now, at the eleventh hour, the Liberals have walked away. Even Doug Ford is bringing the province to the table.

Will the minister explain why she made the health authority jump through so many hoops, only to tell it that the Liberals had no intention of funding this badly needed project?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me thank the member opposite for his years of advocacy and reassure him that I spoke with Grand Chief Fiddler just last week about this very project. We are working with the province and with the region to make sure that everyone can access quality health care, no matter where they live.

* * *

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, disinformation, extremism and violent hate are on the rise around the world, including here at home. Standing up to far right extremism is something that I know the government takes very seriously, but it is shameful that the Leader of the Opposition entertained and posed for photos with organizations our national security agencies call far right extreme groups that are rooted in white nationalism and that promote hate and violence.

Could the government please tell the House how important it is that these far right extreme groups be condemned and addressed for the real threat that they are?

• (1450)

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while we are investing \$273 million toward Canada's first-ever action plan on combatting hate in the budget, the leader of the official opposition is encouraging hate as he cozies up to far right white extremist supporters—

The Speaker: The Speaker has made rulings about lending intentions to hon. members of the House, so I will ask the hon. minister to please correct her statement in a way that is respectful of all members.

Hon. Kamal Khera: Mr. Speaker, as a government, we have been very deliberate about choices to be inclusive, while the Leader of the Opposition is making a very deliberate choice in courting far right extremists. This is extremely reckless, and it is dangerous. He owes Canadians an apology, and he needs to denounce the cozying up that he is doing with these groups.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec will not achieve its French integration targets if the number of people needing to learn French breaks records every year.

Quebec cannot continue to take in 54% of all of Canada's asylum seekers. This is a matter of social justice for the people we can no longer house, educate or even feed. Yes, Quebec society is also about integration, because we have a duty to provide these people with all the necessary tools to welcome them properly.

Will the minister finally announce an equitable distribution of asylum seekers among Quebec and the provinces?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sometimes I wonder if the Bloc Québécois is confusing the willingness and the ability to take in asylum seekers.

What is clear is that Quebec is doing more than its fair share. However, 54% is an exaggeration. If we look at all the humanitarian streams that Quebec covers, the figure comes down to 24% or 25%. Yes, Quebec is doing more. Clearly, it needs to do more concerted work with the Canadian government, but it will take this partnership between Canada and Quebec that we have and that we will continue to work on.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the willingness to take in asylum seekers is real.

Quebec will be unable to reverse the decline of French if the federal government rows in the opposite direction. Ottawa is responsible for two-thirds of Quebec's temporary immigration through the international mobility program and asylum seekers. The federal government is not fulfilling its responsibilities, whether it is in terms of teaching workers French or taking in asylum seekers. Ottawa is ultimately responsible for the skyrocketing need for French language courses in Quebec, but it is doing nothing.

The Liberals keep saying that more needs to be done to protect French, so why are they refusing to do more to accomplish that?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is very clear is that we will be there for Quebec to do more to support the French fact in Quebec. We have contributed \$54 billion since 2015. That is a lot of money.

I have a question for the member opposite. If he thinks that we should accept more asylum seekers from Haiti, would he be willing for Quebec to take in more?

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this much more civilized and fitting parliamentary setting, I can announce that budget 2024 lays out a generational plan to build millions of homes for Canadians.

We already know that skilled trades workers will be the key to successfully building all these homes. As well, Canada's Building Trades Unions' conference is taking place right here in the capital region as we speak. Could the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages assure us that our government has the workers it needs to do this work across the country?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche for his question.

I was at Canada's Building Trades Unions' conference yesterday to talk to people about how we are going to address the housing crisis in Canada. Budget 2024 provides tens of millions of dollars to support training and apprenticeships for workers from coast to coast to build homes for Canadians for decades to come. Skilled trades will be the driving force behind this effort. We are going to make sure they have everything they need to get the job done.

* * *

● (1455)

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, La Presse recently alerted us to the fact that the Canada Border Services Agency has an obsolete and surplus goods program. Basically, it is a program to give money to merchants who throw away their excess merchandise. We are talking about non-perishable goods.

For example, let us imagine that I have a store that sells jeans. I import a new style, and I end up with unsold jeans that are out of fashion. I have two choices: Either I throw them in the garbage and Ottawa refunds me the duties, or I donate them to charity and I do not get a cent. It is a recipe for waste.

Who in Ottawa thinks this is a good idea?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I was not aware of the facts of a particular case. If he is asking if we are in favour of that kind of waste, I think I share his opinion. The answer, of course, is no.

I would be happy to talk to the Canada Border Services Agency to see if it is possible to find an alternative.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the average calibre of the questions has certainly improved drastically today, but the average calibre of the answers has not.

The Canada Border Services Agency refunded businesses over \$20 million to have them scrap their goods after taking pains to render them unusable, at a time when food banks are swamped with demand because times are tough.

Ottawa is funding waste at the expense of social solidarity. It makes no sense. Will the Minister of Public Safety review this misguided program, which penalizes generosity and encourages waste?

Oral Questions

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we absolutely will review the facts that my hon. colleague has presented. Obviously, I share his concern over this situation.

As I said, I will be pleased to follow up with the Canada Border Services Agency. I look forward to it.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April is Cancer Awareness Month. Though the month is ending, the need for cancer awareness and education continues.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, two out of five Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetimes. In 2023 alone, an estimated 239,000 Canadians were newly diagnosed with cancer.

Could the Minister of Health update the House on what our government is doing to support Canadians impacted by cancer?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for her continued advocacy.

She knows all too well, as do I and every member of the House, that so few of us get to make it through life without being touched by cancer. It is imperative that we do all that we can.

I want to take a moment to recognize the Canadian Cancer Society, Breast Cancer Canada and all those who work tirelessly to advocate. Over the last five years, we have put \$1 billion to work for breakthroughs in science and to improve how we prevent and treat cancer. We are taking critical action in prevention. Together, we can see an end to cancer.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the community of Port Renfrew in my riding relies on recreational fishing as the major economic driver in the region, bringing in an estimated \$26 million per season.

Oral Questions

However, the Liberals plan to end that important economic pathway and are failing to provide credible data to justify the fishing closures. This move will harm the local economy and devastate the local community, including the Pacheedaht First Nation.

This is shameful. Why are the Liberals putting Port Renfrew's economy at risk with these ill-informed and punitive fishing closures?

Mr. Mike Kelloway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just a couple of weeks ago, I was in B.C. talking to a lot of first nation communities on a whole host of topics that are important to them and to their communities. I know that this one is equally important in terms of recreational fishing from a food and ceremonial perspective, cultural perspective and an economic perspective. I will set some time aside to discuss the item with the member opposite very soon.

* * *

● (1500)

TAXATION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today was the final day for most Canadians to file their taxes, and thanks to NDP pressure the wealthy will be paying somewhat more. Unlike the Conservative leader who, while in government, gave \$60 billion to corporations, New Democrats would rather fund key public services, like dental and pharmacare.

As usual, the Liberals continue to ignore the need for serious tax fairness at a time of rampant corporate greed. We still use a system where wealthy corporations can get out of paying \$30 billion in taxes in one year.

Does the government have an idea how much money the wealthiest Canadians will deprive Canada of this year?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this budget is about fairness for every generation. It is about making the essential investments in housing, in affordability, in economic growth.

We agree with the idea behind the question, that the way to finance those investments is to ask those who are doing the best in our society to contribute a little more. That is why, in the budget, we are proposing to increase the capital gains inclusion rate. We hope all members will support that.

The Speaker: Colleagues, this brings us to the end of the questions that were indicated by the various whips in the House. Now question period will continue on for another five minutes and we will go to other members who will rise, keeping all in proportion.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Kitchener Centre is rising. Unfortunately, questions from independent members are not on today's schedule.

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

FIREARMS

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government has announced its decision to once again postpone the mandatory buy-back program for assault weapons. Since Canada Post refuses to accept the prohibited weapons, and since Ottawa has once again failed to plan this program properly, the Liberals have decided to postpone the whole thing until 2025. This means that it will likely be the Conservatives who decide the future of this program.

Why do the Liberals not take their responsibilities seriously instead of putting this in the hands of the Conservatives?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank our colleague for the question. As she is well aware, the government fully supports a buy-back program for military-style firearms. However, I do not share her pessimism about the next federal election.

The good news is that we are already working to develop a buy-back program that will be in place this year and next. We made a commitment to buy back those firearms, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if no assault weapon buy-back program is instituted within the next year, we will have lost a decade of work, and public safety will continue to be jeopardized for another decade. The Liberals have no right to betray their commitment at this point. They have no right to let their courage fail them. They have no right to offload the responsibility for assault weapons onto irresponsible people who want to keep them in circulation.

I am appealing to the Minister of Public Safety as a statesman: Will he take action before it is too late?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat once again that we absolutely intend to keep the commitment we made to Canadians to buy back these weapons that we banned.

We will continue to work in a very specific way to ensure that the commitment we made a number of years ago to implement an effective buy-back program is kept. We are not going to stop until we finish this work.

The Budget

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER**PENSIONS**

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the pension advisory board for our CBSA officers has approved retirement after 25 years of service. Our men and women on the front lines of our country have been defending and enforcing the law, and ensuring trade and travel is safe and secure in our country. They have not been treated equally as other officers. Why has the President of the Treasury Board ignored this case for equality?

Will the President of the Treasury Board now act and make sure there is equality for our men and women of service protecting our front lines?

• (1505)

Hon. Anita Anand (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually as a part of the conciliation process, the Government of Canada and PSAC entered into PIC hearings with the Border Services group. We are waiting for the decision of that body. We believe that all deals are best made at the table.

We look forward to reading that report and working very closely with our counterparts. We are optimistic that the PIC recommendations will provide both parties with a plan to go forward, just as past PIC processes have been able to do.

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PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, people with disabilities across the country disproportionately live in poverty. As a result of their advocacy, the government committed to a Canada disability benefit back in 2021.

After years of advocacy, what has been proposed in budget 2024 is nothing that the disability community has called for. No one called for 200 bucks a month. Using the disability tax credit, no one called for that. Waiting until July 2025, no one called for that.

Could the minister share who actually asked for what is in the proposed Canada disability benefit?

Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada disability benefit is a major milestone in our unwavering commitment to creating a more inclusive and fairer Canada. Through budget 2024, we have committed over \$6 billion as an initial investment for the Canada disability benefit. This is the first-ever federal benefit designed for persons with disabilities.

We recognize that there is more to do and we will be working alongside provinces and territories to first make sure that there are no clawbacks for persons with disabilities.

This is the next step in the journey for the Canada disability benefit, not the destination.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to ask for unanimous consent from the House for a take-note debate on the drug decriminalization policy and toxic drug overdoses to be held later today.

Some hon. members: No.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it was a remarkable question period. I am sure I can speak for many of us with respect to your effort to maintain decorum under difficult circumstances.

What I want to speak to, with all due respect, is misidentifying members of Parliament who sit here as members of the Green Party as independents. I would like to ask, Mr. Speaker, that in future perhaps your office could reflect on our role and consider that the practice of accepting a list of speakers from the party whips on the opposition benches is not a rule or regulation of the House, but a common habit and practice. The rule is that only you can recognize who speaks in this place and only you can decide who catches your eye.

I would commend to you, Mr. Speaker, if you are willing to look at it, the practice of the Palace of Westminster in looking at written requests from members of the place that the Speaker decides the day before so that there is order in the House and it is no longer controlled by party whips who have an agenda other than decorum.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her intervention, which was informative as always. The Speaker will take that into account.

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, and of the amendment.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise in this House. I would usually call it the most honourable House, but after today's events, I am not exactly sure.

When we speak about budget 2024 and what is involved in budget 2024, it continues to build a strong economy, an inclusive economy.

One of the sectors that I would like to touch upon is here in Ontario specifically, the auto sector. It is a sector that I covered in the private sector for 15 years before coming into public service.

The Budget

What we announced last week and what we did in collaboration with Honda is a game-changer for the auto sector here in Canada. It is a game-changer for Honda. It is Honda's largest-ever investment in North America, \$15 billion to build an electric vehicle assembly plant, a stand-alone manufacturing plant, a cathode active material and precursor-processing plant, a separator plant and a new assembly plant operation, which in 2028 is projected to build over 240,000 electric vehicles per year.

That is a strong vote of confidence in the Canadian economy. That is a strong vote of confidence in Canadian workers. It is the right thing to do to build a competitive economy and an economy that works for all Canadians.

It did not just happen by chance. It happened because our government was laser-focused on attracting business investments here in Canada. With regard to the auto sector, almost \$46 billion has been attracted across Canada, not just in the province of Ontario and British Columbia, or in the province of Quebec. The spillover in the whole EV supply chain is across Canada. Again, it is our government being laser-focused in budget 2024. An electric vehicles supply chain credit was introduced, 10% on EV assets, battery and cathode active materials.

This follows Volkswagen's \$7-billion investment in St. Thomas, Northvolt's \$7-billion investment in Quebec, the \$5-billion investment by Stellantis and LG Energy Solutions in the beautiful city of Windsor, Ford's \$1.8-billion commitment to repurpose its facility, and the list goes on. The Canadian automotive sector builds 1.5 million vehicles per year. It supports 550,000 direct and indirect jobs here in this country and contributes about \$18 billion. Canada is home to Stellantis, Ford, General Motors, Toyota and Honda. We have been able to secure a commitment from Honda for generations now, and for generations to come, with over 4,000 jobs, over 1,000 new full-time jobs, and we can multiply that by five to seven, in terms of the multiplier, for literally decades, plus all the construction jobs that will come.

I will now turn to something that is near and dear to my heart. I read the IMF projections for economies around the world. The "Fiscal Monitor" came out. The world economic outlook came out. For 2025, Canada is forecast to lead economic growth in the G7 at almost 2.5%, something that we should be very proud of. We are leading the pack because we are making strategic investments in Canada. We are making strategic investments in Canadians. A confident country invests in its citizens. A confident country will always do so. That is what we will continue to do.

With regard to matters that I hear quite a bit about, I would like to reference a Financial Times article that came out about a week ago, entitled "US deficit poses 'significant risks' to global economy, warns IMF". One looks at Canada's fiscal framework, its fiscal management and our AAA credit rating from all the credit rating agencies: Moody's, S&P, Morningstar DBRS.

I can hear some chirping from the other side. I understand that when it comes to being polite and when it comes to decorum, sometimes people need to take further lessons. It is unfortunate that they need to.

When we look at overall government fiscal balances, the net lending/borrowing for Canada is -1.1% of GDP; the United States, -7.1%; the U.K., -3.7%; Italy, -3.2%; Germany, -1.3%. Canada's fiscal framework is the strongest in the G7. It is the strongest in the G20. There is a reason why we have AAA rating. There is a reason why, when we look at our fiscal framework in this country, we have a solid, strong, robust balance sheet.

Those are the facts. Members on the other side can quibble as much as they want. They may not like science, and they may not like data. They may not like looking at the financial numbers, but I do. We will continue to do so. It is very important.

● (1510)

There is another item that I would like to raise, something that may surprise some folks on the other side and may surprise some folks on my side. I am actually very happy that the Trans Mountain pipeline is now in operation. The twinning of those two pipelines is going to boost economic growth here in Canada: this year, by about 0.5%. For a \$3-trillion economy, 0.5% is actually quite important. The economic benefits of that pipeline are going to outweigh significantly the cost of building that pipeline and the debt that is carried on it currently, absolutely. It is going to lower the spread between WTI and WCS in terms of the price differential. For the time being and for many years to come, the oil that is sent from Alberta through the province of British Columbia is going to receive a higher price. Some estimates show a \$9 benefit. We will earn billions of dollars in tax revenue to support hard-working Canadians across this country.

We made that investment, and I am very proud of that investment. It replaces almost 1,500 railcars that were carrying crude oil. It provides lower-cost access to markets abroad, and it raises producer prices here. It is something we need to be proud of. Again, it lowers the differential in the price we were getting for our product, so that now we are earning more on that front. Just in the second quarter of this year, the Bank of Canada estimates that it is going to boost economic growth by 0.25%. It is going to provide over \$70 billion in revenues for the entities involved and tens of billions of dollars in tax revenues to pay for the services that we need.

Trevor Tombe, one of the economists I talk with quite a bit these days, put out an excellent piece today on why it is so important that we have an additional outlet for Canada's resources. As we decarbonize our economy, we need to do it in such a manner that the transition ensures good future for Canadians. The funds received will allow us to reinvest in our economy to green it and to make sure our electrical grid is fully decarbonized by 2035.

