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Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, May 10, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1000)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 39—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-64

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.) moved:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order, or usual practice of the House, Bill C-64, An Act respecting pharmacare, shall be disposed of as follows:

- (a) during the consideration of the bill by the Standing Committee on Health,
 - (i) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for the committee meetings,
 - (ii) the committee shall meet between 3:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on the two further sitting days following the adoption of this order to gather evidence from witnesses, provided that any meeting on a Friday may start at 12:00 p.m. for a duration of not more than five hours,
 - (iii) all amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee by 4:00 p.m. on the second sitting day following the adoption of this order,
 - (iv) amendments filed by independent members shall be deemed to have been proposed during the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill,
 - (v) the committee shall meet at 3:30 p.m., on the third sitting day following the adoption of this order to consider the bill at clause-by-clause, or 12:00 p.m. if on a Friday, and if the committee has not completed the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill by 8:30 p.m., or 5:00 p.m. if on a Friday, all remaining amendments submitted to the committee shall be deemed moved, the Chair shall put the question, forthwith and successively without further debate on all remaining clauses, amendments submitted to the committee as well as each and every question necessary to dispose of the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, and the committee shall not adjourn the meeting until it has disposed of the bill,
 - (vi) a member of the committee may report the bill to the House by depositing it with the Clerk of the House, who shall notify the House leaders of the recognized parties and independent members, and if the House stands adjourned, the report shall be deemed to have been duly presented to the House during the previous sitting for the purpose of Standing Order 76.1(1);
- (b) not more than five hours shall be allotted to the consideration of the bill at report stage, and at the expiry of the time provided for the consideration of the said stage of the bill, or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, and, if a recorded division is requested, the vote shall not be deferred; and
- (c) not more than one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the bill at the third reading stage, and 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided

for Government Orders that day, or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, and, if a recorded division is requested, the vote shall not be deferred. (Government Business No. 39)

● (1005)

He said: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to talk about Bill C-64, which is an opportunity for us to move forward with pharmacare in this country. In the first order, the bill represents the best of what Canadians should expect from the House, which is different parties working together to find common ground and solutions.

I will start by thanking the member for Vancouver Kingsway for his work in what were often challenging conversations and negotiations, but which led to an exceptionally important bill that is going to do incredible good across the country. As well, I want to thank the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, the House leader for the New Democratic Party, for his work as House leader and now as health critic. In all orders, when we are facing something as challenging as the protection of our public health system and making sure Canadians get the care they require, working in a non-partisan way to drive results is exceptionally important.

I will speak to what is at stake, say a bit about what we have been doing in health and then talk specifically to the legislation that is in front of us today.

It was a stark day for me yesterday because I had two very different kinds of conversations. One conversation was with somebody who was saying, in a roundabout way, that maybe it would not be so bad if our public health care system became private. It is important to focus on what that would mean for this country and why it is something that we should all be adamantly opposed to.

If we allow our system to become a private health care system, there would be a migration of dollars toward a private system and expertise, in which the private sector would take that which was easy and lucrative and leave that which was difficult or involved folks who did not have the means to be able to pay for those services. This would leave less money in a public system that would be dealing with the most expensive problems and the most intractable issues. Over time, we would then see more and more migration of that which was easier into the private system, which would mean that people who do not have the means could not afford the same kind of care.

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In a very practical sense, that ends up in the following type of situation: I had an opportunity to be in the United States with my partner for a weekend, and we witnessed a man collapse. It was clearly a person with not a lot of means. He fell unconscious to the ground. We went to his side and called 911. When he became conscious, his first thought was not about his health or worrying about what had just happened to his physical body; his concern was how he was going to be able to afford what just happened to him. I thought about the phone call I made to 911 and whether this was what this man even wanted, because now he has to think of exorbitant health costs to get the care he needs.

Even those who do not fundamentally care about whether their fellow citizens, regardless of their financial circumstances, get the same level of care as everybody else in the country, even if we cannot compel people's morality to care about the circumstance of whether somebody in their own community gets the same level of medical care that they do, the reality is that when somebody does not go to a hospital to get checked for something that is minor, because they do not have money, then it becomes something major. We are then left with the existential question, when that person becomes so sick that they are on death's door, of whether we just let them die or whether we pay the exorbitant costs that we have allowed to accumulate through not having a system that took care of those problems in the first place.

For the prognosticators of doom about our health system, for those who push the idea that we should just allow it to deteriorate and not make the investments or say that it is too difficult, they have to be honest about the future they are painting for Canadians in this country and the type of health care system that they would be left with. It is one where only the affluent have the opportunity to get the care they need. We can imagine a world where nurses cannot afford the care and services they require, but the affluent they are serving do. I do not think that is a society we want to be in.

• (1010)

That is why the investments we are making in health care are so critically important. The federal government has come to the table with nearly \$200 billion to invest in partnership with provincial and territorial governments over the next 10 years. In the same spirit as the legislation, the question was not asked about one's partisanship or one's jurisdiction, because I do not think Canadians are interested. They want to see answers and forward progress.

I really want to commend the health ministers across the country because, over the last 10 months, as I had an opportunity to work with them to negotiate the agreements we signed, it was a spirit of co-operation and putting the health of Canadians first. It does not matter whether it was Adriana LaGrange in Alberta, Tom Osborne in Newfoundland and Labrador, a Conservative and a Liberal, or Adrian Dix, a New Democratic health minister in B.C.; they understand we have an important job to do and that we need to focus on what unites us and how we make things better.

The results were incredibly detailed health agreements that not only put money into the system but also showed exactly how that federal money is going to be spent. Thus, Canadians can view where those dollars are going to go to improve their health system and issues such as the health workforce, where we make sure that

we have the doctors and nurses Canadians need and that everybody has a relationship with a doctor in this country. In addition, this enables us to put common indicators across the country so people can see the progress their province is making.

We know what is measured is achieved, and for the first time in our health system, these agreements put common indicators across the country so we can see the progress occurring in our health system and see what those investments are doing on key indicators identified by CIHI, which is an independent agency dealing with health data.

However, in dealing with the urgency of the now, let us recognize that our health system has been enormously strained. Throughout one of the darkest periods in public health that, certainly, we have known in our lifetime, health care workers were asked to do Herculean amounts of work. They were asked to rise to an occasion and do more than I think any reasonable person could be expected to do, but they met that hour and did it. As in health systems all over the world, instead of being met with a break, they were met with even more work, with burnout, with all kinds of mental fatigue and mental health issues as a result of the pandemic, with a backlog of procedures and with a health system that was even more overwhelmed.

What was remarkable about that period of time, going back to the spirit of co-operation, is that we made extraordinary progress. This was when the health system was fully aligned in the darkest moments of the pandemic, everybody was given more agency to practise at top of scope, jurisdiction was of distant consideration and people's immediate urgent health needs were first. We are dealing with that, with these workforce agreements and the work we are doing bilaterally with provinces and territories, but it is not enough to deal with the crisis of now. We have already made such huge progress. On where we were a year ago versus where we are now, that progress is evident through our whole system, but we recognize we also have to be upstream.

That brings me to another conversation that I had yesterday. I had the opportunity to be with the member for Ottawa—Vanier at a denture clinic in Vanier. Here is another example of parliamentary co-operation, where two parties came together and recognized an essential need in this country, which is that some nine million Canadians do not have access to oral health care.

We have now seen more than 30,000 seniors, just in the first few days of this dental program, receive care for the first time. I have been able to see what that means, in many instances by going into clinics. I will talk about what I saw in that denture clinic in Vanier. A denturist was talking about a senior who had not had their dentures replaced in 40 years; they did not have the money. This senior had no teeth and used a black apparatus to crush food in their mouth. One can imagine the dignity and the spiritual change in that person when they came in and realized that, after 40 years, they were finally going to get teeth in their mouth. The denturist being able to describe that moment, the pride they had in being able to deliver that service and give that senior that dignity, was absolutely extraordinary.

• (1015)

I had an opportunity in my own riding, just a few days before that, in Ajax, to meet with a senior. I never had a chance to meet him before. His name is Wayne. He sometimes goes by “Moose”. He was talking about himself and his wife. He had a need for partial dentures, and he had other oral health problems, as did his wife, which they had been putting off. In terms of what it meant to him to feel seen and to be able to get those issues taken care of, the truth is that we know it is not just a matter of dignity. It is not just a question of what kind of country we want to live in. What about the cost?

I think of Wayne and his inability to pay for the medical care that he needed for oral health care. Left untreated, Wayne could very well end up in a hospital room with an unnecessary surgical procedure, placing his life at risk. Imagine the staggering cost of that.

Dental care is not about some kind of boutique political intervention. It is fundamentally about making sure that people get the preventative care they need. It is part of the overall action that we are taking as a government, not only dealing with the crisis of the now, but also casting our eyes into the future and asking how we can work together.

[Translation]

Clearly the Bloc Québécois members have concerns about the jurisdiction issue, which I completely understand. It is a concern for me too. However, in my opinion, this is not a question of jurisdiction. It is actually a question of co-operation. There was one question that dominated my conversations with Quebec's health minister, Christian Dubé: How can the Government of Canada and the Province of Quebec work together to improve our health care system?

There are plenty of opportunities for us to work together in a spirit of co-operation to improve our health care system. It is easy to pick quarrels, point out differences and raise the issue of jurisdiction. However, I believe that for Quebecers, what really matters is their health and government action.

[English]

Dental care is a great example of that. In Quebec, the Minister of Heritage has done extraordinary work in her riding. Almost all the providers in her riding have signed up, meeting a lot of that misinformation that was coming from the Conservatives with true facts.

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The experiences of those providers have been extraordinary. That is an example of us working together.

I said to Minister Dubé in Quebec that if they want to administer the program, it is no problem. Our care is about the patients, not about the jurisdiction. Our only requirements, if a one wants to take it over, is that one has to have at least the same level of care, number one, and number two, we are not going to give more to administer the program than it costs us to administer it. If it costs one more, that is something one has to bear on one's shoulders or look internally at how one is operating one's system.

That is an example of making sure that we get the care now and that we fix the question of jurisdiction later. For somebody who has a dental emergency, for a senior who does not have teeth in their mouth, they do not care about jurisdiction. They care about care and about getting it done. That is what we are focused on.