Finally, on the housing front, we are going to build in the years to come and we are building currently. Housing is very important for the residents of the 905 region, where I live. We see the activity at the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. We see the activity across our region in terms of the housing builders getting to work. To the wonderful construction workers who are trained at the LiUNA 183 training centre or the Carpenters' Regional Council and the local 27 training centre, I visit with them and I want to give them a big shout-out because they are doing the heavy lifting to build our communities and the infrastructure in our communities.

* * *

● (1515)

PRIVILEGE

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES TO ORDER PAPER QUESTIONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The Chair would like to make a statement concerning the question of privilege raised on April 10, 2024 by the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, about the government response to Order Paper Question No. 2340.

That day, the member contended that the response to Question No. 2340, answered on Monday, April 8, 2024, was inconsistent with previous announcements made by the government.

[Translation]

On April 11, 2024, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who had originally submitted the written question, intervened on this matter. He further noted that a similar inconsistency appeared in the government's response to another of his questions, Q-2142, answered on January 29, 2024.

[English]

The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader acknowledged that, in both instances, there were administrative errors that led to inaccurate information being provided in the responses. He committed that the government would be tabling revised responses to both questions in short order to address the matter. Those responses were tabled yesterday. Considering the explanations, apologies and revised responses provided by the parliamentary secretary, I consider the matter closed.

The Chair does note, however, that this is the second instance in the last sitting weeks where the government has had to table revised responses after members complained about receiving inaccurate information. I trust that these are isolated mistakes. I nonetheless invite the government to take swift action to develop stronger internal checks and ensure that it does not happen again. The Chair is keenly aware of this problem and expects that members' rights and privileges are to be respected.

I thank all members for their attention.

The Budget

● (1520)

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 and of the amendment.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, parts of my colleague's speech were spot-on. The amount of economic activity that is going to be engendered by the completion of the Trans Mountain pipeline is very significant for this country. It has been held up by this government's process for far too long, and we need to get past it. I thank the member for that acknowledgement here on the floor of the House of Commons. The member has always been a supporter of Canada's oil and gas industry, and I really appreciate what he brings to that bench in that respect. However, he was a data analyst in finance before he came to the House, and I will question his numbers as far as Canada's economic performance goes.

Canada's finance minister manages to come up with a number where she plays games by including a whole bunch of assets on Canada's balance sheet that are not assets of the Government of Canada, such as Canada Pension Plan Investment Board money, which belongs to Canadians and is not going to be retracted from, and the Quebec pension plan, where the money belongs to Quebecers and will not be pulled back from them. To actually include that is—

The Speaker: For this five-minute question and answer period, so that all members have an opportunity, I would ask the member to just put the question, please.

Mr. Greg McLean: Mr. Speaker, how does the member justify the use of manipulated statistics in order to get the numbers so he actually looks like he is performing?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do count the hon. member as a friend and colleague, and I always enjoy chatting with him.

I will say that the IMF statistics are there, and the member can look at gross governmental debt and the net debt bases. The standards are developed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. They are commonly accepted standards. They are principles.

Canada's fiscal situation is measured by the rating agencies. I worked for a rating agency for a number of years before I went into the bond side of the business. I understand it quite well. Our AAA credit rating, which has been there since finance minister Martin's years, is there for a reason. We have a solid balance sheet, which is something we should all be proud of and something that I know Canadians hold near and dear to their hearts.

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Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member has heard from constituents who are upset about the paltry Canada disability benefit included in this budget. It is not just the amount; it is the process by which the government arrived at that amount. I will read what the National Disability Network noted: “These specific programmatic details were announced without consultation of the disability community and do not align with the principle of ‘nothing about us, without us.’”

Does my colleague not agree that the Canada disability benefit should have been a higher amount to actually lift people out of poverty and, more importantly, that the amount should have been arrived at in consultation with the people who are most affected?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Mr. Speaker, to my colleague and friend from my old hometown of Prince Rupert in Skeena—Bulkley Valley, I will be very personal on this front. We have a little nephew, Ethan, who has a rare genetic condition. Probably one out of five or six individuals in Canada has this condition. I know full well the amount of expenses that my brother and sister-in-law incur for their son. It is not just in the thousands of dollars; it is literally, in the last couple of years, in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. I know what they face, so I do appreciate the sentiment coming from my colleague.

I will say that the Canada disability benefit does move the needle, and we will continue to work, also in conjunction with the disability tax credit, which is in place ensuring that disabled Canadians have the support they need to live a dignified life and to lead a life where they can fulfill their capacity in terms of what God has given them.

I want to give a shout-out, a prayer and a big hug to my little nephew.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, to my hon. friend from Vaughan—Woodbridge, this is very disturbing from a member in this place who has participated more than anyone else in terms of understanding the Kinder Morgan pipeline, being an intervenor in the NEB process, having read all the material put forward by that particular private sector promoter, and knowing full well that the pipeline is not complete. It does not have permissions from the regulator, will not have a leak detection system in place for a full year and has several kilometres yet to be built. However, we have members in this place, the budget itself and the finance minister herself proclaiming that the pipeline is finished, that it is good news, and a further fanciful offering that we will get more money per barrel once the diluted bitumen is offloaded in Aframax tankers.

I would like to ask the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge if he would be prepared to press the government to provide to each member of Parliament a cost-benefit analysis, which I do not believe was ever presented, for buying the TMX pipeline.

• (1525)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, we all believe in achieving net zero by 2050. We all believe in decarbonizing the economy. At the same time, we must also understand there will be a need for natural resources of oil and natural gas, whether it is in situ for oil and conventional natural gas or whether it is western Canadian—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We need to resume debate, unfortunately.

The hon. member for Saint-Laurent has the floor.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to contribute to this debate today in support of budget 2024.

The budget aims to make our country fairer for everyone, for all generations. As one of the younger MPs in this place, I have heard countless times from people my age and younger how difficult it is for them to visualize the future they had always imagined for themselves.

Millennials and gen Zs are the first generations who are not doing better than their parents. They grew up with a promise that they can do well in school, work hard, get a good job and live a great life. Today's economy is proving all of that to be difficult. Many did really well in school and have great jobs, yet they are still finding it difficult to make ends meet.

Many of my friends, my age and younger, still live with their parents because they cannot afford to buy their own place. At this point, rent is so expensive that it simply is not worth it. Young Canadians are having a hard time getting approved for a mortgage, and some are requiring their parents to act as guarantors. That is if they are lucky enough to come from a family who is well off enough to provide that signature.

This has to change. The backbone of our economy is our youth. They are our present and our future, and they deserve their hard work to pay off. They deserve at least the same opportunities as their parents and grandparents had in order to achieve a good life.

This is why our government put in place, in the last couple of years, the tax-free first home savings account to make it easier for Canadians to save for their first homes. Up to now, over 750,000 Canadians have opened an account to save money to put into a down payment faster, with the help of tax relief.

Budget 2024 proposes an additional support for Canadians to be able to afford a home faster. First off, we know that for homes to become more affordable we need to increase supply. Budget 2024 would include an additional investment of \$15 billion in new loan funding for the apartment construction loan program, bringing the program's total to \$55 billion since 2017. This new investment would help build more than 30,000 additional homes across the country.

The Budget

Budget 2024 would also top up the housing accelerator fund to increase the supply of housing faster. This fund would work with municipalities to cut red tape and to fast-track the creation of at least 100,000 new homes across Canada. The investment in budget in 2024 is \$400 million over four years and would help fast-track 12,000 new homes in three years.

Another measure that would be extended for an additional two years is the ban on foreign buyers of Canadian homes. People who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents would continue to be prohibited from buying homes in Canada, as this practice has brought up the value of our homes.

While building new homes is a longer-term solution to bringing down the cost of housing, there are other ways that budget 2024 would aim to help young Canadians buy and keep their first homes. The budget proposes to enhance the Canadian mortgage charter in several ways. It would allow a five-year increase of the amortization period, allowing for a 30-year amortization for first-time homebuyers purchasing newly built homes and making it possible for more young Canadians to qualify for and afford their monthly mortgage payments.

For those who already have a mortgage and whose terms are coming to an end, renewing one's mortgage with today's rates seems quite daunting. However, the Canadian government will be working toward making permanent amortization relief available to protect homeowners who meet specific criteria. Eligible homeowners would be able to reduce their monthly mortgage payment to an amount they can afford for as long as they need to. This would give them an opportunity to stay in their homes for longer.

While housing is one of the most important points in budget 2024, I would like to turn to a few other great supports for Canadians that would be funded in this budget. I will not spend too much time talking about the national school food program because I have already spoken about it at length in this place. I could not be happier that this investment of \$1 billion to help kids eat a healthy meal at school has seen the light of day. The only private member's bill I have ever had the opportunity to present in this place, in my time as an MP, was on this very program, because as a teacher, I know just how badly it is needed.

Budget 2024 proposes an investment of \$1 billion over five years for the federal government to work with provinces, territories and indigenous partners to expand access to school food programs, with support beginning as early as the new school year. The program is expected to provide meals for more than 400,000 kids each year and is expected to save the average participating family with two children as much as \$800 per year in grocery costs, with lower-income families benefiting the most.

● (1530)

Also incredibly important is that the federal government recently introduced legislation that would help make essential medications more accessible and affordable for Canadians, which is a landmark move toward building a national pharmacare program that is comprehensive, inclusive and fiscally sustainable. Bill C-64, the pharmacare act, describes the federal government's intent to work with provinces and territories to provide universal, single-payer coverage for a number of contraception and diabetes medications. Now,

budget 2024 proposes to provide \$1.5 billion over five years to help Canada support the launch of the national pharmacare program.

We also need more support for persons with disabilities who face significant barriers to financial security. Budget 2024 proposes funding of \$6.1 billion over six years and \$1.4 billion per ongoing year for a new Canada disability benefit, with payments to eligible Canadians, which would start in July 2025. The Canada disability benefit would establish an important support for persons with disabilities and would ensure a fairer chance for persons with disabilities. It would fill a gap in the federal government's social safety net and is intended to supplement, not to replace, existing provincial and territorial income support measures.

Another aspect I was thrilled to see in budget 2024 is continued mental health support for our young people. The budget proposes an investment of \$500 million over five years, beginning in 2024-25, with the goal of reducing wait times and providing more options for youth in need of mental health care. The reason this is so important is that 32% of young people who seek mental health support are unable to access care because of the cost. Whether we are talking about mental health issues brought on by the pandemic or those brought on by the postpandemic economy, gen Z needs that extra help, and the government is here to provide it.

We know that Canada's success, now and tomorrow, depends on the success of its youngest generations, but too many young people feel as though the reward for hard work, which is a secure, prosperous, comfortable middle-class life, is out of reach. For students, even with increases in financial supports, many still need more help to cover rising costs. Budget 2024 announces 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, in time for the new school year. With this change, Canada's student grants will have doubled in size since 2014.

Grants for part-time students, students with disabilities and students with dependents would also be increased proportionately. Increased grants would support 587,000 students, and increased interest-free loans would support 652,000 students, with a combined \$7.3 billion for the upcoming academic year. However, since federal student grants and loans are intended to help cover the cost of shelter, the formula used to estimate students' housing costs has not been updated since 1998.

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Budget 2024 proposes to modernize the shelter allowances used by the Canada student financial assistance program when determining financial need. This new approach would provide additional student aid to approximately 79,000 students each year. The government would also incentivize post-secondary institutions to build more student housing, and would provide the low-cost financing needed so that more students could find an affordable place to call home.

To aid the transition from school to the work world, work-integrated learning opportunities, such as co-ops and internships, are a proven way for post-secondary students to gain the valuable skills, education and real-life experience necessary to get good-paying jobs in important and growing fields.

To create more work-integrated learning opportunities for post-secondary students, budget 2024 proposes to provide \$207.6 million for the student work placement program, which has already created over 192,000 work opportunities for post-secondary students since 2017-18. Likewise, the government would invest to create more youth job opportunities to build their skills and to gain meaningful work experience, which will be critical to Canada's economic growth potential in the years to come.

To create 90,000 youth job placements and employment support opportunities, budget 2024 proposes to provide \$351.2 million for the youth employment and skills strategy. This includes \$200.5 million for Canada summer jobs, including in sectors facing critical labour shortages, and \$150.7 million for the youth employment and skills strategy program.

We cannot ignore those younger Canadians who choose to work for themselves and to launch their own businesses, which is an important part of a growing economy. To empower young entrepreneurs, budget 2024 proposes to provide \$60 million over five years for Futurpreneur Canada, a national not-for-profit organization that would provide young entrepreneurs with access to financing, mentorship and other business supports to help them launch and grow their businesses.

I can see that my time is up, so I would like to wrap up by saying once more that I support budget 2024.

• (1535)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, a generation of young people has become acutely aware of the fact that the government has put their future at risk.

I would like to ask the member this. In light of the fact of all this spending that people hope is for real, what has the government done to create funding to be available? How many of its consultants has it fired and how much money has it set aside now of real money to do these things on behalf of young Canadians?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, I regret that my earpiece was not working for the first part of the member's question, but I think I got the gist of it. I do think that the government has the best of intentions with this budget to help Canadians now that they need help the most.

Our young Canadians are in a place where past generations have not been at the age they currently are. We obviously need to step it

up and help Canadians, and meet them where they are in order to give them the supports they need to live the lives they deserve to live.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wish I had had a chance to comment on the life of generation X, a generation so overlooked that it was named after an unknown value in algebra. That said, I will instead talk about the budget, which is a blatant example of interference and disrespect for the supreme law of the land, that is, the Canadian Constitution. The Constitution is the contract that binds the federal government to the other levels of government in Canada, namely Quebec and the Canadian provinces.

When does the government intend to respect its own Constitution?

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, I think Canadians need help right now. I think all provinces, territories and the Government of Canada should work together to provide that much-needed help to Canadians.

It would be really great to have all the provinces co-operate so that we can give this help to the people who need it most.

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, tomorrow is the beginning of MS Awareness Month. Yesterday, I met some advocates for MS. One of the advocates has MS. She told me that her sister also had MS. The two of them have MS, but only one of them qualifies for the disability tax credit. One lives in a rural part of Canada and the other lives in an urban area. The sister who lives in the urban area got the credit while the rural sister did not.

There are many inequities in the health care system and we know that the Canada disability benefit, hidden behind the disability tax credit, is inaccessible as well as being inequitable.

I wonder if the member could commit that the government will remove this inaccessible and inequitable barrier in the Canada disability benefit.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for raising this concern. I was not aware of her friend's situation. Of course, I cannot commit to anything on behalf of the government, but I can commit to working with the member to bring this to the attention of the government so that something can be done about it.

• (1540)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, non-profits in my community were looking at this budget in the hope that there might be more money available to build social housing, non-market housing, after all the talk of what would be in the budget. However, what we find is the rapid housing initiative, funded at a meagre amount of less than \$250 million a year for the next five years across the whole country, and that is meant to be spread out.

Could the member speak to whether she is concerned about the lack of funding in this budget despite all of the rhetoric about housing? There is a lack of dollars in the budget for non-profits to build the non-market affordable dignified housing that we need across the country.

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos: Madam Speaker, there are obviously many measures that the government has put in place to help build as many homes as possible for Canadians. I would be happy to work with the member to at least bring these issues to the attention of the government.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Huron—Bruce.

Just before I begin debate, I would like to wish a happy graduation to my niece. She has worked hard and deserves all life has to offer, and Auntie Tracy is proud of her.

I rise today on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country to speak to the 2024 budget, one of the most consequential pieces of legislation the House of Commons debates every year. This is now the ninth year the NDP-Liberal government has chosen to run deficits in its budget. I was in my community all last week meeting with businesses and not-for-profit organizations and attending all kinds of events. I had days with back-to-back meetings with people who reached out. Not one person said they were happy with the Liberals' budget.

One resident said the budget is like throwing spaghetti at a wall. Another said her family has lived in the Okanagan for generations and now the whole extended family is considering leaving Canada as no one can get ahead. Another person explained how moderately successful people who have worked hard and followed all the rules are being crushed by the government. A small business owner said, "So much for building up my small business to fund my retirement."

For nine years, the Liberal government, propped up by the NDP, chose together to double the size of the federal debt, which is on track to lead to a generational debt crisis for the children of today and tomorrow. Together, those parties chose to support expensive, third-party consultants, at the same time as seeing a decline in accountability in federal department services, with many departments not meeting their own minimum service standards. They chose together to increase taxes, including the carbon tax, excise tax and payroll tax.

What are the results of the Liberals being propped up by the NDP? It is a cost of living crisis that is destroying the spending

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power of working-class families and causing a record number of Canadians to have to go to the food bank. People are losing hope.

After nine years of the Prime Minister, it now takes the same amount of time to save for a down payment on the average home that it used to take to pay it off. People have a lower quality of life than previous generations. People have more mental health and addiction issues than at any time in the past.

I was hopeful that the Liberal ministers, in their ninth year of government, might listen to Canadians.

Conservatives were clear about what we wanted in this budget in order to support it. We wanted the government to axe the tax on farmers and food by immediately passing Bill C-234 in its original form, which would give farmers in my community and across the country much-needed tax relief. We wanted the Liberals to build homes, not bureaucracy, by requiring cities to permit 15% more homebuilding each year as a condition for receiving federal infrastructure funding. We wanted the government to cap its wasteful spending with a dollar-for-dollar rule to bring down interest rates and inflation, which presently impacts Canadians in many ways, including mortgage renewals.

Just like a family managing its household budget, Ottawa should always look to find a dollar in savings before looking for a dollar in new spending. Sadly, the NDP-Liberal government did not meet any of these common-sense requests. The finance minister has again chosen the same inflationary deficits that have pushed Canadians into a cost of living crisis.

In listening to the Minister of Finance present her budget, I was particularly struck by one line. In her budget speech, the Minister of Finance discussed the importance of not passing on ballooning debt to our children. That is exactly what the budget does.

That is what the NDP-Liberal government has been doing for nine years; just look at the numbers. Budget 2024 forecasts that the federal debt will rise to \$1.2 trillion this year and the interest Canadians will pay in servicing that debt will increase to \$54 billion this fiscal year. That is more than the government intends to spend on provincial health care transfers.

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The budget also shows that the government raised \$51 billion in revenue from GST last year. That means that every cent of GST that every Canadian, business or not-for-profit organization may pay on the products and services they buy will not go toward a single government service program. It does not matter if someone buys a key chain or a car. If they pay the government GST, it will not be used to pay for roads, health care or armed forces. Instead, that amount will be used solely to pay the interest on the government's credit card.

• (1545)

Canada is not paying down its debt. Canada is paying the interest on our debt, while the debt still grows. That means these payments will only increase by a projected \$54 billion again next year, \$57 billion the year after, \$60 billion after that and \$64 billion after that. From now until the end of this decade, taxpayers will provide the government with \$289 billion, which would not be used to pay for any public services Canadians depend on.

As the shadow minister for persons with disabilities, I have been greatly concerned with the government's string of broken promises regarding the Canada disability benefit, which all parties in the House supported. The Liberal Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities will not even acknowledge that persons with disabilities are in a cost of living crisis.

I asked her three times yesterday at the human resources committee, and the most she would say is that it has been "a challenging time". We heard testimony during the Canada disability benefit legislation at the human resources committee that persons with disabilities were considering medical assistance in dying because they could not afford to live.

The Liberal government's pushing off implementation until late into 2025, with a peek into the limited regulations and amounts that might be, saw widespread backlash from my local residents and from national groups representing persons with disabilities. Many persons with disabilities are already among the hardest hit by the cost of living crisis, but apparently the minister does not agree.

Five years of Liberal minister photo ops and announcements on this benefit have produced another broken promise. Ironically, the NDP-Liberal government's 2024 budget title is "Fairness for Every Generation." Skyrocketing federal debt will consume more of our tax dollars, while potentially threatening future social, environmental or security initiatives. This is not worth the cost to any generation, and it certainly is not fair to young adults and kids who will bear the brunt of paying the debt down.

This unwavering commitment to higher debt and deficits has characterized the Liberal government's last nine years. We have seen a doubling of rent, mortgage payments and down payments. There are reports of people not meeting the mortgage stress test and having to sell their homes to rent, only to find rent to be more expensive than their mortgage payment. It is a real concern that there is a big wave of both residential and commercial renewals coming this summer. Insolvencies are already increasing.

This budget projects unemployment to rise to 6.5% this year. Despite the employment minister telling us, at the human resources

committee in December, that he had a plan to address it. We have not seen that plan.

All these issues are not coincidences. They are the consequences of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal deficits driving up costs.

David Dodge, the former Liberal-appointed governor of the Bank of Canada, said that this budget is the worst he has seen since 1982. The previous finance minister, Bill Morneau, has also criticized it. The Bank of Canada and former Liberal finance minister, John Manley, both confirmed that the federal Liberal government's deficit spending was pressing on the inflationary gas pedal, forcing the Bank of Canada to balloon interest rates.

Liberal ministers have been travelling the country to create photo ops for their new spending. However, new spending outlined in budget 2024 would not meaningfully impact consumer costs if inflation is not brought under control, therefore, lowering interest rates. The government, at the same time, continues to increase taxes. Rising food and gas prices are predicted to rise through 2024.

I have no confidence in the government. My Conservative colleagues and I will vote against the Liberal government's ninth deficit-and-debt budget.

• (1550)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, earlier today we witnessed a very embarrassing question period. The Conservative Party literally walked out.

The Conservatives are very sensitive on the issue of Diagonal, a very far-right group, extreme right. There are all sorts of concerns in regard to it. The leader of the Conservative Party refuses to disassociate himself from that organization. This is the same far extreme right that talks about cuts and is very anti-government.

I am wondering if the member across the way would like to put some distance between her and that association of the leader of the Conservative Party.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would be loath to claim that the member was intentionally misleading the House. However, in the interest of informing him, I wonder if I could seek the unanimous consent of the House to table a statement made by the Leader of the Opposition, specifically, in extremely strong terms, denouncing the very organization that the member mentioned.

Do I have unanimous consent to table that statement?

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, I would ask for unanimous consent to table an editorial, in which the leader of the Conservative Party is advised that he should “steer clear of far-right extremists”. It says, “[The leader of the Conservative Party] did tell the group of protesters to ‘keep—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are not going to start a debate on the issue. It has absolutely nothing to do with the affairs of government.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, also on the same point of order, because we are talking about clarity, I believe the parliamentary secretary referred to an incorrect name for the organization in question. He called it “Diagonal”. Just so that we are all on the side of the angles, I want to make sure—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are not going to start that debate. It has nothing to do with the business of government.

The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, thank you for clarifying that we are here to talk about the business of government and budget 2024.

It has been such a bomb for the government. It has had photo ops all across the country, but it has been an absolute failure. The government thought that rolling out the budget in advance, piece by piece, would have a huge uptake in the love of the budget, and that is absolutely not what has happened.

We are debating the budget here today. I spoke quite a bit about all of the issues that have been created by deficit spending, and it is not working. Nine years of deficit spending is not working, and it is crushing Canadians' bank accounts.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, in this budget, we see a lot of interference in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. Take, for example, pharmacare and dental insurance. Quebec already has such programs, but the government refuses to provide the right to compensation.

What does my colleague think about that?

• (1555)

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, what is really interesting is that the Liberal government seems to feel that, if it takes something over, it will be more cost-effective and more efficient, there will be less red tape and it will run better. In fact, it is the exact opposite. We have seen that with everything it touches, whether it is internal services or the programs it creates.

I really do not have confidence at all in the government taking on programs. We see, even within government departments, how they are not even meeting their own service standards internally. A lot of

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the programs they have taken on have not worked and have failed in many ways. Whatever Liberals touch they seem to break.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the member for Kelowna—Lake Country made some really important remarks to the minister at the human resources committee yesterday, pointing out the extent to which folks with disabilities are living in legislated poverty. I appreciate that she made those comments.

If there is a Conservative government one day in the future and the Canada disability benefit was in place at a level that would lift folks with disabilities out of poverty, in that situation, is that a benefit that would remain in place over time?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, the hon. member was at committee yesterday and asked some really good questions of the government and asked for documents. I look forward to those documents coming to the committee.

Conservatives on this side supported the disability benefit from the very beginning. We did not do anything to withhold the legislation. In fact, we did as much as we could to expedite it when it was debated at committee. It was Bill C-22 and we supported it right from the very beginning.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know in my colleague's riding she meets with many people, small businesses owners and people in smaller communities. I assume that she spoke to a lot of people, as I did, this past week. I heard nothing but negative comments about this budget, not one positive thing.

Is that similar to the responses the member heard?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, absolutely, I talk to small business owners from my community and across Canada all the time. In particular, when I was home last weekend, it was the number one topic that I heard. Many business owners, especially in the tourism and hospitality sector, have not gone back to their pre-pandemic levels. Many of them incurred a lot of debt during that time and are still not able to pay it off. They are seeing just a continual increase in costs. They have the carbon tax, which is increasing the cost of everything that is transported. I am in a region where we have wineries and breweries. The excise tax is affecting them. Payroll taxes went up. Overall, it is not a good-news story.

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to echo the question that the member from Calgary just asked about being in the riding. I was not in his riding; I was in my own. However, in all the years I have been involved in politics, I think I have never had such an outpouring of negative commentary about the current state of affairs and the current government. Likely, if they were in their riding last week, all 338 MPs heard the same thing.

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This budget is called “Fairness for Every Generation”, and I would argue that it has been many generations since life has felt this unfair, if members hear what I am saying. I would think the reason is that every age group has been negatively impacted by the current government over the last nine years. Seniors who retired within the last 10 years, who had saved money, who had paid off their home and who figured their money would last them until they no longer needed it, are now in peril. That is now, for the first time, a question mark. Will they have enough to retire? Maybe a place where they are paying rent, if they sold their home and moved into an apartment or wherever they chose to live, was \$1,200 or \$1,500 a month. In my area, for example, it is over \$2,000 a month now. A number of different components of high government spending have negatively impacted seniors.

For families, whether it is a couple looking to have kids or a couple who has kids, whatever the kids' ages are, there are unbelievable skyrocketing costs. For people driving their kids back and forth to hockey, baseball, soccer or whatever they are doing, it is monumental how much things cost now. High government spending, out-of-control deficits, out-of-control debt and increasing interest rates have led to probably the most unfair period of time, at least in my lifetime and likely beyond that.

Back in 2015, this is what former prime minister Stephen Harper wrote about what the Liberals would do: “Permanent deficits, higher taxes, and more debt, as proposed by the Liberals and the NDP, will wreck our economy, cost you money and possibly your job.” Can members imagine? He said that over nine years ago. He predicted this. He knew what the Prime Minister and his staff behind him, pushing all the buttons, would do. They were going to spend, spend, spend and destroy 20 years' worth of fiscal stewardship that would have led Canada to be among the elite in the world. That is what Stephen Harper said in 2015. He also said that “imposing carbon [tax] schemes” would “[drive] up the price of everything Canadian families buy—including gasoline, groceries, and home heating fuel.

It is easy for us to be the Monday-morning quarterback now and say “of course this is what has happened”, but this is what Stephen Harper said nine years ago. He knew all this was going to happen. It was very obvious. The Liberals have done that. They have increased costs.

I was at an annual general meeting earlier in the year, and the president and general manager of the co-op was commenting on the price of fuel, because the co-op sells fuel. It also sells propane to people who heat their homes with propane and to farmers as well. The general manager looks at the bills to see how bad they are. He was not making a political statement because I was there; he does not owe me anything. All he said was that, from his perspective, the single biggest and kindest thing the government could do for families in Huron—Bruce and across the country would be to get rid of the carbon tax and come right off it.

However, the Liberals continue to pile-drive on Canadian families and price people right out of homes. In fact, Liberal members of Parliament are getting up and giving speeches admitting that constituents in their riding who would have been able to afford homes 15 years ago cannot afford homes now. They are living in basements. One Liberal member of Parliament said as much.

• (1600)

I would also like to go back in time to when Jim Flaherty was the finance minister. He was probably amongst the best finance ministers of all time, if not the best. When he would deliver his budget, it was called an economic action plan. It was a plan to boost productivity, make economic gain, keep an eye on the government's finances, look at trade deals and grow the wealth of all Canadians. We have all heard the story about the high tide that lifts all boats and makes everybody do better. That is really what a Jim Flaherty budget was about.

We are so far from that today. If we go back in time to when Jim Flaherty was the finance minister, a young couple could buy a home. They could afford the down payment. They could see the day down the road when they could likely retire. Their parents, who were in their fifties at the time, could also see the day they could retire. That is now all up in smoke because of nine years of high-flying spending.

Pretty well everybody in here knows this by now, I would imagine, but we might as well review. When the Liberals were elected and were brought in, there was a balanced budget. There was a modest surplus after the great economic downturn of 2007, 2008 and 2009. There was approximately \$600 billion in government debt. Today, the gross debt of this country is perilously close to \$2 trillion. That is unbelievable. It is a blemish that will be on the government's legacy for all time. There is a deficit of \$47 billion, which will go up between now and the end of the fiscal year for sure.

With respect to the debt-to-GDP ratio, in 2015, it was 31% and was coming down. It was 32% or 33% the year before, and it went down to 31%. Now our debt-to-GDP ratio, according to the numbers, is 42%. It is not quite a 50% disaster, but it is definitely going in the wrong direction.

I know the finance minister always says that when we compare it to the other G7 countries, we look great. If we are comparing ourselves to the worst managers of finance, maybe we do look good, I do not know, but I would not compare myself to the United States fiscally. I would not compare Canada's finances to those of Japan. Its finances are toast. It is manipulating its currency and interest rates. The United States has \$34 trillion in debt. When Bill Clinton left office 20-something years ago, it was at \$7 trillion and it was on its way to paying off all the debt. That is gone. It is adding a trillion dollars of debt every quarter. That is called a debt, or death, spiral. This is a perilous time. The finance minister should not say that we look great compared with the other G7 countries, because we should be comparing ourselves to what it looked like eight or nine years ago and be ashamed of our fiscal record. That is what she should look at. It is kind of like one's golf game. We do not compare it to our buddies' games, but to our own.

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Another thing we have heard about is the AAA credit rating. RBC just said that Canada's AAA rating is in trouble because of the spending; it can be downgraded. B.C. has been downgraded three times in three years and now sits at an AA-.

The last point I will make before I turn it over is that we are entering into a period of what I call the trifecta of trouble because of this. We have backed ourselves into a corner with inflation, interest rates, mortgage rates and the Canadian dollar. If we have to raise rates because inflation is a little sticky, then the interest rates are going up, which will further compress the housing problem, as well as the Canadian dollar.

• (1605)

Maybe in questions and answers, we can look into that further. I appreciate the time and look forward to questions.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a really specific question. The hon. member for Huron—Bruce is the sponsor of a private member's bill, Bill C-234, which is extremely important for Canadian farmers across the country. I applaud him for bringing it forward. I voted for it here in the House and will be supporting the bill when it comes to a vote unamended.

The member and I would perhaps take a different view on how the government has approached the issue, but we hear a lot about Bill C-234 in the House from the Conservatives asking the government whether it would support the bill. The government has been very clear that it would take a different approach, but the Conservatives have an opportunity to actually get relief for farmers by letting that vote come to the House and happen. There is a parliamentary majority. The Bloc has signalled that it would support the Senate amendments.

Can the hon. member tell us when we might expect Bill C-234 to come to a vote, if the member for Carleton will let him, so we can get relief for our farmers, including in Kings—Hants?

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, the member for Kings—Hants and I have had some collegial discussions over the last couple of years.

There was a unanimous consent motion to pass this bill at all stages. That was rejected by the Liberals. I understand the whole UC motion thing, but at the same time, this bill will be coming up for debate at the end of May, and that will be the true test. We will hear from the member for Kings—Hants at that time on what he and his Liberal colleagues will do.

I will also say that the farmers will be in the fields at that point in time. In my area, most of the corn will be planted and the soybeans will likely be starting to grow in the south. Farmers are going to want to see results. They will want to see what the Liberals and the Bloc Québécois do on this bill.

Is it going to be amended or in its original form? If members are truly for farmers, they will make this vote on the original bill, because farmers need the relief.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, we agree that the government does little in its budget for families, housing, seniors and health care.

If the Conservatives were in power, would they agree to give Quebec the right to opt out with full compensation and no strings attached from any federal program that falls under the constitutional jurisdiction of the provinces?