Before I come to pharmacare, one of the other things we are doing is about school food. When I was at Heart and Stroke, I had the opportunity to lead the Ontario mission and to be the national director of children and youth. One thing that was shocking to me was that when a child has one healthy meal, it can totally change their health outcomes. It does it for a couple of reasons. First, just the act of eating fruits and vegetables and healthy food has a transformative effect on health and prevents chronic disease and illness. Second, how does one learn if one is hungry? Third, one actually gets to develop a taste for healthy food that lasts one's entire life. Therefore, this is an extraordinary investment that is going to make a massive difference.

• (1020)

We are also taking action on marketing to kids with front-of-pack labelling and taking action with the \$500-million fund to develop capacity for mental health services on the ground in communities across the country. I could go on and on, but I only have a short period of time to talk about the thing that we are here to talk about. I see the member for Vancouver Kingsway, and I want to thank him for this.

When we talk about contraceptives, it is incredibly frustrating to me that, over the last number of days, we have seen a march and a protest here to try to take away women's rights and take away their right to choose. We have seen over 80 Conservative members, I believe is the number, who have been endorsed because of their belief that they should take away a woman's right to choose, and that is fine. I am pro-choice, and there are members who are not.

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However, what I do not understand is if someone is against a woman's right to make a choice about her own body, how can they also be against giving her contraception? What choice is she left with? Let us look at that very specifically. If a woman today is in need of contraception and does not have the money for it, what are they supposed to do? Maybe they can find the money for oral contraception, but it has a failure rate of 9%. An IUD has a failure rate of 0.2%, but it costs \$500 up front. For the women who do not have the money to pay for it up front, they are left with a less effective tool to be able to have control over their sexual and reproductive health.

How, in the one order, can we say to a woman that they are not allowed to choose or make a choice for their body, but in the other order, say that we are not going to help them get contraception to be able to make a choice about their body that way either? In other words, they get no choice. What conversation is being had about sexual health? If someone is against giving contraception to women and against them having a choice over their body, then they would at least talk about sexual health.

For women, it is extremely important to know that their body is something that they should always have autonomy over. Sex is something that should feel empowering and should make them feel like themselves. It is something they should never be coerced or pressured into. It is something that they should never feel ashamed of. It is something that should feel pleasurable.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, there are members laughing. Imagine. As health minister, I cannot talk about whether or not sex is pleasurable. Do members know how much sex people have in this country?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, they are laughing again, and that is so juvenile.

Guess what: In this country, or in any country, people have sex. How often does that result in a baby? Less than 0.1% of the time. Most of the sex people are going to have in their lives is for pleasure. Why is it important to be able to say that sex is pleasurable? The reason is when someone thinks that their body is there to serve somebody else, rather than to serve themselves and their pleasure, then they are going to be more likely to accept abuse, more likely to accept manipulation and more likely to be hurt.

I will say this lesson hit home for me very hard in my life when I was young. In my life, I was faced with deep sexual violence that happened when I was a kid. My family did not talk about sex. The result of that was me being afraid of my sexuality and of sex, and linking sexual violence to somehow being part of sex. I did not understand what sex was, and I was deeply confused. That is something that caused me an enormous amount of damage.

We know that sexual identity issues are a leading cause for teen suicide. Many young people struggle with many questions: What do I do? Do I please this person? Do I please myself? Is it okay to please myself? What do I want? It is okay to be ourselves, and we

need to be able to say that in this country. It is okay to have autonomy over one's body.

Again, I will ask the question: If someone is against contraception and against choice, in terms of abortion, then how come one cannot talk about female sexuality? Is it because they do not want women to have any choice at all? That is an important question.

● (1025)

Therefore, making sure that women have access to the contraceptive medicine they need is absolutely essential to women having autonomy and control over their own bodies. It is, frankly, about making sure that they are not used, manipulated or have a negative experience with that.

Lastly, I will talk briefly, because I know I am pretty much out of time, about diabetes. Diabetes medication is so essential because if diabetes patients do not have access to the medication they need, and far too many Canadians do not have the dollars for their medicine, it means they are going to be much more likely to experience heart disease, kidney failure, blindness or limb amputation. It is yet another example, like contraception, where the money we would to spend to make sure that people get medication would actually save the health system more than it costs by avoiding all kinds of disastrous health outcomes. It is not just a matter of social justice or preventative health, but in this instance, it would bring huge savings to our health system.

Why are Conservatives against it? They say that it is fantasy. Then, let me try to negotiate it. When I talk to the provincial health ministers across the country, they are ready to act. If Conservatives are against it because they think the system is too expensive, then what is their alternative? How would people get their medication? They do not say that. If it is just that they are against the idea that people should get the medicine they need, then they should have the honesty to say that is their reason. Then, we can have a debate about the merits of the type of country we live in and whether or not those medications are available for the people who need them.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened attentively to the health minister's speech. He talked about, at one point, finding common ground and finding solutions. He recited every single anecdote in this speech that he did in his second reading speech on the bill.

This bill, Bill C-64, only got three days of debate in the House, and it was then sent to committee. Now, we have a programming motion, so it is a guillotine or gag order attempting to be imposed on the House of Commons to order a committee of the House to dispense with the bill after something like 10 hours of consideration at committee. If we are talking about finding common ground and finding solutions, then we should allow the House and its committees to do their work instead of ramming things through.

I wonder if the minister could explain why, in the programming motion, he is not obliged to testify before the committee.

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Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, in the first order, it is hard to take the call for more debate seriously when you are 100% against the bill and have no interest in negotiating it, adding to it or subtracting from it, so having a debate that is binary, where—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am not against anything.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, through you to the Conservatives, they are against this bill and against providing contraceptive and diabetes medications. That is fair. They can be against it, but the House has an elected will. What we saw on the very first day that we attempted to put this bill before the House was obstruction and what we have seen with other bills is obstruction, not obstruction to continue a conversation, but obstruction because they do not want it.

I do not know how long we could have a debate about whether or not we should do it. What is the value of that debate to public discourse? We could talk about it until the cows come home, but Conservatives are against it. There is going to be an opportunity obviously at committee, at third reading and at report stage to have a lot more debate on the bill, Bill C-64, and to hear their single position, which is in opposition.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. minister for his speech. I want him to know that I was deeply moved and shocked by the story of what he experienced when he was younger. It reminds us of the importance of fighting against all forms of violence, all forms of sexual violence, especially against children. I was very moved and I hope that this type of trauma will never happen to anyone ever again.

Now, with respect to the bill, I commend the minister's openness to collaborating with Quebec and the provinces. He is saying all the right things. In reality, however, based on the way the bill is drafted, it is paternalistic Ottawa that is dictating what its priorities are and disregarding the model that Quebec has in place for pharmacare, which is meeting the most urgent needs. There is no coordination. There was no advance planning. We saw the same thing with dental insurance. Ottawa is giving \$2 billion to Sun Life for management fees alone, while we have a public system in Quebec. The minister could have sat down and discussed how to coordinate this. He also talked about the importance of keeping the public health care system, yet he chronically underfunds the health care systems by covering 20% of the cost, when it should be 35%.

Why is there such a huge gap between the benevolent rhetoric and the actions that undermine the system in Quebec and the provinces?

• (1030)

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate my colleague's question, because it is important.

Regarding the first example, I can talk a bit about the bilateral health agreements. This is a good example of collaboration where we were able to establish common indicators across the country without imposing any directives. It is not about telling Quebec what to do. No, that is not the case at all. Rather, it is about being able to measure progress in our health care system across the country

based on data. Yes, this applies in Quebec, but it also applies across the country. That is important. I hope such a system could be possible one day on a global scale.

The agreement specified that this really was a Quebec jurisdiction. I respect that enormously. That is why it is Quebec's plan. We are here to support the plan and to provide funding. It is important to communicate how federal money will be used, but it is really up to Quebec.

As far as oral health care is concerned, there is tremendous need right now. That is why it is essential to act today to ensure that Quebecers can receive this care now. Then we can find a common solution.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate the minister, the member for Ajax. I had the privilege of leading the team that negotiated with him, who led his team, which resulted in this historic agreement on pharmacare. The New Democrats, and, I believe, the minister, believe that every Canadian should have access to the medicine they need regardless of their ability to pay through our public health care system. This would be a historic first step toward that.

I want to ask the minister a question about diabetes, because that is a very important part of the class of drugs that would be covered. He and I both heard stories about parents who have to wake their children up, their five-year-old daughter or their seven-year-old son, every hour and a half at night to test their blood sugar levels because they do not have access to continuous glucose monitors or insulin pumps.

A very important part of the deal that we have negotiated would cover that, making sure that everybody has access to the test strips, monitors, pumps and syringes they need to keep themselves healthy. Could the minister tell us what impact the Conservatives' delaying access to that medication is having on the families across this country that are worried about their family members who require these instruments to stay alive?

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, it was a tough conversation. Virtually every day we were talking about different elements of it.

The member for Vancouver Kingsway was very clear that his heart and his intention were on fixing the very issues he is talking about. I know that he carries heavy in his heart, as I carry heavy in mine, the types of circumstances that he is talking about, where families desperately need these medicines in order to keep their kids safe and healthy.

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I remember Sarah from a clinic in Ottawa, and I talk about this often just because of how much it rattled me. She said that people are reusing syringes, increasing the danger of blood-borne disease, and that there are people who wind up having a limb amputated or going blind unnecessarily because they did not have the medication they needed.

We cannot afford to delay; we have to get this done. There is too much need and there are too many people who are suffering.

Again, I get that the Conservative Party is against the plan. Conservatives made that very clear. They do not want it. They do not believe that this is an area in which we should be taking action. However, the collective will of the House is that we do serve and help these people. I would say that blocking the bill under the pretense of wanting more debate is nonsense. The Conservatives are against it and are never going to be for it. There is no amount of debate that will ever get them to a different position. Their sole purpose is obstruction, which would block these essential medicines from getting to the people who need them.

• (1035)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have sat here and listened to the member, but honestly, so many of the things he is talking about are provincial issues. The member has talked about contraception. In the 1980s, I could walk into any clinic and, for \$2.00, get contraceptives. However, he is providing the idea that Canadians cannot get access. I will let him know that when the provinces are providing these programs, they do work. In 1989, for \$2.00, one could get a package. That is what we were doing then.

The member talks about all of the great work that the Liberals are doing, but I really think what we see is a lack of consultation. They speak greatly about the dental care program. As a former dental health person, I can tell him that if we do not have antibiotics, a person is not able to have their tooth pulled.

I am just wondering whether the member ever actually studied to find out these things. I am wondering why we are getting into the provinces' territory when they were actually providing many of these services.