[English]

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, I would argue that, when the Conservatives were in government, Stephen Harper was the prime minister and Jim Flaherty was the finance minister, we were probably the most respectful of all the levels of provincial jurisdiction. We were so effective, we almost made the Bloc Québécois extinct. I remember that. It was almost wiped out. Why? It is because the residents of Quebec knew they had a prime minister and a finance minister that respected the Constitution and the areas of provincial jurisdiction. There were no problems. There were no issues in Quebec the entire time Stephen Harper was prime minister.

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I find it to be an interesting comment that there were absolutely no problems, when, in fact, the Harper government was plagued with problems.

Specifically on budgetary policy, the member continued to comment about how amazing Harper's government was in terms of financial management. However, Harper ran a reported five straight budgetary deficits.

What does he have to say about that? I would really love to hear.

Mr. Ben Lobb: Madam Speaker, that is right, and maybe when the member goes home on the weekend, she could talk to her mom and ask her what happened back then.

It was the great financial crisis. If we go back to the IMF and everybody else, they would agree that that is what we did. The most important thing, and the biggest distinction between us and the Liberals, is that we actually got back to a balanced budget. The Liberals are in no man's land with the finances. It will take a Conservative government, led by our leader, to get Canada back on track, get the budget balanced and get rid of all these carbon taxes.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Public Services and Procurement; the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay, Emergency Preparedness; the hon. member for Bow River, Carbon Pricing.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to discuss our government's priorities in budget 2024. I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg South Centre.

The Budget

In my speech today I want to focus on certain priority areas for my residents in Brampton South that I believe this budget responds well to. As I met with families, businesses and organizations in my riding, I have heard about serious issues and challenges that they wanted their federal government to address. Issues such as addressing auto theft, implementing national pharmacare and supporting our youth, seniors and families are just some of the concerns I have heard from my residents. I am going to highlight some effective advocacy of the members on this side of the House that has helped us achieve important progress and fairness in Brampton and for millions of Canadians.

Let me start with the response to auto theft. I have heard through consultation, as well as on the doorsteps of my residents, that we need to work together with all levels of government to urgently respond to this issue. This is exactly what we are doing.

Hundreds of cars have been stolen. Auto theft is not a victimless crime. It harms thousands of Canadians every year. No one should wake up to discover the car they use to get to work, school or the grocery store has been taken from them. This is why the Liberal government is cracking down on auto theft with a robust plan to make it harder to steal and export vehicles.

Members of the 905 caucus, the auto caucus and the Brampton caucus have also advocated for tougher penalties for the offenders, something we have heard from our local law enforcement. This is why the government is also moving forward with harsher penalties under the Criminal Code for those who commit an auto theft-related offence.

Budget 2024 announces the government's intent to amend the Criminal Code to provide additional tools for law enforcement and prosecutors to address auto theft. New criminal offences will be created related to auto theft, such as possession of an electronic device used to steal cars, and new offences for those who involve youth in their crimes.

Most stolen cars leave our country through the ports, and this is where we are putting our attention. Earlier this year, I attended the national summit on combatting auto theft where we raised the concerns of our residents about making sure we take measures to secure our ports. One of the key resolutions of the summit was the commitment of Transport Canada to work with public safety partners to identify cargo-handling risks through targeted security assessments of port facilities.

CBSA has been an important partner in fighting auto theft. Our local Peel Regional Police has one of the largest investigative teams in the country, and we are directing our federal agencies through this funding to increase collaboration on investigations. This includes exploring detection technology solutions and exploring the use of advanced analytical tools, such as artificial intelligence. We will continue our work to protect Canadian families.

Speaking of Canadian families, this budget reinforces an important national program that has already been delivering for thousands of Canadians, which is child care. Before I go any further, I want to recognize the work of our status of women committee on this file in our ongoing study on women's economic empowerment.

I also want to take a moment to thank all members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women for their hard work.

It is important to do everything we can to support our children. That is why the government launched a Canada-wide affordable child care system in 2021, with the final agreement announced in my riding of Brampton South. We know that more needs to be done to ensure that even more families are able to secure space for their children. This is why budget 2024 proposes to launch a child care expansion loan program. The program would offer low-cost loans and non-repayable contributions to public and not-for-profit child care providers to build more child care spaces and renovate child care centres. The new child care spaces created through the program would increase access to affordable child care in Brampton and across Canada, saving more families thousands of dollars per child every year.

● (1615)

We know that we need to do more to support our children, as nearly one in four do not get enough food. This has real impacts on their opportunities to grow and learn, which is why the federal government is taking decisive action to launch a new national school food program and work with provinces, territories and indigenous partners to expand access to school food programs. The national school food program is expected to provide meals for more than 400,000 kids each year. This program would ensure that our future generations have what they need to grow and help make Canada a better place for all.

As a mother, I know that it is important for us to support our children when they grow up and start their careers. Those of Canada's generation Z need the confidence of knowing they will find a good job that will help them get ahead. To help younger Canadians pursue and achieve their dreams, the government is investing to create more youth job opportunities and ensure that hard work pays off for the next generation. Budget 2024 is proposing that the Government of Canada creates 90,000 youth job placements across the country. That includes a significant expansion of the Canada summer jobs program and the youth employment and skills strategy program.

This would mean that moms and dads in Brampton could count on the availability of good jobs for their children who are starting their careers. These jobs will help students gain much needed work experience and support in areas facing labour shortages, such as health care or in senior homes. In my riding of Brampton South, I know Holland Christian Homes. There are many senior homes where students have worked before, and they will now have the opportunity to work again.

Speaking of our seniors, we know that, after a lifetime of working hard, Canadians deserve to know they have a secure and comfortable retirement. Their golden years are meant to be spent in retirement with their families. Canada's social safety net delivers the promise of a safe and secure retirement for everyone.

Seniors rely on these investments to keep a roof over their heads and food on their plates. The government's largest program, old age security, will deliver security to more than seven million seniors this year, and our government has increased the maximum GIS benefit for single seniors.

Nine provinces and territories have announced agreements with the federal government so far. We have also been working hard on the aging with dignity agreement, which would provide \$5.4 billion to include access to home care. After a lifetime of their hard work and helping Canada through some of its toughest times, we have our seniors' backs.

As chair of the all-party diabetes caucus, I am proud of our government's commitments to the national diabetes framework and launching a national pharmacare program. This is something I have been advocating for since I passed my Bill C-237, an act to establish a national framework for diabetes. Our government is now investing in a national pharmacare strategy with a focus on diabetes medication and supplies.

Budget 2024 proposes to provide 1.5 billion dollars over five years, starting in 2024-25, to Health Canada to support the launch of the national pharmacare plan. This investment would save Canadians thousands of dollars per year on contraceptives, as well as diabetes medication and supplies. Improving access to diabetes medication will help improve the health of millions of Canadians. That will reduce the risk of serious life-threatening health complications.

Budget 2024 is delivering fairness for every generation. That is why I urge all members of Parliament to support the passage of the bill.

• (1620)

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member opposite, in her speech today, went on at great length about auto theft. We, at the public safety committee, have recently been studying auto theft. The mayor of Brampton has been very vocal on the severe problem that city is having, a problem she is well aware of.

Yesterday at committee, we had the leads from the Halifax port, who indicated that exterior shipments right now are being inspected at a rate of 0%. Those are his words. In the last five years, not one single vehicle has been confiscated.

How can the member say that they are doing all they can to stop vehicles from being stolen from Canadians?

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Speaker, if the member has not read that section of the budget, he can find it on page 249. We just had a national summit on auto theft. These are the actions our government is taking to deal with this issue.

All Canadians deserve to feel safe in their communities. Our government recognizes auto theft is a serious problem in Canada. The Government of Canada is committed to continued collabora-

tion with provincial and municipal partners, law enforcement, port authorities and shipping companies. As part of our collective efforts to combat this crime, we met with the mayor and council, as well as with the public safety minister. We are all working together. I want to urge the member opposite to pass the bill so we can provide the support they need.

• (1625)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech with great care, and I appreciate her concern for members of the community. I wonder whether she shares my concern that the level set in the budget for people with disabilities of a \$200-a-month benefit is far too low and that it should be perhaps doubled, at least, before we proceed with the budget. We proposed this disability benefit almost four years ago, during the pandemic. At the time, we anticipated it would be set at a level to lift all people with disabilities out of poverty, and certainly the current rate would not do that.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Speaker, this is an important matter. I am speaking with the disability community and have met with members. We need to do more. This \$6 billion is the first step, but I agree we need to do more. We need to work with the provinces and territories to ensure they do not reduce their disability benefit. These new measures will continue to do more. We also need to work with provinces and territories, and the existing programs also need to be strengthened. I thank the member for his advocacy.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am going to talk about interference again. We all understand that the federal government has a spending power. This power is provided by the taxes paid by the adults among the 38 million inhabitants. Nevertheless, there is a Constitution that is a fairly clear contract setting out the duties of each party, be it the federal government, Quebec or the Canadian provinces, and the territorial governments.

When will the government respect its Constitution and not use its spending power to interfere in jurisdictions that do not belong to it?

[English]

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Madam Speaker, we absolutely respect the jurisdiction of Quebec and all provinces and territories. There are many examples of the government working hand in hand with Quebec and the provinces. I give the example of the national child care program, which is such a good example. Quebec is a recognized national leader in child care. With due respect, we will continue to work hand in hand with Quebec and the provinces while respecting the jurisdictions.

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Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House on behalf of those I represent in Winnipeg South Centre.

The budget is one of the most important documents tabled in this chamber every year. It is something that sets forward the priorities for the government and a vision for the country moving forward.

I also have a tremendous amount of respect for the process that ensues after a budget is tabled, and that is that we get to engage in dialogue here with our colleagues, who are themselves representing tens of thousands of people in the communities they come from. I appreciate the opportunity to engage in that dialogue with them here today.

[Translation]

As always, I will try my best to practise my French. My Bloc Québécois colleagues will likely ask me a question, so I will try my best to speak some French during the debate and I will certainly speak French when answering their questions.

[English]

When I knocked on doors during what was my increasingly not-so-recent by-election in June this past year, I talked to constituents who conveyed a number of priorities to me. Of course, the priorities of voters are as varied as the voters themselves. However, there were a number of issues that emerged frequently as the top priorities on the minds of those in Winnipeg South Centre.

They were focused primarily on the environment; on mental health and addiction, and health care broadly speaking; on reconciliation; and on affordability, with a particular focus on housing. It is with respect to those priorities that I rise today and focus the contents of my speech with regard to this budget.

With the environment, there is no doubt that we are at a crisis level, both here in the country and globally. Smoke fills the air we breathe during the summertime, preventing kids from going to camp or the elderly from going outside. Droughts make the fragile soil crumble in places like Manitoba, where I come from in the Prairies, leading to devastating consequences on the foundations of homes, which lead to significant costs and irritants on the part of constituents.

There are dangerous heat waves that make life dangerous for vulnerable citizens, most particularly the elderly in my riding. There are, of course, increased costs that come along with climate change. I have had the pleasure of serving on both the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food as well as the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs since joining colleagues here in Parliament, and I have noted how often concerns around climate change and the environment are raised in the context of our discussions at those committees.

The Canadian Climate Institute, which is a nationally respected organization of scientists and policy experts, has recently published a report that speaks about the state of affairs vis-à-vis climate change and climate policies in Canada. It is important to note that policies are working.

Without the combination of environmental policies we have in place now, which were put forward by our government, emissions would be 40% higher than they are. By 2030, if the combined policies we have implemented thus far remain in place, we will see a reduction in emissions that equals the combination of both the province of Ontario and the province of Quebec together.

We are continuing to protect the environment, and we are doing it in meaningful ways, but I want to take the opportunity to talk about how we are protecting the environment, specifically in my home province of Manitoba.

We have made historic investments in Lake Winnipeg, a place that is not only one of significant importance personally to many of those I represent, but also one of the world's largest freshwater lakes. It plays a critical role in the preservation of our environment.

● (1630)

The same is true for Lake of the Woods in Ontario, just over the Manitoba border, which my hon. colleague from Kenora represents. As I have stated in the House before, he serves as my member of Parliament there. We have intentionally invested in the preservation and the sustainability of that valuable area of water as well. The Seal River watershed is one of the world's largest remaining intact watersheds that, and it is something that, working alongside first nations communities and the provincial government in Manitoba, we have invested in to ensure its protection moving forward.

It is important to note, thanks in large part to the work of my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg South, that there is a new national water agency, which will be headquartered in the heart of the Prairies, in Winnipeg. This is going to play a critical role in how we sustain and preserve our environment for generations to come.

Canada must do its part, not only from a moral grounds perspective, but also from an economic perspective, in terms of our relationship with trading partners. If we do not have aggressive policies in place domestically that effectively counter the impacts and the disastrous consequences of climate change, then we will be left out of future trade deals with our partners, and worse, we will be taxed on our imports. It is critical that we maintain direction like the one we have established.

I want to shift now to talk for a few moments about mental health and addiction. This issue is deeply personal to me for a number of reasons. One is that I have several very close family members who, for years, have struggled with addiction and with mental health issues. I cannot count how many times I have received a knock on the door by a police officer who had to drive a family member to the emergency room, have visited family members on a psychiatry ward or have engaged in very difficult tensions that emerge in families when we try to figure out the best ways to support those we love as they deal with mental health and addictions crises.

In addition to that, my mother is one of the leading addictions doctors and specialists in the province of Manitoba. It is something that gives me tremendous pride. It is through much of her work that I am not only inspired to help but also derive much of my information and understanding of the issues.

The Budget

I want to talk very briefly about the ways in which this budget would address some of the mental health and addictions crises we are facing in the country. Recently, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions visited my hometown of Winnipeg with me, and we visited the only mobile overdose prevention site between Thunder Bay and, I believe, Saskatoon. It is called Sunshine House, and it is a remarkable place. In a recent report done through an independent audit, there were 26,154 visits in one year, last year, to Sunshine House, which fortunately resulted in no deaths and only 20 overdoses. Suicide prevention is a critical component of the government's policy, and the introduction of the suicide crisis helpline is very important for the future of our country.

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection, which is located in my riding of Winnipeg South Centre, is doing amazing work not only in the country but also around the world to protect children, specifically, from online harms. We would provide funding that would allow it to continue to do that important work. I was very pleased to see, particularly as a former teacher and principal, that there would be \$500 million invested in a youth mental health fund.

I want to elaborate a little on reconciliation, which is the final piece. I will not have time to expand on it; although, if one of my colleagues is gracious enough to ask me a question regarding that, I would be happy to take some time to respond. I want to note that so much of the legacy of residential schools is still with us. I saw it every single day when I worked with young indigenous kids and their families. I am so pleased to see that there is \$96 million in the budget that would help to support survivors, as intergenerational trauma still very much applies when we talk about the challenges we face.

• (1635)

With that, I am pleased to have had the opportunity to rise today on behalf of those I represent, and I am happy to take questions now from my colleagues.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do want to take this opportunity to congratulate my friend and fellow former Carleton alumnus on his by-election win and to wish him well in the upcoming Liberal leadership race; I think he would do better than some of the prospective contenders.

I want to ask the member a serious question. He spoke, toward the end of his comments, about mental health and about suicide prevention. As I understand it, it continues to be a policy of the government that it wants to pursue, at some point, the legalization of medically facilitated suicide for those with mental health challenges. Concurrently, the government continues to consider and to speculate about extending that regime to include minors. I know the member talked about reconciliation. Many indigenous leaders have spoken out against these proposals, as have many others. As a former teacher and a former principal, does the member agree with the government's intentions to eventually extend medically facilitated suicide to those struggling with mental health challenges?

• (1640)

Mr. Ben Carr: Madam Speaker, I look forward to selling my colleague a membership; although, we offer them for free now, so he does not have to worry about that.

In all seriousness, I suspect that my colleague is referring to some recent debates we had around extending medical assistance in dying in this country to those suffering from irreparable psychological conditions. I do think this is a very challenging conversation. However, I can speak to the experiences that I have had with some young people, over the age of 18, but young nonetheless. They have been in my office, sitting across from me and talking about the experiences they have had and about some reasons that they have wanted to continue to advocate for themselves to be eligible for the same types of assistance in dying protocols that are in place for those with irremediable physical illnesses.

I recognize, absolutely, that it is a challenge. I would be happy to continue the conversation with my hon. colleague in a format that would perhaps allow us to delve into the complexity and the nuance a bit more. However, I do look forward to continuing that conversation with constituents I represent.

[Translation]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, we all think that it is essential to ensure that everyone has access to housing and health care, especially when we are in our ridings and we see how hard life is for our constituents, those who are around us every day.

It is important that the federal government use its spending power to make the necessary transfers for infrastructure, particularly when it comes to housing and health care. The federal government is infringing on other jurisdictions by wanting to set conditions that the provinces and municipalities have to meet in order to get that funding.

Since the federal government decided to infringe on our jurisdictions, what conditions does it intend to impose before it will transfer money for housing to Quebec?

Mr. Ben Carr: Madam Speaker, as a member representing a riding outside Quebec, it is kind of hard for me to give an answer about something that has to do with Quebec.

Nevertheless, my colleague did talk about health care, and I am proud to say that, a few months ago, the Premier of Manitoba, the Prime Minister of Canada, the Minister of Health, other colleagues and I were in Winnipeg announcing \$630 million for Manitoba's health care system. I know that will make things a lot better for the people I represent.

I am sorry that, as a Manitoba MP, I was not able to answer my colleague's question about talks between Quebec and Canada. However, I am certainly interested in continuing the conversation.

[English]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg South Centre mentioned reconciliation. I know that the issue of murdered and missing indigenous women and girls is one that has profoundly affected communities in his home province of Manitoba.

The Budget

It was good to see mention in the budget of the red dress alert. However, we were disappointed to see the very modest budget commitment to that service. By comparison, the 988 suicide crisis helpline received \$156 million over three years for implementation. The commitment in the budget for the red dress alert is \$1.3 million over three years.

How does the member explain what seems to many people to be a huge discrepancy in the funding? Do not get me wrong; the suicide crisis helpline is essential. I am simply noting the disparity between the numbers.

Mr. Ben Carr: Madam Speaker, I know there is an alignment of values and shared principles when it comes to supporting communities. I had the pleasure, as an educator, of working alongside many indigenous families when I was working in schools. I have seen the pain and the trauma that come as a result of over a century and a half of oppressive policies here in Canada. I am happy to continue the conversation. It is certainly something I have engaged in a discussion—

● (1645)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam.

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am going to share my time with the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

I am standing today as a woman in Parliament. Every time I enter this place, I am aware of how different my experiences in life are from those of the men who have tried to keep women out of this place for 100 years or more. My colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, said it explicitly recently when she called out the Conservative Party's infringing on the status of women committee. The fact that the Conservatives recently chose to arbitrarily remove the respected chair of the committee not only disrespected the voices of women on the committee but also was symbolic of how the women in the House of Commons are often punished when their voice is too strong, by a system designed to benefit men in power.

As I was reading through the budget this year, it was with the lens of being a woman and how, for 100 years, our needs have been second, for example with respect to child care. I have often said in the House that the only reason I am standing here is the \$5-a-day day care I had access to when I lived in Quebec. That fact allowed me to go back to school and become a programmer analyst. That allowed me to capitalize on opportunities in the new, digital economy of Y2K. I know how important affordable child care is for women, and I am so pleased to see in the budget, with investments in educators as well, that it is going to be a gateway of economic empowerment. That reality for women cannot be understated.

Child care is the second-largest payment for families after housing. I am incredibly grateful to the leader of the NDP and the member for Winnipeg Centre for finally forcing the government to enact affordable, quality child care in this country. The Liberals would not have done it on their own; they proved that over the past 25 years. It was 28 years ago that I benefited from the \$5-a-day day care in Quebec. That is how long the rest of Canada has been waiting for accessible, affordable child care.

The Conservatives would not have offered this type of child care at all. In fact, the Conservatives would walk back any kind of public, affordable, accessible child care if they were ever to get into power. I never want to see that.

The budget is not an NDP budget, but there are clear examples of the difference between how the NDP uses its power for good to support people and how Conservatives continue, with their gut-and-cut ideologies, to hurt people. Conservatives have used their past powers to make their corporate friends even richer by instituting \$60-billion corporate handouts, which I want to say the Liberals have continued to support, while they cut services for women, families, seniors and persons with disabilities. By contrast, the NDP, with only 24 MPs, forced the government to enhance the social safety net that lowers costs for Canadians by addressing affordability, health care, housing, climate and more.

With that in mind, I need to address right away the deficit of respect the Liberals have shown for persons with disabilities, as it relates to the Canada disability benefit outlined in the budget. What is in the budget is not the Canada disability benefit in reality or in spirit. The Liberal government never seems to run out of money for handouts to giant corporations and rich CEOs, but when it comes to the benefit promised to people living with disabilities suddenly the government offers only crumbs.

Offering only \$200 a month through the Canada disability benefit, hidden behind an inaccessible and inequitable disability tax credit is not recoverable for the government. It is insulting, and the government needs to adhere to the NDP amendments to Bill C-22 and those that came from the Senate, to ensure that the benefit will lift persons with disabilities out of poverty.

● (1650)

The Liberal government threw aside the advice and the input of disability advocates. Its own policy advisory council had resignations over the Canada disability benefit criteria. It disregarded the legislation, and worst of all, it disregarded people with disabilities. It is shameful. The government was told that the use of the disability tax credit would create a barrier to access. It did not care; it did it anyway.

While the Liberals' inadequate Canada disability benefit is best understood as an insult, there are important items in the budget that we need to protect in order to significantly reduce the cost of living for persons with disabilities and to increase overall well-being. That includes the long-overdue protection for renters to stop them from losing their homes to speculators and renovations.

The current government, and the Conservatives before it, let this country lose affordable housing at a rate of 11:1. The Conservatives and the Liberals are the architects of the reality we are living now, walking away from affordable housing investments for decades and shovelling money to developers gentrifying neighbourhoods with investments in condos 50 storeys high. They left persons with disabilities behind, leaving them with less accessible and less affordable housing.

In the budget, the NDP forced the government to create a rental protection fund, the housing accelerator fund, and a new rapid housing stream to build deeply affordable homes. It is only because of the NDP that we are having a revitalization of affordable and accessible homes in this country.

The NDP has also secured historic expansions to our universal health care system for persons with disabilities and all Canadians, a health care system that is under attack of privatization by Conservative premiers across this country. That cannot happen. Privatization of health care and long-term care is hurting Canadians, and the NDP will not stand for it. We will always push back on privatization of health care at the same time as we advance historic wins for Canadians, like the universal single-payer pharmacare and the transformative dental care program that thousands of children in Port Moody—Coquitlam have already benefited from. We stand against Conservative ideology that puts profits in the hands of CEOs off the backs of people who are just trying to stay healthy. I echo that statement for the Liberals who are standing by and letting it happen.

The NDP pharmacare program will start with life-saving, free diabetes medication and devices and free birth control for millions of Canadians. These are equity measures Canadians cannot risk losing to a Conservative government that courts incels for votes and disregards the voices of women.

With respect to persons with disabilities, the Centre for Health Services and Policy Research Institute at Queen's University wrote, in an article in 2020, "Canadians with disabilities may skip doses of medication or neglect to get their prescriptions filled because of the cost of prescription drugs." The article also stated that pharmacare would "remove financial barriers to prescription drugs, and overcome inequities among Canadians for this important aspect of health care."

The Conservatives have already acted on trying to prevent pharmacare for Canadians, which is a program that would save \$3.5 billion on Canadians' medications and billions more on preventing unnecessary trips to hospitals and doctors' offices, and on ongoing care for preventative illness. Another important program the Conservatives do not support is the creation of a national school food program. It was in my riding that James Moore asked, "is it my job to feed my neighbour's child?". Conservative James Moore said, "I don't think so." My NDP colleagues and I believe it is our job to make sure no child goes to school hungry.

I am going to close by saying women have been ignored in the economy for a long time, and I note that the Liberals put the support of a care economy, which I agree with 100%, and the launching of a national caregiver strategy, which is amazing work by James Janeiro and others in the caregiving realm, under the chapter

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heading "Lifting Up Every Generation" rather than under economic growth—

• (1655)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member is over time.

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, I appreciate the support that New Democrats have provided on a number of progressive measures. I believe it is important. I think Paul Martin and others, such as Jean Chrétien, might question some of the member's comments in regard to child care. Ken Dryden did a phenomenal job on the child care program. Unfortunately it never got passed through the House, ultimately.

I for one have been a very strong advocate for pharmacare for many years now. I am glad that it is incorporated into the budget. We are, from my perspective, at a starting point for pharmacare. One thing we have to look at is what we add to it, and there is no doubt that there will be a lot of discussion over the coming months and years in regard to how we can make the pharmacare program stronger and healthier.

An example would be vaccination for shingles. Could I get the member's thoughts on that issue?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I will take this time to say that all drugs need to be available for Canadians, and it is the work of the NDP to make sure that all drugs will be covered in pharmacare. I appreciate the member's comments on the importance of pharmacare and health care.

As such, I wanted to ask for unanimous consent to table, in both official languages, a report entitled "British Columbia Priorities Panel on Primary Care: New perspectives and possibilities for primary care in Canada".

This is a report—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is there consent?

Some hon. members: No.

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Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to follow up on the member's comments on child care. We could have a debate about what would theoretically be a good child care system, but I think it is hard to deny that the current program from the government on child care is not delivering on the promise. We are hearing very clearly from child care providers across the country that the combination of price regulation with funding that does not match that price regulation is making it impossible for child care operators to maintain and meet the expectations. The result of this is government subsidies for some and less access for others.

Does the member acknowledge those failures, in terms of child care policy, and is she willing to hold the government accountable for them?

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, it does not surprise me at all that the Conservatives would stand up and try to stop access to quality, affordable child care for women. I am very disappointed that the Conservatives would stand up and say no to tabling information about British Columbia's priorities on primary care. These are Canadians across this country who want their voices heard in the House, and I am very disappointed that the Conservatives' decision not to have a simple report accepted here is the way they want to act.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question, but I am not sure it is in her usual area of expertise.

We know that 90% of the francophone minority in Canada lives in Quebec. Quebec is in a minority situation, and 96% of the funding allocated by the federal government to official languages is used to support English in Quebec. For the past two years, we have heard the Liberals boast about wanting to implement measures to protect the French language, but we see nothing in the budget, which contains no financial measures to protect French in Quebec, just like there were none in the action plan for official languages.

What does my colleague think about that? Does she think it is fair that funding for official languages in Quebec is used almost exclusively to support English?

[English]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam has the largest quartier of francophones in British Columbia. The executive director of Société francophone de Maillardville is Johanne Dumas. I want to raise my hands and thank her for all the work she has done, as she is now retiring, to try to get representation of francophones in Maillardville, trying to get some physical space. What I do not think is fair is that the government has been very lax in assisting those who move outside Quebec to keep their language, culture and community. It is very disappointing.

• (1700)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Skeena—Bulkley Valley and address the 2024 budget.

I want to start with a few words about the truly shameful display that we saw today during question period. I was thinking back to my time, just a few weeks ago, on Haida Gwaii, where we celebrated the signing of a historic agreement. The president of the Haida Nation spoke about the Haida concept called *yahguudang*, or respect. It is about a respectful way that we govern our communities, that we engage with our neighbours and that we lead. The Wet'suwet'en, whose land is part of the territory where I live, have a similar word: *wiggus*.

I was thinking about those words and just how far from the spirit of those concepts this place was during question period today. Looking up in the gallery, I saw Canadian citizens looking at the governance of this country, embarrassed and ashamed of what it has become. As a member of Parliament, I too was embarrassed.

I do not speak to individual Conservative members, because there are many good Conservative members whom I respect, some of whom are in the chamber right now. However, the party and the leader are working not to try to change policy in this country, using the institution, but to erode public trust in the institution itself. We have seen that happen in other parts of the world and other parts of North America, and it is not a road that we want to go down as a country.

Turning to the budget before us, I want to start with the context. The context, of course, as many Canadians know, is that we are in a very difficult time. People across the country are struggling with increased costs in terms of skyrocketing rent, groceries, home heat and just about everything. In these times, the government has choices. We all have choices to make. As New Democrats, our vision is that we must come together more than ever during difficult times. We must lift each other up and bring in programs that support each other and support the people who are struggling. Therefore, it is in that context that we are very proud that there are things in this budget that we fought hard for. These things have long been a part of NDP policy, and we are finally seeing steps toward their implementation. I will speak about a few of them, and they have been raised.

I want to thank my wonderful colleague for her words just prior, but I will start with pharmacare. This is obviously such an essential extension of universal health care in Canada. It has been five years since the Hoskins report laid out a very clear path for the government to take to implement universal single-payer pharmacare. We are finally seeing steps toward that, with the recent pharmacare legislation that has been tabled and, in this budget, a commitment of \$1.5 billion over five years for the first phases of a national pharmacare program, starting with two essential classes of medication. One is diabetes medication, which affects thousands and thousands of Canadians. I was noticing statistics from Diabetes Canada that the out-of-pocket cost of type 1 diabetes is as high as \$18,000 per year. People living with type 2 diabetes are paying as much as \$10,000 a year, and this is precisely the kind of cost that the first tranche of a national pharmacare program would cover. We are very proud to see that in the budget and to see the legislation that is before this House.

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A national school food program is something that would lift up so many students across Canada who are going to school hungry, and the idea is that having at least one meal per day of healthy food would help those students so much. It goes without saying. I was thinking back to my experience in Terrace with the wonderful community volunteers, such as Gurjeet Parhar, with the Kalum Community School Society, as well as Helene Fleury, of the group Groundbreakers in Smithers.

● (1705)

These folks have been advocating for years for a national school food program. A billion dollars over five years in the budget is going to be a huge step forward, helping deliver meals to over 400,000 students across the country.

With regard to the firefighter tax credit, I want to give credit to my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni for his hard work ensuring that this is in the budget. This is going to double the tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue personnel in our communities from \$3,000 per year to \$6,000 per year.

Certainly, in the region I represent, which is a huge rural region, volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers play a critical role. I was in Houston the other day, talking with their search and rescue team. One figure that the individual shared with me was that, in British Columbia, search and rescue teams provide \$200 million per year of value. If we think about all the volunteer fire departments and add that to the search and rescue teams, the figure would be a staggering one.

I think about folks in Bela Coola, Fort St. James, Bella Bella, Houston, Smithers, Telkwa and all the way up to Dease Lake. There, these small volunteer fire departments are made up of individuals who donate their time, contribute their personal time to keeping their neighbours safe.

This is a way we can recognize that contribution. It is going to help with recruitment and retention, and I think it is a huge step forward for our country.

Liberal budgets are often a bit of a mixed bag. There are things in this budget that are half measures and worse. There are policies that, on the surface, look as though they are heading in the right direction. However, when one looks at the financial commitment in the budget, it is hard to see how we are going to make marked progress on critical issues.

One that has received some debate already today is the government's approach to the Canada disability benefit. We were very hopeful when we saw the legislation pass that created the foundation for this benefit. However, people living with disabilities waited month after month, year after year, to find out what the amount was going to be, because the important thing here is the amount that was going to supposedly lift people out of poverty.

What we saw in the budget amounts to about \$200 per month, or six dollars per day. That is a far cry from what is required to really improve people's lives in the way that is needed and to lift people out of poverty.

One of the most troubling aspects of that is that this number was arrived at without consultation with the disability community, with-

out talking to the people who need this benefit most. It really contravenes the government's commitment to "nothing about us without us", which is one of the promises that it made to people living with disabilities.

I want to mention the red dress alert, which is something we have been pushing hard for. I want to honour the work of my colleague from Winnipeg Centre, who has been a fierce advocate for that service, but it is \$1.3 million over three years. It is hard to see how we are going to build an effective program and ensure that a red dress alert is available to families in northwest B.C. and right across Canada with such a modest investment. Much more needs to be done. We are going to keep pushing on that front.

I will end with the concept of fairness. This is how the government has framed the budget, with the idea of working towards a more fair approach to the way we govern this country. While there are some very modest changes in this budget to address inequities in the tax code, it is clear that there is much more that needs to be done.

TD just released a report showing that wealthiest third of Canadians in the country increased their wealth by 6% in the last year alone. The rest of Canadians either saw their income stagnate or go down, as a result of inflation, when it comes to their real buying power.

We need to do much more. I welcome the concept of fairness, which is something we have long spoken of, but this budget is only a very small step in that direction.

● (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to get the member's thoughts on the idea of co-operation and working together.

We do have a national situation with housing. I was very pleased to participate in a press conference where we had the Prime Minister, the premier of the province and the mayor of Winnipeg all together talking about how we are going to get more homes built in the city of Winnipeg.