Hon. Mark Holland: Madam Speaker, I will be frank: Canadians across the country are just not interested in that argument. They have critical needs that need to be met, and we have to work collaboratively to do it.

Canada has a responsibility to maintain and protect the Canada Health Act. The Canada Health Act is a matter of absolute federal jurisdiction, and the idea that we would abdicate the field and let our health system deteriorate and fall apart makes me wonder what the real argument is.

If the member was not listening when I was talking about the difference between oral contraceptives' having a 9% failure rate versus an IUD at 0.2%, how could she talk to a woman who does not have the dollars about why she would—

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

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened attentively to what the health minister was saying, so I am glad to be the first person to rise on my side to maybe provide a rebuttal and also to reset the debate, because the debate is not directly about Bill C-64; it is about a programming motion.

When I listened to the minister's speech, I also had the time to compare it to his speech that he gave at second reading. The same three anecdotes he raised today were raised then. Two of the three are completely misleading, and one was a very personal experience of his that he raised, which is his right as a member and a minister.

However, this is about a programming motion that would guillotine debate in the House. It would order a committee of the House to basically consider a bill within 10 hours, a bill that would have profound impact on the structure of Canada's health care systems, plural because they are systems. Quebec has a different system than Alberta, than British Columbia, than Saskatchewan and than other provinces in Canada.

We know from much research that has already been done by CIHI, The Conference Board of Canada, Statistics Canada, and CLHIA, which is the life insurance trade association, that 97.2% of Canadians already have access or are eligible for access to an insurance benefit plan of some sort. I know that in my home province, we have Blue Cross, which is usually the insurer of last resort that provides a lot of the services that the minister talked about.

The worst part of all is that we would be programming a committee of the House to study what essentially amounts to a pamphlet of legislation. The minister talked about finding common ground and solutions. I have also heard other members of Parliament talk about how important committee work is to them. Now we would basically be guillotining and gag ordering a specific committee of the House, the Standing Committee on Health, to do its work in 10 hours.

That is why I asked a question for the health minister on why he felt the need to exclude himself from having to come to testify before the health committee. One would think that he would put himself before the members at committee and answer all of their questions on the reasoning behind C-64 and the wisdom of it, because it is not a national pharmacare plan. That is not what it would do. It would cover two very small areas of medicine.

I will note that in the minister's second reading speech about Bill C-64, he had all of one sentence devoted to rare disease drugs and rare disease patients, typically the source of the most expensive therapies, the most expensive drugs, on an individual basis, not on a broad basis. Typically most drug plans in the provinces, whether private or public, spend the most on things like the very basic medication for infections. Medications like amoxicillin or penicillin and variations thereof are the ones that are quite expensive because people get a lot of infections, so it is just a question of volume in those situations.

There is a lot of medication out there that is expensive because it is brand new; it is coming onto the market for the first time. Recently I learned about a new oncology drug that is going to be made available in the United States, but it is cutting-edge, specialized medicine made for the individual patient. The drug comes with a few tens of thousands of dollars of cost associated with its delivery. There will be some cancer centres in Canada that will not be able to have it available for patients, but it will be available to other patients in other parts of Canada. Oncology drugs would not be covered under the plan.

There would actually be nothing covered in the plan except for those two areas of medications, which are very specific ones as well. Like I said, there would be nothing for rare disease patients. The minister talked, in his original speech at second reading, though not today, about the \$1.5 billion being devoted to rare disease drugs. That announcement was made in 2019, yet only now has some of the spending gone out, not to cover drug costs but to cover things like the creation of rare disease registries to get foundations, universities and private organizations to start up a rare disease registry specific to one individual drug.

There is often a problem in how the Liberals propose things. They say something, make claims, and then it takes years before anything actually happens. As an example, in 2019 there was an announcement. In 2024, still not a single rare disease drug has been covered by the \$1.5 billion. It took five years of waiting. Rare disease patients cannot wait. In fact it was the Liberal government that cancelled the original rare disease strategy in 2016. At that time, the president of the Canadian Organizations for Rare Disorders, Durhane Wong-Rieger, said that it was the kiss of death for patients with rare diseases.

• (1040)

She is a literal ball of energy and an amazing woman, an amazing advocate for patients with rare diseases. This was in 2016. It took the government three years just to announce funding and five years after that to roll out a single dollar. Now the government wants to convince us that it needs to expedite Bill C-64 by programming and ordering the Standing Committee on Health to consider certain things but not others.

I will go through the programming motion, since the minister did not feel the need to even explain why this was necessary. He repeated, essentially, his second reading speech on why we need to expedite this so quickly. There were three days of debate in the House before there was a vote at the Senate and in the Standing Committee on Health. I looked at the work the Standing Committee on Health had done. It did not even have the chance to consider the bill. That is how quickly the government is now programming what is going on.

The first line of this programming motion is very simple: “the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for the committee meetings”. It seems quite reasonable that it would be given first right to interpretation, rooms and catering services if the committee is expected to sit for hours and hours on end. I guess a programming motion would have to have that in it.

The second part is, “the committee shall meet between 3:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on the two further sitting days following the adoption

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of this order to gather evidence from witnesses, provided that any meeting on a Friday may start at 12:00 p.m. for a duration of not more than five hours”. Essentially, that is saying there will be two more meetings of the Standing Committee on Health and 10 hours of testimony. There are countless members in the House who will say that, during consideration of a bill, witnesses will testify, explain an idea or perhaps a missing amendment or particular line in a bill between the French and the English, which happens on a fairly regular basis. They either do not match, do not make sense or there could be more added to a bill to clarify or constrain a bill. Ten hours is simply not enough for a bill that would have such a substantive impact.

According to the health minister, the Liberals are going to celebrate a bill with such a substantive and profound impact as some great achievement. I do not believe that. I believe this is a pamphlet. This is not national pharmacare. There is no spending associated with this bill. Every one of my constituents back home knows there is no spending associated with this bill. If the Liberals keep ramming the bill through at this pace and it passes through the Senate at some point in the future, not one single drug will be paid for through this legislation because there are no dollars associated with it. There is no, what we call, ministerial warrant from the Minister of Finance connected to this bill. There will be no medication paid for through this particular bill. That is why I do not understand why this programming motion is of such necessity when the committee has not even had a chance to consider it.

I understand perhaps it would be easier to tell Conservatives, members of the Bloc and independent members that they are slowing down the committee's work, that they are not allowing the committee to proceed with witness testimony or consider the contents of the bill, but that has not even happened yet. We have not even had a chance to invite witnesses to explain to us their views on the contents of the bill.

When the minister talks about finding common ground and solutions, he accuses the Conservatives of being against it. Of course we are against it. We voted against the bill, but that doesn't mean we cannot improve an F product and make it maybe an F+ product. I know that is not a grade in universities or colleges in Canada, but we can always make something terrible a little less terrible. This is essentially, like I said, a pamphlet. For me, it was easier to vote against it because I saw nothing for patients with rare diseases. That is not a surprise to anyone in this place.

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I remember the original debate on an NDP private member's bill, which I believe was Bill C-340, if memory serves. It was on national pharmacare. At least the title was on national pharmacare, not the contents. It was put forward by the member for Vancouver Kingsway. He and I debated it for most of the day. I was all about access for patients with rare diseases, and I said that was why I could not vote for that bill at the time.

It is not a big surprise to many members of the House and members of the other place that I would be against a bill that has a title of national pharmacare, but would not do anything for patients with rare diseases. Members know of a personal anecdote I have mentioned many times in the House. I have three living kids with a rare disease called Alport syndrome. One daughter passed away very young, at 39 days old, with a different rare disease. I always joke with my friends in the rare disease community that I am due. I should probably play the lottery as I would have a decent chance of winning because both of those conditions are rare.

• (1045)

In the case of my living kids, it is a rare disease of the kidneys, CKD, a chronic kidney condition. In the case of my youngest daughter who passed away, she had Patau syndrome, which is a chromosomal condition and very, very rare.

If one knows a child with Down syndrome, one should hug them. They are very special little kids. My daughter had a condition that is considered much worse than Down's. Down's is survivable. There are a lot of very sweet kids who live with Down syndrome, and their families are made incredibly happy by them because they are sweet into the teen years, into their twenties, thirties and forties. One never has to go through those teenage years, as I am going through right now with one of my kids, where suddenly, as the dad, I know nothing and they know everything, which is okay. I will go through this three times in my life.

I will move on to the next part of the programming motion, which reads, "all amendments be submitted to the clerk of the committee by 4:00 p.m. on the second sitting day following the adoption of this order".

We are quite fortunate there was unlimited time provided, I believe, for the first two speakers on a programming motion. Perhaps members are surprised I would rise on this, but I intend to use this time to explain why I do not like the programming motion and the defects with Bill C-64, and to remind the minister about what the summary of his own legislation says that it does, because it is the complete opposite of what the minister just explained to the House. It is the complete opposite from his second reading speech as well, so members can stay tuned for that part.

On these amendments, we are fortunate because we have a constituency week coming up. I can guarantee many of us will be sitting down and working with patient advocacy groups. We will be going to our stakeholder groups and meeting with our constituents. I have a few who have emailed me on this subject. I will be finding useful amendments to this bill that would improve it in my eyes and in the eyes of my constituents. We have the time.

Had we had a sitting week coming up, had there not been unlimited time for the first speaker on the official opposition side, we

could have been rushed to provide amendments by 4 p.m. after the first day. That is an incredibly low amount of time considering this first came to the House February 29 and then the last vote was on April 16 before it was sent to the committee.

Doing a programming motion like this, or a gag order to the committee, is wrong. I do not agree with programming motions. I believe I voted against nearly all of them that ever came through the House. I believe the health minister was also the House leader at one point when Motion No. 16 was being moved through the House. There was also a previous one, and I believe it was a member for Waterloo who moved Motion No. 6, which would have programmed how committees work in the Standing Orders forevermore for the Houses.

I cannot base our opposition or our support for any particular motions and programming motions on good faith coming from that side because I simply do not believe the cabinet, the front-benchers. I do not believe them. There are many good-hearted backbenchers in the Liberal benches. They are easier to work with, I find, than those on the front bench. The front bench I just do not trust. I do not trust the front-benchers to do the right thing for Canadians. In fact, Canadians do not trust them. If we look at the polls, there is about a 20-point disparity, depending on which poll we consider, between what the government is polling at and what the official opposition is polling at.

I will move on to the next point, which reads, "amendments filed by independent members shall be deemed to have been proposed during the clause-by clause consideration of the bill". I actually do not have a problem with that. Independent members should be treated like every other member of the House, especially during considerations of bills.