Looking at the national issue of housing, would the member not agree that Ottawa does play the critical role of leadership, but it is going to take the different levels of government coming together to deal with and get optimum solutions on the housing situation?

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, I suppose if the parliamentary secretary considers us dragging the Liberal Party, kicking and screaming, to be working together, then I am all for it.

His question was about housing. Of course, we need to see jurisdictions work together. My concern is that I represent a riding entirely made up of rural and remote communities. The government's focus on housing has predominately been in the larger urban centres where it can make commitments of tens of thousands of housing units.

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Communities in the region I represent need infrastructure. They need a commitment to building drinking water systems and waste water systems. That is what would enable housing development in small communities, and it is something that we see is sorely lacking in the budget before us.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my fellow British Columbian about the Canadian disability benefit he talked about.

First of all, Bill C-22, which was the enabling legislation, simply delegated to the minister responsible, so the minister could introduce regulations that would define who was considered disabled, who would be eligible and for what amounts. Here we are, and the government is now saying it up to \$200. It is not even a guarantee of \$200. Does the member think we, as parliamentarians, did our job in accepting, basically at surface value, that the government was going to help persons with disabilities with this benefit?

For people who are on the Canadian pension plan disability, often times they are at a lower rate on that particular program than they would be, for example, in British Columbia, on social assistance. To me, it would make sense to at least help those individuals first, instead of telegraphing it to everyone. People had such high expectations and have only come to find out that persons with disabilities feel left out completely by this particular budget.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach: Madam Speaker, the member makes some good points. His first question was whether we did our job in essentially giving the minister responsible carte blanche to determine the amount. I think there are reasons the amount of the benefit was not codified in the legislation.

Where the government has let us down is that the minister did not consult with the disability groups that are so important in this whole equation. If the government would have consulted on the actual amount, if it would have looked at what is required to lift people out of poverty, the benefit would have been a higher amount.

The member's second question is about prioritizing funding to those who need it most. I think, regardless of whether we are talking about CPP, disability or people on social assistance, the reality is that folks need what they need to get by and cover their basic costs. We need to ensure that this benefit, for everyone who is living with a disability and who needs it, is raised to a level where they are able to cover the basic cost of living. There are many details in ascertaining what those levels are, but the key thing is the outcome, which is whether people getting what is required to lead a decent life.

• (1715)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the amendment.

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party

participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I request that it be carried on division.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Call in the members.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 743*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Bragdon
Brassard	Brock
Calkins	Caputo
Carrie	Chambers
Chong	Cooper
Dalton	Dancho
Davidson	Deltell
d'Entremont	Doherty
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Ellis
Epp	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Ferreri	Findlay
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Goodridge
Gourde	Gray
Hallan	Hoback
Jeneroux	Jivani
Kelly	Khanna
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Lake	Lantsman
Lawrence	Lehoux
Leslie	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
Maguire	Majumdar
Martel	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
Melillo	Moore
Morantz	Morrison
Motz	Muys
Nater	Patzner
Paul-Hus	Perkins
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Rood
Ruff	Scheer
Schmale	Seebach
Shields	Shipley
Small	Soroka
Steinley	Stewart

Strahl
Tochor
Uppal
Vecchio
Vien
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Williams
Zimmer— 117

Stubbs
Tolmie
Van Popta
Vidal
Viersen
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

Lightbound
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Mathysen
May (Saamich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrice
Murray
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Perron
Plamondon
Qualtrough
Robillard
Rogers
Rota
Sajjan
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Tassi
Thériault
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Villemure
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacDonald (Malpeque)
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Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
Miao
Miller
Morrissey
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Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Regan
Petitpas Taylor
Powlowski
Rayes
Rodriguez
Romanado
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The Budget

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I declare the amendment defeated.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

The House resumed from February 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-318, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code (adoptive and intended parents), be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one thing I have witnessed over the years is a general attitude toward how we can improve our EI system and how benefits are ultimately paid out. We often talk about what is being proposed in this legislation. For adoptive parents to have 15 weeks, from my perspective, with the child or infant is really important. Members should be aware that it was incorporated into the minister's mandate letter. We know the government was taking action on the issue. That is something members opposite would have been aware of.

When I think of Bill C-318, one of the things that crosses my mind is the economic statement from last year. Incorporated within the budgetary legislation is the change that Bill C-318 would achieve. I question whether this legislation is even required. Some issues have been brought forward as to whether it would require ministerial involvement or a general recommendation, because it would require additional funds.

At the end of the day, the bottom line is that the government has recognized the need to look at ways to improve the EI system. Legislation exists that we would like to pass. On the one hand, opposition members say what the bill would do and, on the other hand, they frustrate and filibuster government legislation that would ultimately do what the member wants to take place with this bill.

It is important to recognize that the connections that are made by adoptive parents, in particular, are just as significant as those of natural parents. The love between a parent and a child is something that I believe justifies the government taking the type of action it has. It is one of the reasons it was incorporated, as I said, in the ministerial mandate letter. It is one of the reasons we incorporated it into the budget implementation legislation.

We are on the right track and moving forward on an important issue. I only wish the Conservative Party would have recognized that and demonstrated a desire to, at the very least, allow the legislation that already exists and would make a difference in a much quicker fashion to take effect. In order for that to happen, the Conservatives, at least in part, have to stop the filibustering on all government legislation and agenda items.

• (1805)

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to once again speak to this bill. I may not use up all of my 10 minutes. Sometimes when I say that, however, I end up running over my time. I therefore say it at my peril or the peril of the House.

Bill C-318 is a private member's bill that made its way to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social De-

velopment and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. I forget the name of my colleague's riding, but I want to commend this bill for its single focus, which is to ensure equity in maternity and parental leave by providing adoptive parents with a system equitable to that available to biological parents. I think that equity is what this bill seeks to achieve. In committee, we had the opportunity to meet with Adopt4Life several times—I commend Ms. Despaties, by the way—and it was recognized and shown that when it comes to the bonding experience of adopted children, regardless of their age at adoption, the child's origin or any accompanying difficulties, bonding time is very important.

This bill has to do with children's rights, but also with the time that should be granted to parents to ensure that they are available to welcome a child into the family properly and that the child gets all the services and care they need from their parent. I think that is self-evident. I heard the parliamentary secretary when he rightly said that the economic statement included a commitment to add 15 weeks. I would go even further than that and say that the former employment minister was on board with that. It is still part of the minister's mandate letter to add 15 weeks of parental leave for adoptive parents.

I think the only thing missing now—this is the first hour of third reading—is the royal recommendation. That is what is needed to move forward and fully enact this bill. I think that is what the government needs to do. My understanding is that it intends to do so. At least we hope so. Although when I hear the government, specifically the parliamentary secretary, say that the government plans to reform EI, I have to pinch myself. We are all a little ashamed—including workers, unemployed workers' groups and the members of the Bloc Québécois who are advocating for a comprehensive reform of employment insurance—that we thought the government was actually going to do it. The government promised this in 2015, 2019 and 2021. According to the minister's mandate letter, this reform was supposed to be implemented in the summer of 2022. It is almost summer 2024, and still nothing has been done. There has been nothing in either the economic statements or the budget to address the reality of workers and initiate a reform to strengthen EI.

Instead of this piecemeal approach, EI reform could have already included 15 weeks for adoptive parents. It could have already included 50 weeks of sickness benefits instead of 26 weeks, as the government did. It also could have specifically fixed the situation of mothers on maternity leave who have the misfortune of losing their job while on leave and end up no longer having access to regular employment insurance benefits. We need to correct these discriminations, provide better access and better benefits to the workers in the seasonal industry. It was all hot air and broken promises from the government. What is more, the current Minister of Employment had no qualms about telling workers and the unemployed at a meeting that this was not on the agenda.

• (1810)

In that respect, the government's actions—and its eight years of broken promises—are deeply disappointing. This mainly affects workers, but it also affects the unemployed. This government has admitted that it took too long to reform the system when the pandemic hit and that the system was full of holes. Not giving adoptive parents fair treatment in terms of parental leave, not giving them the 15 weeks of benefits under the guise of ensuring equivalency, is akin to discrimination or having two different levels of benefits in very similar situations.

Quebec has managed to address this. Since 2021, the Quebec parental insurance plan, which provides far more coverage than federal EI plan, has allowed for benefits to be adapted so that adoptive parents are treated the same as non-adoptive parents.

This reality has been acknowledged. Now what we need is a commitment from this government, a royal recommendation so this bill can see the light of day.

The people I am really thinking of here are adoptive parents. I met with some of them and their kids to learn more about how life-changing it is to be able to be with their kids from the start and have enough weeks of benefits to be with them. Adoption is a choice that comes from the heart, a choice parents make because they believe in it. We want to do everything we can to ensure that these children have the best parents in the world. In order to give them every opportunity, we have to recognize the challenges that parents may encounter during an adoption. Sometimes things go very well, but people should never give up the right to the same amount of parental leave that biological parents get.

I hope this bill will see the light of day as soon as possible.

• (1815)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I rise to speak to Bill C-318, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code regarding adoptive and intended parents. *Qujannamiik* to my colleague from Battlefords—Lloydminster for this important piece of legislation, which would help bring equity to adoptive and intended parents.

I thank my colleague from Winnipeg Centre for all of her hard work on the file. I highlight that at committee the NDP proposed several amendments that would have improved the bill significantly. Regrettably, the amendments were rejected. I am especially disappointed that the amendments to uphold Canadian law were rejected. Those amendments would have ensured that Bill C-318 would be consistent with Bill C-15, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

Unfortunately we have seen the pattern with the current Liberal government, when it comes to indigenous people's rights, that it is going to go below what the expected standards are, including what it has tabled in the first nations clean water act as well as in the amendments to the Indian Act. By failing to uphold Bill C-15, the current government is willfully disrespecting articles 19, 21 and 22 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is part of a disturbing pattern for the current Liberal government, which consistently fails to follow its own laws, including ob-

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taining the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples. If the government is serious about reconciliation, which is a word it loves to use, it must do better and commit to upholding UNDRIP.

Overall, Bill C-318 has merits, and New Democrats support the bill. It would create a 15-week attachment leave benefit for adoptive and intended parents through the employment insurance system. During my speech, I will describe the bill's benefits for children, parents and overall Canadian society. I will also describe the troubling realities substantiating the need for Bill C-318 to be passed.

It is unfortunate that the issue has reached the House through a private member's bill and not as a government bill, given that in 2019 and again in the last election the Liberals promised to introduce legislation in this area. I note that since the proposed bill's introduction, the Liberals have announced changes to the employment insurance program as part of the fall economic statement. These changes would create a new 15-week EI benefit that adoptive and intended parents would finally be eligible for. This is a step in the right direction.

New Democrats will continue to hold the Liberal government accountable to its promises by passing Bill C-318. The NDP is committed to ensuring that all parents and caregivers, whether biological, adoptive, intended, customary or kinship, can spend time at home with their children in the critical first years. Research shows that the quality of a child's attachment impacts the overall health and development of the child. The benefits of passing the bill would be most prominent for children. Children with strong attachments are more likely to form strong relationships, be better able to regulate their emotions and be less dependant on their caregivers.

Parents who are adopting, and those intending to be parents, need to receive the same benefits as biological parents. Adopted children must have the same sense of coping for their future. I have seen the benefits of ensuring those strong bonds early in life, through watching my grandchildren bond with their parents in the time spent together early in their lives. Adoption is an important practice in Nunavut, and providing this benefit would help many of my constituents.

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Unfortunately Bill C-318 does not reflect our customary adoption practices. While the bill is an important step in the right direction, it does not include kinship and customary caregivers, who are particularly important for Métis, first nations and Inuit. Kinship and customary care reflect indigenous culture and traditions. Respecting indigenous peoples' practices could result in many more children not being forced into foster care or group home placements. We must ensure that an attachment leave benefit is extended to kinship and customary caregivers in a similar manner as to adoptive and intended parents. I hope this will be added sometime later.

• (1820)

Providing parents or caregivers with an additional attachment leave benefit so that they can develop these strong attachments is crucial for the well-being of children. This benefit would provide adoptive and intended parents with much-needed financial security and would improve outcomes for children, many of whom are over the age of 10 at the time of placement and have a history of trauma and loss.

Providing a 15-week paid attachment leave would ease the burden being placed on women who are adoptive or intended parents, or who are kinship and customary caregivers. Providing them with the financial supports they need would help to ensure stronger attachments with their adoptive or intended children.

The societal benefits would be a healthier Canada, and children who would be able to enter the school system, who would be prepared and ready to adjust to a world where they could learn to have friendships and who could realize the importance of becoming contributing members of society.

The need to pass Bill C-318 is evident in the disproportionate amount of unpaid caregiving work that takes place in this country, mostly on the part of women. Indeed, more than half of the women in Canada give care to children and dependent adults, and almost one-third give unpaid care to children.

I conclude by sharing what we, as New Democrats, have heard from important agencies across Canada. The Child and Youth Permanency Council of Canada and Adopt4Life are calling for the passage of this bill. I very much appreciate their Time to Attach campaign, which has been effective in building public support for this change. I thank my NDP colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, who had a petition on the 15-week attachment leave benefit, which garnered so much support by many.

New Democrats support this bill. We will continue to hold the Liberals accountable to deliver on their promises. Bill C-318 would help many adoptive and intended parents across Canada. These are positive and necessary changes; although, it is not comprehensive and does not recognize the important work of customary and kinship caregivers in indigenous peoples. I hope that this is not the end of these discussions and that more work will follow to provide financial attachments to more forms of caregiving. We owe it to our children and to our grandchildren to ensure they have the care they need.

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this private member's bill. My friend, the member of Parliament for Battlefords—

Lloydminster, is an amazing person and I have the opportunity to sit with her at our committee. I must say I never really imagined that I would have the opportunity to speak about this kind of thing in the House of Commons, but here we are talking about something that has the potential to have a profoundly positive impact on the lives of parents and children.

I guess I come back to this point, which I have been thinking about over and over again: I know, from my own personal experience in life, that families are families. They are created in many different ways, and how their government treats them should be the same. There should be fairness in how we treat families and in how those families come to be.

I speak of my own personal experience a bit in that I left home when I was pretty young and I was taken in by a family. I was never formally adopted or anything, but they are absolutely my family. They are my siblings and all their kids call me “uncle” now, for sure. It took time for us to develop that bond, but it is a bond that is as strong as any bond. They are my family, and I consider myself incredibly lucky to have that family.

I have to say that, when we were at committee, we heard testimony from a number of families who came to speak and share their stories. It was among the most beautiful, heartwarming, compelling stuff I had ever heard. It was emotional. When we hear the stories of adoptive parents, some of the circumstances around which an adoption occurs and the life that adopted children sometimes lead until the point of adoption, there are some tragic stories.

For parents who make that choice to adopt kids who maybe have been in and out of foster care and have witnessed horrible, terrible circumstances in their short lives, it takes a long time to build trust. We heard about a number of young people who were adopted, and it took them a long time to feel like they were safe and that this would not be just another place they would be bounced through and on to the next place. It took a long time to know that they were loved.

I ask members to think of that for a moment. I find it so hard to imagine a kid existing in this world who is not sure if they are loved. I do not think it is hyperbole to describe as heroic those parents who take that choice to rescue young children out of horrible circumstances and make them part of the family. It may be a word that gets bounced around a bit too much, but in this circumstance it is absolutely accurate. It is nothing short of heroic to take a life and build that self-worth and that love, and create a family in a different way than maybe is traditionally done.

To me, this would be a really common-sense, simple change to our EI system that would offer a little more assistance and support to all families. Talking about the bill, now the Liberals are talking about having it in their own legislation and adopting parts of it, and I fear that it may not happen. There is an awful lot of talk all the time on that side and the results are not always delivered, so I really wish we would just adopt this bill. We have heard from other parties in the House that there is lots of support for it. There is lots of support in the country for this move. It makes common sense, especially now in a circumstance where the cost of living is really hurting all families.

• (1825)

Mortgage rates have doubled and rents have doubled. Families are struggling to heat their homes and to put food on their tables. This is an impact that adds one more burden and one more stress on families of all kinds. However they are created, those families deserve the same level of support, and I do generally believe this is a disadvantage that is very easy for us to fix.

I am really grateful to my colleague for coming forward with such a simple yet important bill that is, as we can see, easily supported by everyone. It is just a common-sense thing that makes complete sense. If we were to adopt this, it would give 15 weeks to adoptive or surrogate parents, who are shorted 15 weeks of support when they start their families. It is fundamentally unfair, and this is a very simple way to make sure all those families are treated equally by their government.

I do not have a lot more to say. I am really touched by what this is. I am touched by the parents and the families who came to talk to us and who shared their stories, and they did that even when it could be difficult. They are passionate, and their passion is infectious. Members have maybe heard that in the House from other colleagues on all sides. I could ramble on, but it seems unnecessary. This makes complete sense, and I remain grateful to my colleague for bringing it forward and for the opportunity to speak briefly to it today.

I salute all those families across this country, however their families are started. In the House, I believe that we need to have their backs, and this is a great way to do it.

• (1830)

[Translation]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to amend the Employment Insurance Act to introduce a new type of special benefits: an attachment benefit of 15 weeks for adoptive parents and parents of children conceived through surrogacy. It also amends the Canada Labour Code to extend parental leave accordingly. Passing Bill C-318 would be a small step in the right direction. The Bloc Québécois has been calling for this for many years. We have been saying that employment insurance must be reformed as soon as possible to improve accessibility for taxpayers, review the eligibility criteria, formulas and funding, and optimize service delivery.

Government leadership on EI as a whole has been lacking. We need more leadership on this issue. In 2021, the Liberals campaigned on a promise to modernize EI. They promised to expand

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the program to cover self-employed workers and address gaps made obvious during the COVID-19 pandemic. After the last federal election, the Prime Minister gave the then minister of employment, workforce development and disability inclusion a mandate letter instructing her to bring forward and begin implementing a plan to modernize the EI system by summer 2022. It is fair to say that the Liberal government missed that deadline, since it is now 2024.

The Liberals say they are committed to modernizing the system, but their communicative action is clearly lacking. The government is not walking the talk. Since I spoke at second reading, the bill has changed somewhat, with two amendments adopted. I will not read them, but the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of these two amendments because they broaden the scope of the bill. The categories I mentioned earlier were initially not included in the scope of the bill, but I believe they are in the spirit of respecting indigenous traditions and knowledge and, more broadly, in the spirit of reconciliation.

The arrival of a child is a complex and challenging time for the whole family, all the more so when the child is adopted or conceived through surrogacy. The bond created with the child is an important part of parenthood. Again, in the case of adoption or surrogacy, the process of forming attachments can be tricky because there is no biological connection to the parents, which is why it is important to pass this bill.

We know that international adoptions are becoming less frequent and that children adopted by Canadian or Quebec families are often older than in the past or have special needs. As a result, we can be sympathetic to the desire of these new parents to receive a special benefit to foster attachment.

Another important thing about Bill C-318 is that it provides for an extension when the child is hospitalized. Given that the hospitalization of a child is an emotionally difficult ordeal, this extension seems necessary, especially if we take into account the emotional factors that are added when a child is adopted or born through surrogacy. The extension would be equivalent to the number of weeks the child receives care in a health care facility.

We also know that the attachment process is complex and time-consuming, particularly for adopted children, and that it is part of an equation that also involves the so-called “normal” needs of a baby or toddler. That is why it is a good idea to create this new benefit. John Bowlby's attachment theory states that, from birth, children turn to adults for protection. If the adult adequately meets the basic needs of the child, an attachment relationship that is necessary for the development of the child's psyche will form between them.

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I remember relating a bit of my story during second reading stage, but I would like to remind the House that I myself was adopted at the age of two months. Since I was not receiving any affection at the orphanage, I was wasting away. For seven years, my adoptive parents tried in vain to have a biological child before finally deciding to turn to adoption. They chose me. How lucky I was. They gave me the chance to be loved, cuddled, reassured, protected and educated, and to become the person I am today. They took care of me and I will be grateful to them for the rest of my life.

Currently, in the adoption process, the long-awaited arrival of a new child is a very emotional time for the parents. The meeting often takes place in a context of lengthy travel, time differences, fatigue, and changes in culture and climate.

● (1835)

However, the children do not experience the same feelings of anticipation as the new parents. Naturally, they may mourn the loss of familiar people and places and be frightened by people who are often of a different ethnicity and who do not speak their mother tongue. It is an emotional transition. There are, however, several things that can help relieve the pressure on everyone involved in the process.

As we know, in Canada, the EI program provides 17 weeks of maternity leave for pregnant women, which can begin at any time during the period starting 13 weeks before the expected date of birth and ending 17 weeks after the actual date of birth. The Canadian program also provides up to 63 weeks of parental leave for biological and adoptive parents.

If both parents work for federally regulated employers, they can share their parental leave, entitling them to an additional eight weeks of leave. Parents who share parental leave are entitled to 71 weeks of leave. They can take this leave at any time during the 78-week period that starts on the day of the child's birth or on the day the child comes into their care. The code contains no provision for paid parental leave.

Let us compare that to how it works in Quebec. In the case of a birth, parental leave can begin the week of the child's birth. It is in addition to the 18 weeks of maternity leave or the five weeks of paternity leave. In the case of an adoption, each adoptive parent is also entitled to 65 weeks of parental leave. The leave may begin no earlier than the week the child is entrusted to the adoptive parents or when the parents leave their work to travel outside Quebec to pick up their child. The leave ends a maximum of 78 weeks after that.

In a same-sex couple, both parents are entitled to parental leave if the child's relationship to his or her mothers or fathers was established in the birth certificate or adoption judgment. At the parent's request, the parental leave can be suspended, divided or extended if required by the parent's or child's health. In other situations, at the parent's request and with the employer's consent, the leave can be divided into weeks.

Up until December 2020, Quebec's parental insurance plan did not offer the same benefits to all workers. Adoptive parents had 18 fewer weeks to spend with their children. Eventually, the tide

turned following a battle waged by the Association des parents adoptants du Québec, which represents adoptive parents in Quebec.

Bill 51, which was passed on October 27, 2020, and assented to on October 29, gave equitable treatment to adoptive parents as of December 1, 2020, through the creation of welcome and support benefits, as well as adoption benefits for the second parent. All in all, this means adoptive parents are entitled to the same duration and level of income replacement as biological parents. For the time being, neither the Canadian nor the Quebec plans provide for any attachment benefits such as those proposed in this bill. It is therefore important to pass Bill C-318 to fill this gap.

● (1840)

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster has five minutes for her right of reply.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, as has been said, Canada's current parental benefit system puts adoptive and intended parents at a disadvantage. With access to 15 fewer weeks of leave through the employment insurance program, families formed through adoption and surrogacy are robbed by our parental benefit system of precious time together, time that is needed to care for their child, to bond and to form healthy attachments, and time that is critical in the first year of a child's life or placement with a family. The purpose of Bill C-318 has always been to fix that disparity in our system, to recognize the unique challenges faced by these families and to ensure that they have equal access to leave benefits.

Unfortunately, without having received a royal recommendation from the Liberal government, the bill's journey is coming to an end today. The bill had cross-partisan support and should have been an opportunity for collaboration, but the Liberal government opposed the bill throughout the process. At second reading, the Liberal government voted against the bill. At the committee stage, Liberals fought against amendments that would have removed any ambiguity in the bill around customary care arrangement for indigenous families. The amendments were challenged again in the House by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Canadians who are following the issue closely would know that after opposing Bill C-318, the Liberals then introduced a benefit similar in principle. This provides cause for cautious optimism. The proposed benefit would help close the parental leave gap. That section of the bill received unanimous support in the House at second reading, but it is not across the finish line yet. The Liberal government has tied the changes to an omnibus bill, making it impossible to ensure its quick passage. The definition of “placement” in the Liberal bill is not entirely clear either, leaving it, in parts, to regulation. The Liberals’ fight against the inclusion of customary care arrangements in Bill C-318 raises more questions than answers.

The Liberal government has given Canadians reason after reason to distrust it. The disability benefit is a stark example that is top of mind for so many Canadians across the country. The Liberal government refused to do the work at the front end to tell Parliament and Canadians what the benefit would look like. The so-called framework legislation has no concrete dates, eligibility requirements or benefit amounts.

The then minister of employment, workforce development and disability inclusion repeatedly said that the new benefit would lift persons with disability out of poverty. We also heard that the benefit would roll out in about a year’s time. It has been just about a year since the bill received royal assent, and Canadians with disabilities who have been desperately waiting for the rollout of the benefit were hit with massive disappointment when the budget was announced. The six dollars a day will not pull anyone out of poverty, much less in the current cost of living crisis. To receive the benefit, persons with disabilities will have to wait until July 2025.

It is very difficult to trust the Liberal government to deliver what it has promised to Canadians. The Liberals have refused to work collaboratively on this meaningful and straightforward policy change, but every day that passes without fixing the inequity in our parental leave system means another family that is left without the time it needs to attach. It means more parents who will have to return to work prematurely to make ends meet or who are forced to take the extended parental leave at a significant financial disadvantage. Adoptive and intended parents deserve equal access to parental leave. More importantly, their children need the additional time with their parents. These families are faced with unique challenges, and the time to attach is truly crucial.

As the House ends its consideration of Bill C-318, I would like to express how truly grateful I am for all those who have supported the bill. I thank the thousands of Canadians who have signed petitions and written to their MPs and to the minister, and all those who have shared their personal stories and advocated tirelessly for the changes.

While the Liberal government has ensured that Bill C-318 will not cross the finish line, I remain deeply committed to ensuring that adoptive and intended parents get the time they need and deserve with their children.

• (1845)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to inform members that the notice requirement in respect to a royal recommendation has not been met pursuant to Standing Order

Points of Order

79(2). Consequently, the question will not be put on the motion for third reading of this bill.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, the order for third reading is discharged and the item is dropped from the Order Paper.

(Order discharged and bill withdrawn)

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

RESPECT FOR THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHAIR

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP):

Madam Speaker, I gave notice to the table regarding this point of order following what we witnessed this afternoon and the Speaker’s decisions, which were good decisions.

[*English*]

I want to start by saying that the rules have to apply to all in the House of Commons, and what we saw today was the Speaker enforcing the rules of the House of Commons. We have the Standing Orders, and we chose, together as members of Parliament, a Speaker. The Speaker’s job is to ensure that the Standing Orders are respected.

I will read what a former Speaker, who is now the member for Regina—Qu’Appelle and the Conservative House leader, said. He spoke to this issue, which I am going to raise, on September 24, 2014. I was in the House, so I remember this. He said, “Another of our time-honoured traditions is that of respect for the office of Speaker.” He then quoted from O’Brien and Bosc:

Reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker—an allegation of bias, for example—could be taken by the House as breaches of privilege and punished accordingly.

The former Speaker then continued:

I wish to conclude with an appeal to members on all sides. Needless to say, the kind of unsavoury language or expression that we heard yesterday does little to assist the Chair in managing question period proceedings, and I urge all members to be judicious in the expressions they choose to use.

This is the former Speaker of the House of Commons, who is currently the member for Regina—Qu’Appelle and the current Conservative House leader, stating that reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker, for example, an allegation of bias, could be taken by the House as breaches of privilege and punished accordingly.

I want to submit for your attention, Madam Speaker, two posts that have come out on social media.

One is from the member for Carleton, which says, “Today the Liberal speaker censored me”, before going on to provide deliberately misleading information in his Twitter post. This is very clearly challenging that ruling from 2014 of the former Speaker and current member for Regina—Qu’Appelle, the current Conservative House leader.

Points of Order

The second tweet is from the member for Lethbridge, who also has shown a wanton disregard of the rules of the House of Commons. She stated: “How did partisan hack, [the Speaker] respond?!” These are unacceptable terms and warrant a full apology from those members.

I will read, for the record, what we have in our *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which is the procedural bible of the House of Commons. These are the rules that Canadians expect us to live by. When they elect us in ridings across the country, they expect members of Parliament to abide by the rules to ensure that there is decorum in the House and that we are doing the job that Canadians have sent us here to do. The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* says, concerning the impartiality of the Chair:

The actions of the Speaker may not be criticized in debate or by any means except by way of a substantive motion.... Reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker (an allegation of bias, for example) could be taken by the House as breaches of privilege and punished accordingly.

There are a number of examples where that rule has been breached. For example, in 1981, when there was clearly a question of privilege being raised, the leader of the opposition at that time withdrew his remarks, and that settled the matter. In 1993, there was a similar attack on the dignity of the House, an attack on the Speaker. Again, the member rose in the House and withdrew the remarks.

• (1850)

[Translation]

It is very clear that the rules of the House, which are put in place to ensure that our democracy functions properly so that we can have orderly discussions and debates, were violated. It is very clear that these two social media posts do not abide by those rules.

In my opinion, both members should have to apologize and withdraw their remarks before returning to the House.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, briefly, on the same point, the member knows very well that the comments he cited are outside the jurisdiction of the House. The precedence he cited are examples of statements that were made in the House and that have nothing to do with his apparent desire for the Speaker to go about policing what people say in conversations far beyond.

I do want to draw the attention of the House to something that occurred on June 13, 2022. The NDP House leader was giving a speech in the House and he said, “We have had absolutely wacko claims by Conservatives.” I will note that the NDP House leader was not called to order at the time. With false indignation, the NDP House leader wishes to call, on the carpet, people who have said words that he himself has said in this chamber and was allowed to say.

The point is that the Speaker did not call the NDP House leader to order at the time, and a precedent was established. If the NDP House leader is outraged by what has gone on, he needs to reflect and to consider the state of his own conscience and whether he has some words he needs to withdraw in the future.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, I think that most Canadians would be very concerned about what took place earlier today. It is the first time I have ever seen the leader of an opposition party be asked to leave the House and then the entire caucus leaving the House. It was in response to something the Speaker was saying. It is interesting that the Speaker was applauded for his actions, even by members of the Bloc.

I quickly looked up the Twitter feed. I think it is exceptionally offensive. The member for Lethbridge said, “How did partisan hack, [Speaker] respond?! He kicked [the Leader of the Conservative Party] out of the Chamber.”

I think it is a very serious issue when members start going out and tweeting that sort of response when all members in the House are respectable, honourable members. I think there is an obligation for not only the member for Lethbridge but also the Leader of the Conservative Party, when they do eventually return to the House, to actually apologize to the Speaker for their efforts. Failing that, I would suggest maybe it is something the procedure and House affairs committee should look into.

We will wait and see what happens, and if there is no apology given, then we would reserve the right to come back and revisit the entire issue as something that PROC might have to look into.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to thank everyone for their interventions. There are a couple things I am going to speak on before we continue.

I just want to remind the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby that there are rules in the House. I appreciate him bringing this matter to our attention. However, he did use the procedures book in his hand and pointed to it, which is a document that the hon. member is using as a prop. I just want to remind him that he is not to do that.

To the hon. member who spoke about the word that was used by the NDP leader, I just want to say that it was not a personal attack on someone in particular and that is the difference compared to what happened today. As Speakers, we are not here to win brownie points; we are here to ensure that the House is functioning and that members are respectful of the Standing Orders and of the policies and procedures of the House.

Having said that, I do want to remind members, and this was said before, that sometimes members can become impassioned when making remarks in the chamber, but the content of their comments and speeches must always conform to the Standing Orders and the practices of the House. Standing Order 18 states, “No member shall...use offensive words against either House, or against any member thereof.”

The other entity that was brought to the attention of the Speaker was the fact that statements are being made outside of the House by a member. The Speaker has no authority to rule on that, as the hon. member has indicated. However, the respect for those who chair in the House should be, first and foremost, respected.

I will take all the information under advisement, and I will come back to the House if needed. I thank everyone for their interventions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1855)

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have seen a consistent pattern of corruption from the government, that is, of trying to get contracts to well-connected government insiders. The government has quite the choice of friends, by the way. At the government operations committee, we have been studying the favouritism that the government has shown toward McKinsey. The government's contracting watchdog has come up with a damning report about that favouritism, about how rules were changed and structured to work to the advantage of McKinsey. That is in the context where we know about the friendship between the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and Dominic Barton, who was the managing partner of McKinsey at the time.

To be fair, Dominic Barton went to the committee and said he was not a friend of the Prime Minister, that he barely knew him. If Dominic Barton's testimony is to be believed, then the government funnels contracts not only to its friends but also to people it wishes were its friends. The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister talked a lot in fact about this and made lots of claims about how there is a friendship. Rather than delve too far into the extent to which they are friends or not, we know that the government had a passionate, perhaps unrequited, love for McKinsey and did everything it could to send contracts McKinsey's way.