Now comes the next one, which gets quite technical:

the committee shall meet at 3:30 p.m., on the third sitting day following the adoption of this order to consider the bill at clause-by-clause, or 12:00 p.m. if on a Friday, and if the committee has not completed the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill by 8:30 p.m., or 5:00 p.m. if on a Friday, all remaining amendments submitted to the committee shall be deemed moved, the Chair shall put the question, forthwith and successively without further debate on all remaining clauses, amendments submitted to the committee as well as each and every question necessary to dispose of the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill, and the committee shall not adjourn the meeting until it has disposed of the bill...

This means that, once the 10 hours of testimony are done, once that particular portion of the committee's work is done, every single amendment has to be voted on immediately, with no debate for amendments. In those 10 hours, if witness testimony takes five or six or seven hours, we then have a few hours left over to consider and debate amendments. We could not even persuade the other side of the wisdom of the amendment. This is so profoundly wrong. I see this programming motion all the time when it comes to omnibus budget bills.

• (1050)

I will remind the House that the Liberal platforms in 2015 and 2019 promised not to do omnibus budget bills, yet they have done them repeatedly, over and over again. In fact, in Liberal budget 2023, they had section changes to clauses 500 to 504 on natural health products. That has nothing to do with the budget. There are no spending items related to it, but it was a regulatory expansion to apply rules for pharmaceuticals directly onto natural health products.

It caught a lot of people by surprise, including myself, that in a budget bill, which sometimes has hundreds of pages, one would do such a thing. They basically clip what they usually do at the finance committee, and now they have dropped it and ordered the Standing Committee on Health to do it in one particular way, in their way, their preferred way, with no debate on any amendments.

Why should one allow backbenchers from any of our political parties to freely consider the judgment and the argument being made by another member of another political party, individually or on behalf of their political movement, on the wisdom of a particular amendment to a government bill? I know, it would be shocking to even have that consideration.

It would be even more shocking for some members of the government benches to know that I have voted for government amendments at committee. I know. I hear “shame” from my side of the benches, but it happens. Sometimes they have a good idea. I am willing to consider good ideas. I am willing to. I have been on several committees over my time, from foreign affairs to finance to the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations. I am on the immigration committee and the Canada-China committee now, the select committee. I will vote for reasonable amendments. I will even talk to my own side to try to convince them if there is a reasonable, logical amendment that makes sense. Sometimes there is an argument made by a member of another party that actually makes sense. This section prevents that. There will be no debate on amendments. One is just supposed to vote on them.

Of course, what will happen is that there will be a question of having a recorded division on every single one of those votes. This means the committee will continue, likely, late into an evening, because it is basically programmed. To demonstrate that this is wrong and should not be done, I am fairly sure that there will be members of the committee who will want a recorded division on every single item so that we can go back to it later with our errors and mistakes and illogical situations that arise because two sections perhaps conflict with each other. This type of amendment process, clause by clause, is incredibly important, and we now will not be allowed to be given this opportunity.

The sixth portion of this guillotine gag order on the Standing Committee on Health says:

a member of the committee may report the bill to the House by depositing it with the Clerk of the House, who shall notify the House leaders of the recognized parties and independent members, and if the House stands adjourned, the report shall be deemed to have been duly presented to the House during the previous sitting for the purpose of Standing Order 76.1(1)

This is a fairly reasonable amendment that is often provided by members in other committees to make sure that, when reporting on

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a bill, the House leaders are informed, typically to go on the Notice Paper. I do not have a direct issue with this particular portion, apart from the fact that this is a programming motion, a gag order, that is going to guillotine a committee of the House without that committee even having had the chance to consider a bill.

The next section is section (b). It says:

not more than five hours shall be allotted to the consideration of the bill at report stage, and at the expiry of the time provided for the consideration of the said stage of the bill, or when no member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment, and, if a recorded division is requested, the vote shall not be deferred...

It continues. There is another one, but I am going to stop right here. This essentially means that, when amendments come back from committee, they are sometimes ruled out of order. They cannot be considered at committee but they can be considered by the House because the House has control of its committees, and the House can decide whether certain amendments can be voted on. Those are typically then submitted to the Speaker.

This essentially says that this process will also be guillotined after five hours. I know they love gag orders. I know they love to guillotine debate. My hope is, too, that during this debate on the programming motion, they do not gag order the gag order. I would hate to see that. It would be like a double gagging of the orders of the House and really limiting debate.

They have done it before. They have done it on Bill C-7 and Bill C-14, the two medical assistance in dying bills. At different stages of those bills, they both programmed and then shut down debate on them. I have seen, plenty of times, allocation motions being moved by cabinet to force bills through the process on matters of conscience.

• (1055)

It is not as if they are technical bills where perhaps there is a timeline the Liberals need to reach and where, for the proper administration of government, they can perhaps make an argument they can stand on, but for matters of conscience, to guillotine debate is wrong. In this particular case, I would say that this is not a matter of conscience. I think this is about administration of government services and what the contents of the bill are actually about versus what they are not about. When the Liberals impose a guillotine with time allocation and force the closure of debate, the major disadvantage to Canadians is that they cannot prepare themselves. They cannot organize themselves when they are opposed to particular ideas and when they want to ask questions like, “Why is my rare disease, my health condition or MS not covered in this bill? Why is diabetes covered?”

Statements by Members

I know a lot of diabetics, and I am not picking on them directly. I am just asking a simple question. The most common rare disease is multiple sclerosis, or MS. A lot of people in my family have it, as well as friends, colleagues and co-workers. There are spouses of members on this side who have it. Therefore, why is that particular condition, and its medication, which is expensive medication, not in this particular piece of legislation?

It is a choice the government made, so why can we not debate that choice the government has made for those two particular conditions and the medications associated with them? If they are being covered, why not others? There are so many other types of medications, such as the most common ones: penicillin, amoxicillin and all the variations of the “-cillins”, because there are so many of them. Why are they not covered in this particular piece of legislation?

On this programming motion, should we put forward such an amendment to be considered at committee? If it is deemed non-votable at committee, why can it not be considered at report stage?

I guess I will only get through the programming motions, and I will have to come back later to finish talking about Bill C-64 and some of the things the minister said, as well as my concerns with the PMPRB, CADTH, pCPA and the entire architecture of drug approval in Canada.

The motion reads, “not more than one sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the bill at the third reading stage, and 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders”, and it goes on like that, which basically means that there will be one day for final speeches, and then it will be done and sent to the other place. It is wrong to ram through a bill in this method, with bad faith being shown by the health minister, claiming that we were opposing it and not willing to consider things, when he has never bothered to listen.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

GAZA

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during the last about 200 days, Israel has killed over 34,000 Palestinians, including about 14,000 children. In Gaza, Israel has displaced 90% of the population, destroyed 70% of the infrastructure, destroyed all universities and demolished all hospitals. Not satisfied with this, Israel has now initiated a ground invasion of Rafah.

The reign of Israeli terror must come to an end. Innocent Palestinians, including children, held in Israel must be released, and the terrorist organization Hamas must unconditionally release all the hostages immediately. The United States has admitted that its bombs have been used to kill Palestinians.

I call on Canada to immediately implement an official arms embargo using Canada's Special Economic Measures Act and pressure Israel to end its invasion. This is the issue that defines who we are as Canadians.

FALKLAND STAMPEDE

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, we know the Prime Minister is not worth the cost, but here is something that is: the 104th annual Falkland Stampede. North Okanagan—Shuswap is an amazing place with beautiful people and spectacular events.

One of the longest-running events in the area, and one of Canada's longest-running rodeo stampedes, is coming up on the May long weekend. If anyone is looking for affordable family entertainment, this is the place to be. With three days of rodeo fun, food trucks, beer gardens, cowboy church, dances, and pancake breakfasts, there really is something for everyone. There is even a parade, which is free, because even the Prime Minister cannot carbon-tax free.

We will be there on Sunday for the parade and the rodeo, and we hope to see wagonloads of families out enjoying Falkland showing off its best, including one of the largest Canada flags. The louder the crowds cheer, the harder the broncs buck at the Falkland Stampede. Yee-haw.

* * *

CALGARY NAGAR KIRTAN

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this Saturday, the Dashmesh Culture Centre will host Calgary's annual Nagar Kirtan, commemorating Vaisakhi, the birth of the Khalsa. The Nagar Kirtan embodies a vibrant procession filled with sacred hymns and traditional martial arts, guiding the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji through our community streets. I am especially honoured that the parade will travel to Prairie Winds Park, right in front of my constituency office in the heart of northeast Calgary.

This event stands as Calgary's second-largest gathering, following the Calgary Stampede. It serves as a testament to our city's rich cultural tapestry and spirit of unity. All attendees, regardless of religion, caste, gender, economic status or ethnicity, are warmly welcomed to enjoy complimentary vegetarian meals, symbolizing inclusivity and compassion.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Dashmesh Culture Centre, dedicated—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

BARSBY BULLDOGS

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment to highlight an incredible team in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith: the John Barsby Secondary School football team, or what locals know as the Barsby Bulldogs.

The Barsby Bulldogs is a team full of dedicated and skilled players, winning multiple provincial titles in British Columbia. The success of this team is the result of the collective strength of all those who continue to lift them up. Generation after generation, the high school football team has been surrounded by many who make the Bulldogs the strong community it is, including coaches, parents, community members, alumni, teachers and administrators.

One particular individual I want to give a special shout-out to is Coach Stevenson. The positive impact Coach Stevenson has made on the lives of many over the years is undeniable, so much so that the team sees time and again previous high school players coming back as adults to take on coaching youth football themselves.

Coach Stevenson may be humble, but he deserves to be acknowledged for his important mentorship and thanked for his dedication to the team. Congratulations to the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

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LENNOX O'REILLY HINDS

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am rising to recognize an individual in my riding who passed away earlier this year. He was a friend. Next week, we will be celebrating his life.

Dr. Lennox Hinds was an outstanding public servant who served Canada for 35 years. He believed in political engagement. He was a Liberal. I knew him for over 25 years. I was just a young adolescent when I met Dr. Len Hinds. He always proved to be a friend who provided sound advice. Sometimes I would have to keep his door for last during elections because he would always want to have a drink and chat about politics.

My sincere condolences go to his wife, Marjorie, and his family. He will be missed.

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● (1105)

GENERAL SIR ARTHUR CURRIE AWARD

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, on April 22, John Adams, the President of Valour Canada, presented the annual General Sir Arthur Currie Award to one of Calgary's finest, George Brookman, often referred to as Mr. Calgary.

There is much I can say about George and his contributions to Calgary and to Canada, but I would be here for quite a while. His recognition for this award is due to his role in steering events that contribute to our understanding and support of our military. Like the general honoured in the award he received, George Brookman

Statements by Members

is a true leader. We thank George for all he does for Canada's military heritage and so much more.

Valour Canada is an organization that educates young Canadians about our shared military heritage by developing learning opportunities to foster a deeper understanding of who we are as individuals, as citizens, and as a nation. We thank John Adams and his team at Valour Canada. We are indebted to them for their work.

* * *

SURREY'S TOP 25 UNDER 25 AWARDS

Mr. Randeep Sarai (Surrey Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Surrey is a young city. With over 35,000 individuals aged between 19 and 25, Surrey is home to the largest number of youths in all of B.C. It is no surprise that our youth are at the forefront of Surrey's growth and innovation.

Every year, the Surrey Board of Trade recognizes 25 outstanding youth with its Surrey's Top 25 Under 25 award. This award pays homage to business and community-minded youth and recognizes their position as a role model for their community. From focusing on drug and opioid abuse prevention to advocating for increased senior support and the promotion of arts and culture in youth, Surrey's Top 25 Under 25 are represented in every corner of the city.

I want to give a special shout-out to my former staffer Harjot Kular and volunteer Suhana Gill, who have both been recognized for their community service with this award.

Congratulations to all the recipients of this amazing award—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Orléans.

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CANADIAN REMEMBRANCE TORCH

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today we are welcoming the Canadian Remembrance Torch to Parliament Hill. The Canadian Remembrance Torch was created by accomplished McMaster students and now serves as an important symbol for the contribution of Canadian veterans.

The founder of this torch, Karen Hunter, whose family has a long tradition of serving in our armed forces, was the visionary behind the symbol. It is a symbol of gratitude for peace and freedom, and it serves to bring awareness of Canada's military contribution in the liberation of the Netherlands during the Second World War.

This summer, it will continue its journey by travelling to France to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day at Juno Beach. I want to say thanks to Karen and her students for undertaking this project, dedicated to remembering those who have fought for the freedoms that we so much cherish.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***FINANCE**

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of this Liberal government and nine inflationary deficit budgets, this Liberal government is not worth the cost.

This is especially true considering that, unfortunately, it can rely on the Bloc Québécois's support. Yes, the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of \$500 billion in budget appropriations. That means \$500 billion in centralizing spending, and the Bloc Québécois said yes. It also means \$500 billion in inflationary spending, and the Bloc Québécois said yes.

As a result, Quebecers and Canadians are paying more for everything.

Yesterday, in the Quebec National Assembly, the leader of the Parti Québécois condemned the Liberal government's mismanagement of public funds. The Liberal Party's governance is so inept that it has become an argument in support of Quebec's independence. Things are not going well. I would like to remind the leader of the Parti Québécois, who forgot to mention it yesterday, that the Bloc Québécois voted for \$500 billion in budgetary appropriations.

When will this Prime Minister, who is being propped up by the Bloc Québécois, stop wasting money? When will this government finally govern responsibly?

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*[English]***GAZA**

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we speak, Rafah, the last place where Netanyahu's regime told Palestinians to evacuate, is being invaded and innocents suffer.

Our allies have warned Netanyahu not to proceed with this invasion or they will pause military exports. My constituents have been clear that they want us to do the same. The people of Israel have the support of Canada, but that does not mean supporting Netanyahu and his regime's indiscriminate war against the people of Palestine.

Canada has continued calling for a ceasefire, the release of hostages and sustained humanitarian aid, but we can be that stronger force to build a better long-term solution so that Palestinian people can live in peace, security and dignity, co-existing with Israelis and all in the Middle East. The ongoing violence has defined generations of lives over the last 75 years. Do they not all deserve to live in peace?

* * *

● (1110)

DRUG POLICIES

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the Liberal-NDP government, thousands upon thousands of people are overdosing every year on our streets or in their homes. There have been 42,000 deaths under the watch of the Prime Minister. I cannot count how many heart-

broken parents and family members I have met who have lost loved ones to this scourge.

The results of legalized hard drugs, safe supply and a toothless criminal justice system have been death, destruction, chaos and carnage in Canadian hospitals, playgrounds, parks and on public transportation. Our beautiful country is being destroyed by radical Liberal and wacko NDP drug policies. The Liberals must not allow the legalization of hard drugs to be expanded to other cities like Toronto or Montreal after the clear failures in B.C. and Oregon.

What the Liberals are doing is absolutely not working. Common-sense Conservatives will ban hard drugs, stop taxpayer-funded drugs and put that money into detox and recovery.

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FORMER GOVERNOR OF THE BANK OF CANADA

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Madam Speaker, carbon tax Carney's crusade to be coronated as the Liberal leader is in full swing. He is preaching the same radical agenda as the woke Prime Minister, who doubled rents and mortgages on his path to quadrupling the carbon tax scam.

Canadians are terrified of what carnage Carney will create. His silence on Liberal waste speaks volumes, as the Prime Minister sends more taxpayer dollars in interest payments to Carney's Bay Street buddies than what goes to health transfers or to national defence. After speaking at the Senate, he fled to rub elbows with Ottawa high society and preach his radical agenda. He is more comfortable with Davos elites than in a room full of everyday, hard-working, struggling Canadians.

Carbon tax Carney needs to show some courage and show up at the finance committee so he can answer what destructive path he will take this country down. No common-sense Canadian can say that carbon tax Carney, the next Liberal leader, is any different from the woke, radical, out-of-touch Prime Minister.

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*[Translation]***SYLVAIN LAMBERT**

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to pay tribute today to an exceptional administrator who, over the past decade, has made a significant contribution to the development of young adults in my region.

Sylvain Lambert has worked in the college network for over 20 years, spending the last nine as executive director of CEGEP Édouard-Montpetit and École nationale d'aérotechnique in Longueuil. In July, he will be stepping down to take on new challenges.

Statements by Members

I had the privilege of working with Sylvain in my former life as a college administrator and then as a member of Parliament, and I can personally attest to his great qualities on both a personal and a professional level. I sincerely commend him for his commitment to the college and the community.

I wish Sylvain much happiness and success in all his future endeavours.

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[English]

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, CMHC is going to end the rent-geared-to-income subsidies to some of the homes under the federal government's bilateral agreement with the provinces. Non-profits are forced to jack up the rent to market rates after the existing tenants move out. That means thousands of affordable homes will be lost forever. This move is beyond stupid. It shows that the Liberals have learned nothing from the housing crisis they helped create.

Already, between successive Liberal and Conservative governments, Canada has lost more than a million affordable homes. For every home built, 11 are lost. Canada cannot continue down this track. Communities cannot afford to lose more affordable housing stock. This giving with the right and taking with the left sleight of hand will fool no one. The housing crisis will only get worse, and the Liberals will have no one to blame but themselves. The rent-geared-to-income subsidies must continue.

* * *

• (1115)

[Translation]

CENTRE D'ACTION BÉNÉVOLE DRUMMOND

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, this year, the Centre d'action bénévole Drummond, or CAB for short, is celebrating its 45th anniversary.

I was there when they celebrated this milestone during the kick-off of National Volunteer Week. The room was packed. These are generous men and women who make check-in calls, provide respite care and escort seniors or vulnerable people to appointments. They are a ray of hope for people who are going through tumultuous times. Last year alone, CAB helped over 14,000 people and nearly 200 organizations, thanks to 273 volunteers who did close to 24,000 good deeds for a combined total of nearly 37,000 volunteer hours. These volunteers make a huge difference in people's lives. We are lucky to have them.

With 45 years of service under its belt, CAB knows what people need. The tax clinic and meals on wheels program are both running at full capacity. Volunteers are the lifeblood of CAB. They are guardian angels, and kindness is their watchword. They forge special bonds, create friendships and brighten the lives of many people.

I wish CAB Drummond a happy anniversary and thank them for being there to ensure the well-being and safety of the people in our community.

[English]

REX MURPHY

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Madam Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador has contributed much to our great dominion, but few gifts from the Rock rival that of the now departed Rex Murphy. Inspired by his firm belief that Canada was founded on great principles, had achieved great things in the past, and could and should do much more in the future, Rex stood on guard for all of us with great wit and wisdom throughout his many newspaper columns and on-air commentaries.

Rex was brave, but without pretense. He despised the smug. He understood and championed everyday Canadians, especially those who struggled. He appreciated the inherent fallen nature of humankind, as well as our ability to rise above our failings through the pursuit of virtue.

God bless Canada, God bless Newfoundland and Labrador, and God bless the soul of Raphael Rex Murphy.

* * *

HAMILTON AUTHOR

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Hamilton Reads title for 2024 is *Chrysalis*, the first book by Hamilton Mountain's own Anuja Varghese. It won a Governor General's Literary Award, a Writers' Trust Award and several other honours.

The dedication reads, "This book is for all the girls and women who don't see themselves in most stories. You are worthy of reflection, despite what you have been told." It is a really fun read. Anuja told me that she is always looking for ways to empower women and girls, and sometimes that means "you get to be a shape-shifter and eat your enemies". She says fantasy fiction helps us let loose, wonder "what if?" and consider difficult subjects like racism, homophobia and misogyny in stories, rather than statistics.

Anuja unleashed her inner writer when she moved to Hamilton and found the community that inspired her and the support that helped her flourish.

I want to congratulate Anuja on her success, thank her for the delicious stories and tell her that Hamilton is very glad she now calls our city home.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS**

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years, the Prime Minister is not worth the drugs, disorder and death. Open access to meth and fentanyl is killing Canadians. B.C. parents are terrified that children will step on dirty needles on soccer fields. Nurses are breathing in fentanyl smoke as they treat patients in hospitals. On May 21, Parliament will vote on our motion to ensure that this extremist drug experiment is never repeated.

Will the Prime Minister vote to reject expansion and prioritize treatment and recovery, yes or no?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, too many Canadians are dying every day from an ever-changing illegal toxic drug supply. The opposition leader talks about investing in treatment, but Conservatives cut two-thirds of drug treatment funds when they were last in government.

Let us talk about what saves lives: safe consumption sites, accessible social and health care services, prevention, treatment and harm reduction. This is a public health crisis, not a criminal justice issue.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years, it is on them, and they have to do something about it.