In particular I am following up on a question about the arrive scam scandal, about how we know now that systems were created and designed to maximize the benefit for GC Strategies, as well as Dalian, and that contracts were sent to those companies. The Auditor General reported that members of the government actually sat down with people at GC Strategies, who advised the government on what it should be asking for in a contracting request. GC Strategies subsequently got the contract. The government was rigging the process with the bidder that eventually got the contract, whether it was McKinsey or Dalian, the principal of which was a government employee at the same time as he was getting government contracts.

There are multiple instances of corruption, of the NDP-Liberal government's working to get contracts to its well-connected insider friends. It is a government that is working for insiders and not for Canadians. In that context, we have seen incredible growth in spending on contracting. While the public service has been growing in size, the government has also been spending more than ever on outside contracting.

Then when we talk about having problems with the budget deficit, the Liberals come back to ask what could possibly be cut or

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where savings could possibly be found. Let us cut back on the spending on outside consultants. Let us stop shovelling money to McKinsey. Let us stop shovelling money to GC Strategies. Let us stop paying useless insiders who simply receive contracts and pass on the work, or who are paid to provide advice that the public service is perfectly competent to provide. It is the well-connected NDP-Liberal friends and consultants who have gotten incredibly rich under the government. GC Strategies' founders became millionaires on arrive scam alone. Let us cut out the spending on well-connected NDP-Liberal insiders and provide those savings to the budget.

I asked this before and will ask it again: Was the scheme to reward well-connected insiders due to incompetence on the part of the government or to outright corruption?

• (1900)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on a question of procurement.

I want to remind my hon. colleague that it was not a Liberal government that told Canadians an outright lie, if I can say so, that the F-35 procurement project was going to cost \$10 billion. It cost triple that. Who said that? It was Mr. Harper and the current leader of the official opposition who told Canadians that in 2011, and I would argue that is how they won the election. It was not a Liberal government who lied to Canadians and told them that a pay system would work and function well. It was a Conservative government, so let me set the record straight.

Let me first say that I am very proud of the public service. I am a member of Parliament who represents a lot of public servants who worked so diligently to ensure the government could deliver services and programs to Canadians during the pandemic. At the same time, it is clear that something went wrong with the procurement of professional services related to ArriveCAN. Nobody is hiding that fact, and our government is extremely concerned about the issues that have come to light. I want the member to know that we have taken and are taking action to improve our procurement processes, and we are holding companies accountable for misconduct while protecting federal expenditures.

With respect to the reports by the Auditor General and the procurement ombudsman, Public Services and Procurement Canada, or PSPC, as the central purchaser for the government, has already taken several steps to implement their recommendations and improve processes. For several years now, the department has been making progress in its plan to modernize procurement, which has long been a priority for our government. Right now, the government is firmly focused on improving and further strengthening processes, especially when it comes to IT procurement. We have been working for months to do just that. This includes strengthening guidance and training for those involved in the procurement process.

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Public Services and Procurement Canada has also improved evaluation requirements to ensure resources are properly qualified and is requiring increased transparency for suppliers around their prices and their use of subcontractors. In addition, it is improving documentation when awarding contracts and issuing task authorizations. It is also clarifying work requirements and activities, and specifying which activities and which projects are worked on by contractors.

In addition, PSPC is updating its guidance to help other departments and agencies in procuring responsibly when using their own procurement instruments under their own authorities. We know that fundamentally improving IT procurement requires us to ensure that those processes are clear and transparent, and that the roles, responsibilities and rules are understood, respected and adhered to. To that end, the department is going even further to strengthen integrity in procurement by creating a new office of supplier integrity and compliance, which we now know will help the government better respond to misconduct.

We owe it to all Canadians to preserve the integrity of federal government procurement. That is why we are taking action now to strengthen and improve procurement, so that what happened in the case of ArriveCAN never happens again.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. parliamentary secretary that he cannot say indirectly what he cannot say directly. I again want to caution members to make sure whatever language they use does not move in that direction, as the member's comments clearly did at some point.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

• (1905)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, everything is broken, but the Liberals are refusing to take responsibility. It is somebody else's fault all the time. This is typical of the responses we get from the government.

Emblematic of it was the member's reference to Phoenix at the beginning. He said it was the Conservatives' pay system. Yes, the work on the Phoenix pay system started under Conservatives, but it was launched under the Liberals. It has been nine years, and the system is still failing public servants, and of course it is Stephen Harper's fault.

There is endemic corruption within the procurement system, and it is somebody else's fault. There is out-of-control inflation, a broken economy, crime, drugs and disorder, but it is not the fault of the people who have been running the place for the last nine years.

When will the Liberals take responsibility for their many failures?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I can tell the member has no experience in procurement. I can tell by the language he is using that he has zero experience in procurement. I have been on the government operations committee for eight years of my life in this place. By the way, I have worked in procurement before and, though I respect him, I can tell he is just a junior in this place. He has zero credibility when it comes to advancing the issues of IT procurement.

If politicians make decisions on IT procurement, there is something wrong. We do not make them. We obviously set the governance rules, but somebody broke the rules within that department and we will hold them accountable. We have called in the RCMP, not the frantics on the other side. The CBSA referred the matter to the RCMP. Those who will be held accountable will be held accountable, and if money was misused, we will recuperate that money.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, this adjournment debate stems from a question I asked earlier about how we deal with wildfires in Canada: When will the federal government create a national wild-fire-fighting force?

As we all know, last year was the worst year ever for wildfires in this country. This year, all predictions point to an even more disastrous fire season. We have already had evacuation orders in British Columbia and Alberta in April. Last year, we had fires all across the country, from Halifax to Yellowknife and Vancouver Island.

I want to pause here to pay tribute to all the firefighters and other first responders who worked so hard to keep Canadians safe during last year's firestorms. Eight firefighters in the prime of life lost their lives in last year's battle against those fires, and I attended the memorial service for one of those young people in Penticton.

It is clear that local and provincial wildfire-fighting services were overwhelmed last summer. Even in British Columbia, where we unfortunately are very accustomed to catastrophic fires, the BC Wildfire Service, one of the best in the world, had to bring in crews from all over the world to help out. Indeed, thousands of firefighters from Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, South Africa, Costa Rica, Chile, Spain, Portugal, France, Brazil and the U.S.A. came to Canada last summer to help us deal with that crisis.

We are grateful for that international help, but it comes at a cost: the cost of paying the crews, the cost of bringing them to Canada and, perhaps most of all, the critical cost of time lost in making those arrangements. Provincial and municipal forces become overwhelmed and costs are exploding. B.C. spent about a billion dollars last summer fighting fires, last year alone.

We need to have a homegrown response that is both timely and cost-effective. In response to this accelerating crisis, experts have been calling for the formation of a national wildfire-fighting service.

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Dr. Mike Flannigan, from Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, is Canada's foremost expert on wildfire behaviour. While firefighting is normally a provincial area of authority, Flannigan points out that the last few years have put us in uncharted territory. He has suggested a national wildfire service of a few hundred well-trained members divided into teams that could be deployed to parts of the country that face clear and imminent fire threats.

We have the modelling power and the expertise now to know where fires are likely to become problematic in the coming days and even weeks. We should have teams on the ground so that they are there when fires ignite and can be extinguished. Fires not caught in those first few hours can become the catastrophic firestorms that destroy huge areas of forest, as well as homes and livelihoods. Getting those crews to the fires quickly is essential, and we can do that with a national force.

That force could work year-round. The fire season is growing longer and longer. It is already year-round in California. We could put this force to work in the Canadian winter, working to thin forests in the interface with communities across the country, doing FireSmart inspections or being mobilized to other countries that are facing a wildfire crisis.

The government is proposing training local residents to fight interface fires. That is important and useful. We already rely on volunteer crews to cover structure protection. However, a national force would be a game-changer, and we really need to change the game on wildfire fighting in this country.

• (1910)

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government stands with the hundreds of thousands of Canadians across the country who are affected by wildfires, floods and other extreme weather events year after year.

It is worrisome when we look at the science. Experts are clear: Climate change means wildfires, floods and hurricanes, and they will increase in numbers and intensity. Every month of the past 10 months has broken heat records. Many provinces are experiencing a period of drought. We are not even in May, yet more than 100 fires are already burning in British Columbia and Alberta.

This is paving the way of what might be, yet again, a difficult summer for Canadians. However, the member can rest assured that we take climate change seriously; we are working with our partners in the provinces and territories to make sure we are ready to face the challenges to come. We did the work and put in place the long-term funding they needed to procure firefighting material.

That is \$256 million in wildland firefighting equipment to the provinces. We are also making sure that our partners have the necessary human resources on the ground. We have funded the training of 600 wildfire fighters and 125 indigenous fire guardians. These firefighters are ready to work now, and they will be on the ground this summer to protect our communities. The training program is still recruiting, and we are on pace to reach 1,000 new wildland firefighters before the end of the year.

We are also making sure that the current firefighters feel our support and appreciation. We are grateful for the work they do and the

risks they take. This is why we announced that we will double the tax credit for volunteer firefighters and search and rescue. We are investing massively in civilian response capacity by investing \$166.9 million in the humanitarian workforce program. We have allowed them to develop capacity, mobilize more quickly and deploy critical on-the-ground support to local governments. These organizations can leverage different capacities across jurisdictions and provide Canadians with the reliefs they need during any large-scale emergencies that follow.

Our government is also determined to tackle the effects of climate change before they impact Canadians and pose a threat to their security. With the national adaptation strategy, we are addressing local vulnerabilities and investing proactively to increase resiliency. The strategy advances significant investments in disaster-resilient infrastructure projects and in wildlife prevention. Our climate is changing with every passing year, but we will remain focused on keeping people safe while strengthening our capacity to support Canadians.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the funding put in to help volunteer firefighters and the training of firefighters, but the real point here is to create a deployable force that could go to where the firefighting is needed.

A recent Abacus Data poll found that 74% of Canadians are in favour of a national wildfire fighting force. The public is ready for this. They know it would be a good investment, not only to save money fighting fires but also to stop fires before they become the catastrophic monsters that consume vast forests and communities and to save the human cost of evacuations and the loss of homes. Yes, having a national firefighting force would save money and valuable time. It would save forests, livelihoods and lives. We need one in Canada as soon as possible.

• (1915)

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I know there are a lot of communities in my hon. colleague's province that go through these fires. In my neck of the woods, I do not have to go through that, but I want to assure the hon. member that our government takes this issue seriously. We are working to build local capacity.

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On what he is proposing, the government has not necessarily said no. However, right now, we are focused on building local capacity, and we are providing the funding to do that. In the future, if a national firefighter force is necessary, then I am sure we will get there.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about the carbon tax tonight with my colleague across the way. We have had a discussion before.

I have a couple of definitions of rebate, just to get that out of the way first: From Cambridge, a rebate is “an amount of money that was returned to you, especially by the government”; from the Oxford dictionary, it is “a partial refund to someone who has paid too much money for tax”.

We know the flavour of The Hill Times. There was a Hill Times cartoon recently where the Prime Minister was holding a wallet and handing some cash back to a citizen; the citizen looked at it and said, “Isn't that my wallet?” That cartoon spread out, and I have had a lot reaction to it in my constituency. People ask, does the government not understand that it is their money it is giving back, and not all of it? The government took the money from them to begin with; if it did not take the money from them in the first place, it would be of benefit to them. The understanding of a rebate is giving money back that was theirs. It is an interesting concept.

One challenge with carbon tax is some of the issues it has created. People will talk about the cost in agriculture, and we have talked about this before. It is a huge part that agriculture producers face. I have irrigation in my riding, which my colleague knows about well. It is costing huge amounts in the agriculture sector, and there is no rebate back for large producers, which I have in my riding. We are talking about a lot of money.

On the other side of it, people talk about the different kinds of energy that we have. Regarding Alberta wind farms, for example, I have an article here stating that, on a specific day, November 24, 2023, Alberta's 44 wind farms operated at 0.3% capacity. Alternative energy, when we talk about wind and solar, is a bit of a problem, but we still have the carbon tax moving from \$65 a tonne to \$80 a tonne and then to \$170 a tonne by 2030. The Saskatchewan farm producers association figured out that this is \$7.42 per acre in 2023 and \$17 per acre by 2030. That is a huge amount of money.

The other thing that scientists are beginning to say is that, with advances in technology, they are figuring out that the amount of carbon absorbed by agriculture is huge. It is at the point that people in agriculture should be getting and selling those credits just as solar and wind power operators do. The technology is showing the amount of carbon that agriculture is absorbing is not recognized. It is beyond being equal; it is above equal, and agriculture should even be credited with the amount that wind and solar energy are. Therefore, a huge shift needs to be made in recognition of what the agriculture sector is doing with carbon and how it is being absorbed; those credits could even be sold. Scientists are now recognizing that.

However, the former Greenpeace founder, Patrick Moore, has made some interesting comments. He said, “The idea that wind and solar are going to replace fossil fuels or nuclear or hydroelectric is absolutely insane.” This is Patrick Moore from my generation. He said that there are other things that we need to do, not depend on solar and wind.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have tremendous respect for my hon. colleague on the other side. There are too few members of Parliament in this place who defend farmers, and I thank him. He defends farmers, but so do I and others on this side of the House.

I want to correct the record when hon. members say that farmers get absolutely nothing back in a carbon rebate. This is something for which I fought very hard, along with my colleague from Kings—Hants, and other members from P.E.I. and Ontario. We certainly recognize there is an issue regarding natural gas and propane, but farmers are already exempt for upward of 90% of carbon pricing on their farms. They do not pay eight dollars for diesel use on farms, but they do get a rebate for natural gas and propane.

It would be useful for the hon. member to know this because I am sure he wants to share the good news. This year, farmers are eligible for a rebate of \$1.86 per \$1,000 of expenses on farms. I realize it is not 100% of a rebate. The problem is that the government is not aware of who is using propane or natural gas, but 100% of carbon pricing that is collected by the federal government in that particular province is returned to farmers. All of it is returned to farmers through a rebate, and that works out to \$1.86 this year. As carbon pricing increases, that amount will also increase to ensure that farmers get a fair share.

On other issues the member pointed out, we recognize that input costs have gone up on farms. The Government of Canada does not control that. I will remind my hon. colleague that when the leader of the official opposition was in government and was sitting at the cabinet table, none of that was increased under his watch. I was not on the Hill, but I was close to it and watched very closely. I do not remember Conservatives advocating for an increased amount on the advance payments program's interest-free portion when input costs went up, and I will remind the member that they did go up in 2008. We recognized that during the pandemic and increased it. We went from \$100,000 to \$350,000. Now, we have moved to \$250,000. I hope my hon. colleague will support that because he knows it is important for farmers.

Secondly, the member recognizes and understands that technology and farmers are good stewards of the land and that they are capturing carbon. We are working with farmers, and we recognize that they are doing that. Universities are working with farmers to find a proper measurement. The methane protocol that Environment Canada is working on I believe will provide an opportunity for farmers to participate in the carbon economy, which the entire world wants access to.

Lastly, we believe in SMR technology, which my hon. colleague knows. We do not just believe in wind and solar; we also believe in SMR.

The Conservatives want to axe the tax, but a tariff will be imposed because other countries are talking about a carbon import tariff. If we do not have a carbon price on pollution, then other countries will impose a tariff. I do not want to leave our farmers out. We need to act right now.

● (1920)

Mr. Martin Shields: Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the information my colleague shares.

There are programs as a result of federal and provincial governments working together. We look at different things that happen in our climate and in our economy, but the challenge is in irrigation. We have talked about this a number of times. It is the electricity that is used, not the diesel and not the natural gas. Irrigation has a huge use of electricity. One farmer who has an operation showed me the bills, and he is up to \$100,000 in carbon tax.

There is a small rink in a rural area that supports kids' programs that people are keeping alive. It is costing them \$700 a month in

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carbon tax. They are fundraising with bake sales and hamburger sales to try to keep that rural rink alive, but the \$700 a month is killing them. Rinks are important in rural communities.

Mr. Francis Drouin: Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that we should have a regional approach to carbon pricing. I would hope the member would advocate with his own provincial government to acknowledge that there are regional differences among jurisdictions.

I think the Prime Minister wrote a letter about a month ago and asked provinces to come up with their own plans, plans that respect our Paris Agreement and that ensure farmers do not get slapped with a carbon import tariff.

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

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 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:26 p.m.)

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