The Liberal leadership race is well under way, I see, and it seems like the new guy is just like the old guy. Mark Carney testified at the Senate and, surprise, surprise, he announced his support for the Prime Minister's failed carbon tax. Carbon tax Carney could not commit to cutting a penny from the Prime Minister's reckless spending. These random Liberals really have a lot in common.

If carbon tax Carney will not and the Prime Minister will not, will someone over there have Canadians' backs and axe the tax?

● (1120)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if we are going to talk about having Canadians' backs, let us talk about the work that we are doing to protect the environment while making life more affordable through the carbon rebate. In fact, if we look at economists, and over 300 economists have signed a letter stating this very fact, Canadians receive more on average through the rebate than they pay through any carbon pricing.

In fact, in Ontario, the average family, at the end of the year, has \$300 more through the carbon rebate. I am listening to the economists, and I am standing up and having the backs of Canadians.

HOUSING

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am listening to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who says the exact opposite of what that member just said. Inflationary budgets destroy the working class with high interest rates.

After nine years, mortgages, down payments and rents have all doubled, and 90% of young Canadians are stuck in housing hell with their dreams of home ownership shattered. Those who do own fear they cannot qualify for renewal. Mortgage delinquencies are up 50% overall, 135% in Ontario and 62% in B.C. This—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, if the member opposite wants to talk about what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said, he said that eight out of 10 families end up with more money at the end of the year through the carbon rebate and through the carbon pricing.

Also, if we are going to talk about protecting homes, at the very moment that houses were burning in Kelowna—Lake Country from climate crisis fires, wildfires, that member was opposing the carbon price.

The carbon price actually results in a third of our emissions—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

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*[Translation]***FINANCE**

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Governor of the Bank of Canada has repeatedly confirmed that the Prime Minister's spending is keeping interest rates high.

Many mortgage holders will face large increases in their payments as their loans come up for renewal over the next two years. That is the direct result of this Prime Minister's \$500 billion in centralizing, inflationary spending, backed by the Bloc Québécois.

When will the Prime Minister and the Bloc Québécois stop their out-of-control spending and give Quebecers a break?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague talks about responsible management. Are people aware that, during his entire term as minister responsible for housing, the Conservative leader built six affordable housing units across the entire country, while in the riding of my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles alone, 222 affordable housing units have been built in recent years? Many more are on the way thanks to the historic agreement that we signed with the Government of Quebec.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister has been repeating the same childish line for two weeks now, but does he know that, when the Leader of the Opposition was the minister responsible for housing, rent in Canada cost half as much?

Right now, July 1 is shaping up to be a disaster for those who are looking for housing. The housing director for Vivre en ville, Adam Mongrain, has said that “the current numbers from the municipalities and the Tribunal administratif du logement show that we are currently headed for the worst July 1 of our lives”.

The government, with the support of the Bloc Québécois, has created catastrophic economic conditions for people who are looking for housing.

Will the Prime Minister get his act together and stop his inflationary spending that is just putting pressure on the economy and Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are talking about childish math. It is easy, even for young children, to count to six. Over his entire term as minister responsible for housing, the Conservative leader created only six affordable housing units across the country. It is true that six seems like a rather childish number, when 222 affordable housing units were built in my colleague's riding alone with the help of the Canadian government and under the leadership of Quebec's municipalities.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, the unfortunate thing about the insults uttered by the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is that they overshadowed opportunities for a substantive conversation about the French language. While he was publicly humiliating himself, the report of the Commissioner of Official Languages went almost unnoticed. However, the commissioner harshly criticized the federal government, describing it as uncooperative. It is uncooperative when it comes to providing services in French and allowing francophones to work in their language.

Instead of insulting Quebecers, should the Liberals not have announced this week that they are finally going to force the federal government to respect francophones?

• (1125)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we have always been there for francophones in

Canada and Quebec. I find it very interesting to see my Bloc Québécois colleagues acting like they are the only ones who care about the French fact. They appear a little bothered by the fact that our government, which includes my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, all Liberal members from Quebec and even our entire caucus, is defending the French fact in Quebec and across Canada. We are the only government—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Manicouagan.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Liberal member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell spent his 15 minutes of fame denying the decline of French in Quebec. It is an odd choice at a time when the Commissioner of Official Languages notes that it is from my colleague's region along the Ottawa river that he receives the most complaints, including from federal public servants who are unable to work in French. The commissioner said, “The complaints my office has received...attest to the fact that a number of federal institutions do not take their language obligations seriously.”

If the Liberals are not taking the future of French seriously, then why would the federal government?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us talk about our government's investments in the action plan for official languages. We will be investing \$1.4 billion over the next five years to help the French fact. Our government is the only one that has recognized the decline in French. We have modernized the Official Languages Act. We are working with the Treasury Board. We are working with the commissioner. We understand the issue very well.

On this side of the House, we believe in the French fact. They do not.

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[English]

GROCERY INDUSTRY

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, a recent report reveals alarming rates of poverty and food insecurity in Nova Scotia, the highest in the country.

However, the Liberals, as did the Conservatives before them, are choosing to reward grocery CEOs with corporate handouts instead of cracking down on their greed. This is driving up food costs. While the Conservatives vote against nutritious meals for kids at school, the Liberals are letting food conglomerates gouge Canadians at the till.

Why is the Liberal government allowing the CEOs' greed to go unchecked at the cost of Canadians going hungry?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that it is certainly hypocritical for Conservatives to cite food bank lineups as something that they care about when voting against a national school food program that would feed over 400,000 kids per year. That is hypocritical if I have ever heard it before.

Oral Questions

It is very good to hear from my colleague in the NDP, whom we worked with successfully to update our Competition Act in successive rounds. This is going to improve prices for Canadians and increase competition, which is vitally important.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, rent is going up faster than Canadians can afford, with families relying on credit cards more and more to buy food and necessities.

In my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, rent went up over 9% last year alone. People cannot cut back any more than they already are, and yet the Liberals are sitting on their hands and letting corporate greed drive up costs. This plan is not working.

When will the Liberals have the courage to crack down on the corporate greed driving up rent and food prices?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would point to the recent federal budget, in which we announced that we would not only be taking measures to prevent corporate landowners from buying up single-family homes but also advancing measures to protect renters and bring down the cost of rent by adding more supply. We are moving forward with programs that introduce low-cost financing for more rental construction. We have new subsidies for affordable housing and co-operative housing, as well as an acquisition for non-profits that can take affordable homes and keep them affordable in perpetuity.

In addition, we are moving forward with the renters' bill of rights and a series of other measures that are designed to protect the interest of renters for whom the cost of living has simply become too high.

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HOUSING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of this speNDP-Liberal government, finding an affordable rental is only getting harder. Despite its record spending, a new report says that rents in Canada increased 9.3% annually in April. It has gotten so bad that people's only choice when seeking an affordable rental is to laugh or cry.

Given the dire situation of these renters, could the Minister of Housing please enlighten us as to whether he considers the performance of his government's housing strategy a comedy of errors or a tragedy of oversights?

● (1130)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if my hon. friend is interested in a tragedy of oversights, I would direct him to the plan put forward by his leader when it comes to housing, which does not advance a single measure designed to help renters with the cost of living. The plan that he is now campaigning on would literally increase taxes on rental construction in this country by putting the GST back on those construction projects.

We have removed the GST. We have introduced low-cost financing to build more rental supply to bring down the cost across the ecosystem, across the country. In addition, we are putting more

money on the table to provide affordable housing options, with the Conservatives—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

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FINANCE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, a lot of that spending does not kick in until after the next election, so I do not think that promise is worth the paper the minister has written on.

This week, the Bank of Canada warned, “Higher debt-servicing costs reduce a household’s financial flexibility, making them more financially vulnerable if their income declines or they face an unexpected material expense.” Considering that the Prime Minister has doubled our debt and borrowed more money than all Canadian prime ministers combined, could he please explain how this warning does not equally apply to his government?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, to correct the misinformation, there is money flowing to projects, including in the member's province, as we speak. We have signed multi-billion dollar deals with provinces to build housing. We have invested billions more to help in the construction of nearly 500,000 units since the inception of the national housing strategy.

However, the member seems to ignore the fact that Canada maintains one of the healthiest fiscal positions among advanced economies. I expect he is trying to distract because Conservatives have had a very bad week, when Canadians are focused on their use of the notwithstanding clause to erode important rights that are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We will move forward with—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country.

* * *

HOUSING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, deficit spending caused skyrocketing inflation, which caused higher interest rates, which are causing higher mortgage payments. The Bank of Canada confirmed that the Prime Minister's wasteful spending is keeping interest rates higher for longer. Now the Bank of Canada is warning, when compared with origination, that the median mortgage payment will rise more than 20% in 2025 and 30% in 2026. Families cannot afford this.

Will the government stop its deficit spending so families can keep their homes?

Oral Questions

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what I would ask the member opposite who just asked that question is how she faces her constituents. At the very time homes were being evacuated and people were losing homes to climate-induced wildfires, she was fighting the price on carbon pollution and our work on making sure that we fight climate change. This is what is actually putting homes at risk.

We are going to support our firefighters as they fight those fires. We are going to do what we need to fight climate change, and we are protecting Canadians.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years, the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. For families with variable rate mortgages with fixed payments, it is even worse. Median mortgage payments will increase 60% by 2026. Working-class paycheques have been shredded by the NDP-Liberal government. Common-sense Conservatives will bring in a dollar-for-dollar law to find a dollar of savings for every new dollar spent. This is how families run their households.

Can the minister explain how Canadian families are supposed to come up with hundreds or thousands of dollars more a month just to keep their homes?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we understand the very serious challenges that families are facing when it comes to the cost of housing, which is why we put a plan on the table that is designed to solve Canada's national housing crisis. What is fascinating is that, in the member's own riding, we have actually invested \$31.5 million in that community to build thousands of homes, which she and her party oppose.

Moreover, the Conservative plan lists only 22 communities in the entire country that can benefit from their plan. Kelowna is not on the list. I hope she has a hard time explaining that to her constituents, who thanked us for the investment we made to build housing in her community.

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, Quebecers are suffering after nine years of this Liberal government and its wastefulness, which is driving up the cost of living.

This Prime Minister's reckless spending knows no bounds, and the Bloc Québécois is supporting him in this spending spree. That is evidenced by the fact that the Bloc Québécois voted in favour of hiring an additional 110,000 federal public servants. The Bloc agrees with sending Quebecers' money to Ottawa and is voting in favour of that. What is the world coming to?

When will this Prime Minister, who is supported by the Bloc Québécois, stop increasing the suffering of Quebecers with his wasteful spending?

• (1135)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our colleague is talking about sound management. Does she know that, over his entire term as minister responsible for housing, the Conservative leader created only six affordable housing units across the country?

When he was the minister responsible for housing, the Conservative leader created six affordable housing units, while 205 affordable housing units were built in my colleague from Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis's riding in recent months. Many more are coming thanks to the agreement that we signed with the Government of Quebec for 8,000 affordable housing units. That will enable the municipality of Lévis and other municipalities in Quebec—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of this Liberal government, Quebecers have had nine years of misery: budget chaos, criminals on the loose, unaffordable food and housing. Instead of thinking about fixing the budget, the Bloc Québécois is voting for \$500 billion in wacko, inflationary spending.

The more this Bloc Québécois-backed government spends, the more Quebecers suffer. The Bloc Québécois and the Prime Minister are not worth the cost.

Can this Prime Minister and the Bloc Québécois start thinking about Quebecers and stop wasting their money?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am so happy to have another chance to talk about the 205 affordable housing units we have been able to create with the support of the Quebec government, thanks to the leadership of the Lévis community. That is 205 affordable housing units created in my colleague's riding in just a few months. Many more are on the way.

Unfortunately, that is not such good news for the Conservative leader who, during his entire term, created six affordable housing units across the country.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, while Ottawa keeps saying that the fight against climate change is going well, the experts have never been more pessimistic.

The Guardian newspaper, as reported in *Le Devoir*, polled 380 climate experts from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Seventy-seven per cent of them believe that global warming will top 2.5°, exceeding the Paris Agreement target by a long shot. More than three out of four experts think that governments and oil lobbies are leading us down the road to disaster. At the same time, this government is proudly opening the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Oral Questions

Does it have its priorities straight?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, just two weeks ago, we submitted our report showing that our greenhouse gas emissions are declining. In fact, if the Conservatives were still in power, our emissions would have gone up. We changed things. Now, Canada's emissions are falling. That means we are doing a good job.

We are obviously on track to accomplish everything we set out to do. According to Nature Québec, the figures in the national greenhouse gas inventory show that when—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Repentigny.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, 77% of climate experts think we are running headlong toward disaster. Only 6% think there is a chance of meeting the Paris Agreement targets.

Meanwhile, in Ottawa, we have the Liberals launching a brand new pipeline to transport oil from the tar sands. Then we have the Conservatives, whose only measure that is even vaguely related to the environment is their crusade against Tim Hortons paper lids and straws. Frankly, that is pathetic.

What will it take for Canada to listen to the science and stop sabotaging the fight against climate change?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with my colleague. I do not understand why the Conservatives have a problem with straws and with Tim Hortons, which is making changes in an effort to tackle plastic waste and recycle more.

Things are very different on this side of the House, because we are doing the work that needs to be done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We have submitted our inventory report to the United Nations to illustrate how we are doing and to show that we are on the right track.

I hope the Bloc Québécois will continue working with us so that we can have more clean energy here in Canada.

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[English]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, in Feed Ontario's 2023 report, over 800,000 Ontarians accessed food banks, up 38% from the previous year. This was the largest single-year increase ever recorded. Even worse, a report by Canada's food professor found that nearly 60% of Canadians are eating expired food to make ends meet. The cost of food, fuelled by the carbon tax and inflation, is causing families to suffer.

When will the Prime Minister admit his carbon tax scheme has failed and axe the tax?

• (1140)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, disingenuous is what one calls it when someone says that they care about something, but they do the exact opposite, which is today's Conservatives. They claim to care about people in food bank line-ups, but oppose our plan to feed 400,000 more children per year. They claim to care about housing, but oppose our investments to build 3.9 million more homes by 2031. They claim to care about affordability, but oppose our investments to help Canadians with the cost of seeing a dentist, of getting child care or of accessing life-saving medication. It is clear that the Conservatives would make cuts that would hurt families and abandon—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, those Liberal policies are not working. I just talked about the rising cost of food. Three out of five Canadians are eating expired food, just to survive. More Ontarians than ever are using food banks. In my own area, the Kawartha Lakes Food Source reports that total visits to the food banks it serves have increased by 10% to almost 14,000.

After nine years of this carbon tax rhetoric, I get that it is hard for the Prime Minister to admit he is not worth the cost, but the facts speak for themselves. When will he admit his failed carbon tax does not work—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the facts are that Conservatives will never stand up when they have the opportunity to support Canadians. They will not support feeding more hungry children. They will not support building more homes. They will not support access to life-saving medication. They are disingenuous at best. The hypocrisy is over the top. We see, every day, in the House that they complain, that they holler from the other side, that they play politics and that they advance slogans, not solutions.

Here we are standing up for Canadians. I do not know what the Conservatives are doing on the other side.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of reckless spending, Canadians are at a breaking point. With record demand at our food banks, we have now learned that 60% of Canadians have resorted to eating expired food, yet the NDP-Liberal government cannot help itself. It has hiked the carbon tax another 23% on April 1 as part of its plan to quadruple it by 2030.

Why does the Prime Minister hate Canadians who just want to heat their home, feed their kids and drive to work? Why will he not just axe the tax?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Conservatives talk down our economy every day in the House, while in reality, Canada's economy has shown great resilience, despite the global shocks it has been under. We have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio, the lowest deficit in the G7 and an AAA credit rating that has been reaffirmed.

Warren Buffett, while talking about investing in Canada, said, “We do not feel uncomfortable in any way, shape or form, putting our money into Canada”.

The IMF, in the most recent Fiscal Monitor, rated Canada as number one for budget balance, and this year's budget puts our healthy national balance sheet to work—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, the Prime Minister is just not worth the cost. Food banks are on the brink. Demand is up and donations are down. The Moose Jaw food bank helped nearly 8,000 households in 2023, up 58%. Moose Jaw has a population of 33,000 people. The sad reality is that this is what the government has created.

When will the Prime Minister axe the tax to make food affordable again for Canadians?

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is so rich to hear the Conservatives, again, cite food bank lineups and continually rage farm off the suffering of Canadians when they will not step up when given the opportunity to support feeding 400,000 more kids per year.

This is something I advocated for, many years before getting into politics. I know many members of the House are encouraged by the fact that our government has made a \$1 billion commitment to feed more hungry children in this country. I do not understand how the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

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PHARMACARE

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals are out of touch with everyday Canadians and

the Conservatives are worse. After voting “no” to free medication, the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex wants people to know that the real problem is not that they have to pay out-of-pocket for care; the real problem is Tim Hortons and its new paper coffee cups.

While New Democrats are getting free dental care and pharmaceutical for Canadians, Liberals delay and Conservatives obstruct support for people and also blast coffee lids. Why is the government, like the Conservatives, so completely out to lunch with the reality of everyday Canadians?

• (1145)

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her advocacy. Talking about liberty, there is nothing more fundamental than having the liberty and the autonomy over one's own body. It was so disappointing to see Conservative MPs out making speeches, trying to tell our daughters and our sisters what they can do with their bodies.

I am here to say that our party, the Liberal Party, our Prime Minister and every member of our caucus, stands firmly behind a woman's right not only to choose when it comes to making a choice over her body, but also to make sure that she has the reproductive medicine so that she has full autonomy and control over her own body.

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PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is National Caregiver Month, and 50% of women are taking care of their elderly parents or loved ones with a disability. One in five of those caregivers reports spending more than \$1,000 a month to take care of their loved one. These costs are only going up.

The Liberals keep letting women down. For years, the Liberals promised families a simple, refundable caregiver tax credit. They have not delivered. When will the Liberals give women the respect they deserve and finally make the caregiver tax credit refundable?

Mr. Sameer Zuberi (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government has stepped up and has implemented the law. We have introduced the disability benefit. This benefit is the single-largest line item in the budget with \$6.1 billion over six years.

This is an important first step, a step that will help Canadians alleviate poverty. We need to build upon this.

*Oral Questions***SPORT**

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity has said all along that Canadians deserve a safe, inclusive and welcoming sport system. Our sport system needs to be grounded in human rights. Accountability, integrity and safety need to be at the centre of sport governance and operations.

Can the minister update the House on her progress to create a safer sports system in Canada, one that reflects and celebrates our Canadian values?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have heard very clearly about the need for systemic reform and culture change in sport. Survivors have bravely come forward so that we can learn, better protect our kids, and improve our systems and processes. What has been going on in sport, the maltreatment, the abuse and the discrimination, is unacceptable and has to stop. That is why we announced the creation of the future of sport commission, the membership of which we announced yesterday.

Along with the member for Lac-Saint-Louis, all of us here in the House, indeed all Canadians, need to build for our children a sport system that is safe and that they deserve.

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MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister, it is clear he is not worth the crime, chaos, drugs and disorder. His radical experiment in British Columbia with taxpayer-funded hard drugs and legalized street drugs has led to more crime, chaos and disorder.

Common-sense Conservatives have put forward a motion to put an end to this risky experimentation. Will the Liberals vote with us to ban hard drugs and to offer recovery and hope instead?

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, from day one, what we have been proposing to members of the public is to support them with treatment, harm reduction and enforcement. We are there to help and support them. Each journey is different. Each individual needs all the support they deserve. No one chooses to become addicted to drugs. That is why we are there to help.

[English]

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is not worth the crime, chaos, drugs and disorder caused by his wacko policies. It is wacko to allow drug use in parks, hospitals and playgrounds. It is wacko that the government's policy is exposing kids and health care workers to lethal drugs.

Will the Prime Minister and his government support our common-sense motion to ban hard drugs and offer recovery, or will

they continue with his wacko drug policies of legalized use of meth and fentanyl in children's parks?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have engaged with experts with a range of views, to learn from current experiences and to inform policies, moving forward. We are working with all federally funded programs and are ramping up mitigation and enforcement measures.

We expect provinces and territories to do the same. The evaluation is ongoing. We will do what we need to do.

• (1150)

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, having eyes, why can the Liberals and NDP not see the death and destruction their radical drug experiment is having in Canada? Having ears, why can they not hear the cries of weeping parents and of the loved ones of 42,000 who have died from opioids?

When will the Liberals and NDP realize that their wacko safe supply and hard drug legalization is destroying this nation? Will they vote with common-sense Conservatives to ban hard drugs, to stop taxpayer-funded drugs, and put that money into detox and recovery?

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is because we are listening to the experts, listening to the public and listening the needs of the people in the street who use drugs that we are proposing harm reduction, prevention, enforcement and supervised consumption.

That is what the experts are telling us, and that is what we will do.

[English]

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals are more offended by their policies being called “wacko” than they are by finding needles on kids' soccer fields or skyrocketing overdose rates.

Conservatives have put forward a motion calling on the government to ban hard drugs and to offer recovery programs across Canada. Will the government vote in support of a common-sense motion, or will they continue pearl-clutching over words like “wacko”?

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, harm reduction is health care. Harm reduction is the door to the system. Safe consumption sites have responded to more than 53,000 overdoses since 2017.

Our government has invested \$200 billion to support provinces and territories, delivering services needed in addition to the \$1 billion we have directly invested to address this crisis. We will use every tool at our disposal to end the toxic drug and overdose crisis.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, for 117 days, the federal government has been ignoring its civilian employees at Quebec's military bases, who are on strike. The government cannot ignore them anymore, because their representatives from Saint-Jean, Bagotville and Valcartier are here today.

They are here to ask why Quebecers have the lowest salaries in Canada, why Quebecers are treated like second-class workers and why the Liberals have been ignoring them for 117 days now.

Will the government standardize the pay scale and stop discriminating against Quebec defence employees?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question because it gives me the opportunity to talk about an announcement that was made earlier this year, in April, with the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services.

A settlement was negotiated with the non-public funds workers in Petawawa, Kingston and here in Ottawa, which includes a significant wage increase of 13.75% over three years. To be clear, no employee is paid less than minimum wage.

We hope that a settlement can be reached with the three parties that are on strike right now, and we encourage them to return to the bargaining table.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, historically speaking, most of the armed forces' civilian employees in Quebec have been women.

They are rightfully asking why the federal government discriminates against them. For example, they are rightfully asking why a financial assistant in Bagotville gets paid \$10 less an hour than an assistant doing the same job in Ottawa. The striking workers are rightfully demanding equal treatment across all bases. At a time when the armed forces are struggling to recruit, they should be demonstrating that they respect their employees.

The striking workers are returning to the table. They are ready. They will be tabling a counter-offer at 3:30 pm. Will the defence department finally listen to them?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, I appreciate my colleague's question, because we know that it is possible to find solutions and come to an agreement at the bargain-

Oral Questions

ing table, as we did in Kingston, Petawawa and right here in Ottawa.

Once again, I would just like to say that the agreement that was negotiated will significantly increase wages by 13.75% over three years. We hope that the three parties that are on strike will return to the negotiating table.

I would like to thank all the employees who work so closely with our military members and their families.

* * *

● (1155)

HOUSING

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of this Bloc-Liberal government, the housing crisis is reaching unparalleled proportions. This July 1 will go down in history, but for all the wrong reasons. The crisis is not limited to large urban centres. It affects the regions as well.

An article published in this morning's La Presse says that Quebec's association of police chiefs has noticed a significant rise in homelessness. This sad state of affairs results from insufficient housing and a rising cost of living.

When will this government, backed by the Bloc Québécois, stop announcing programs that simply add to the bureaucracy instead of ensuring that housing gets built in the regions too?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question.

It is a very interesting question, coming from a member who supports a plan that is devoid of any measures to assist renters or build affordable housing, but that does include measures that increase tax rates on new apartments.

That is no good. We have a plan for making investments to build affordable housing. For example, we signed an agreement with Quebec to build 8,000 housing units. In contrast, when the leader of the Conservative Party was the minister responsible for housing, he built only six units across the entire country.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Madam Speaker, rents were half as expensive then. It took nine years for this government to get its act together.

After nine years of this Bloc Québécois-backed government, they voted for \$500 billion in centralizing, inflationary spending that is driving up prices across the board, pushing more people into homelessness across Canada. The Liberals' inability to control their spending is the cause of all these problems. Add to that a carbon tax, and we can see where that got us.

Oral Questions

When will this Prime Minister, supported by the Bloc Québécois, stop his wasteful spending so Quebecers can afford decent food and shelter again?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the member for Beauce, who is a former mayor of a major municipality in Beauce.

I am interested in hearing my colleague from Beauce's opinion of his Conservative leader's attitude. We know that he built six affordable housing units when he was the minister responsible for housing. We also know that he insulted and continues to insult Quebec municipalities by calling them incompetent.

How does it feel, as a former mayor of a Quebec municipality, to be on the receiving end of that kind of insult? Being called incompetent by a Conservative leader who built six housing units while he was the minister responsible for housing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, does the minister know Nadia Gagné? Has he heard of Nadia Gagné?

Nadia Gagné is a woman who has been living in her van for the past few days. Why is that? It is because she lost her home. There are currently 24,000 people on the waiting list for low-income housing in Montreal. There is one very important number that the minister keeps forgetting, and that number is nine. Two terms plus one equals nine. The Liberals have been in government for nine years. Is he proud of his government's record today, after nine years of Liberal governance—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. minister.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, for whom I have a great deal of respect. He is an involved and important person in the Quebec City area. I thank him for telling us about Nathalie. There are many other Nathalies in the Quebec City area who need help from the Canadian government. Life is tough in Quebec City in 2024. That is why we need a government that invests, not a Leader of the Opposition who insults. Relationships, in both private and political life, are based on respect.

Does he consider insulting Quebec municipalities, including our own municipality, a sign of respect?

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Patricia Lattanzio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives continue to show their true colours. The Conservative leader said he would override the rights of Canadians by using the notwithstanding clause.

On Tuesday, the member for Peace River—Westlock introduced a petition here in the House to restrict abortion access, and on the same day, every Conservative member voted against a bill that would provide contraceptives to women who cannot otherwise afford them. Yesterday, coincidentally, an anti-choice March for Life protest was held here in Ottawa.

Can the Minister of Health assure women across Canada that their —

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. Minister of Health has the floor.

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her incredible advocacy in making sure women have autonomy over their own bodies. It was so disappointing, on the one hand, to hear them speaking about this. I understand that over half the Conservative members are anti-choice. Their telling our daughters and our sisters what they should do with their bodies is upsetting enough, but then in the same order, to vote against women's being able to get the reproductive medicine they need means they want them to have no choice whatsoever about their bodies, not a choice—

• (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton has the floor.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Employment pocketed money from his business partner, the same business partner who was lobbying the minister's department while securing \$110 million in government contracts. Meanwhile, the minister actively hid the shady arrangement from the Ethics Commissioner.

For two weeks, the minister has refused to answer the most basic question, so I will ask it again: How much did the minister pocket?

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member well knows that the minister has answered these questions, and of course the member would not dare say the things he just said in the chamber, where he uses parliamentary privilege, outside, because he knows that to do so would have serious consequences.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, the Canadian Armed Forces has 16,000 personnel vacancies and a crisis of morale, recruitment and retention.

That is why the defence committee unanimously voted to cancel the April 1 rent increase for base housing. Like other Canadians, our troops cannot afford rent and groceries, and they know that the Prime Minister is not worth the cost.

Will the Prime Minister show that he actually supports our troops and reverse the April 1 rent increase, yes or no?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will take no lessons from the Conservatives when it comes to defence spending.

The Conservatives let defence spending drop below 1%. They voted against a salary increase for our members. They voted against funding for Ukraine. They voted against Operation Unifier. They voted against \$40 billion for NORAD modernization. They badly mismanaged our procurement for years.

Today in the House, I have no lessons to take from that side.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Arpan Khanna (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, when asked by the media, the immigration minister clearly stated that all international students undergo a criminal record check to enter Canada. That is false. Police certificates are not mandatory for international students who enter our country, thanks to the Liberal government. The immigration minister is following the exact same reckless path of his predecessor, who notoriously lost a million people.

Why did the minister mislead Canadians? Can he tell us how many international students were let in without police clearance?

Mr. Paul Chiang (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for far too long, international students have been exploited and have been vulnerable to abuse and fraud. That is why we are taking concrete action. We implemented a new verification process to authenticate acceptance letters. We raised financial requirements to ensure that students are prepared for their life in Canada. Recently we announced a national cap on student visas.

We have a responsibility to ensure that international students are set up for success. That is exactly what we are doing.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, international trade is very important for Canada, supporting roughly one in six jobs nationwide.

While Conservatives in the House voted against modernizing free trade with Ukraine, cheered on damaging and illegal bridge blockades, and supported Brexit, on this side of the House, we know that Canadian businesses, innovators, workers and exporters benefit from a strong, stable, progressive and rules-based international order.

Can the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of International Trade kindly update the House as to how the government is standing up for free trade on the global stage?

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Export Promotion, International Trade and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I had the honour of attending the OECD ministerial meeting, where I met with key allies and stakeholders to discuss the importance of inclusive, resilient and

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sustainable trade, especially in this space of rising populism and protectionism.

We know that promoting free trade and investments grows the economy and creates good jobs right across Canada. I would like to thank the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for his important work as we work together to advance Canada's trade agenda.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberal government promised to remove criminal records for simple possession of drugs for more than 250,000 Canadians. After two years, we are still waiting for the government to act, because the Liberals are saying it is hard to do. What is hard is not being able to get employment or housing, or to travel to see loved ones, because of a criminal record. These records disproportionately impact indigenous and racialized Canadians, and all those living in poverty.

Will the Liberals keep their promise and meet the November legal deadline to make sure all of the simple possession records are removed?

● (1205)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions and Intergovernmental Affairs (Cybersecurity), Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government agrees. We are committed to dealing with the systemic racism and discrimination that often are in our criminal justice system.

It is why I welcome working with the member opposite to meet our November 2024 deadline to implement Bill C-5. We are working with partners, like provinces and territories, to do just that. There is more work to be done, but we are absolutely committed to creating a fair justice system, because that creates safer communities.

* * *

[Translation]

REX MURPHY

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): There have been discussions among representatives of all parties in the House and I believe there is consent to observe a moment of silence in memory of Rex Murphy.

[English]

I now invite hon. members to rise.

[A moment of silence observed]

Government Orders

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, during a response to an oral question, I mentioned that the action plan was worth \$1.4 billion. I apologize for my inattention. It was \$4.1 billion over five years.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to one petition. This return will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development in relation to the motion adopted on Wednesday, May 8, 2024, regarding the governance of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission.

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

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, entitled "Main Estimates 2024-25".

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[Translation]

PETITIONS

FALUN GONG

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition that was brought to me by a constituent of Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and signed by hundreds of Canadians who are calling on us to condemn the illegal arrest of a family member of a Canadian citizen for practising Falun Gong. They are also calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Ms. LanYing Cong.

[English]

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I rise to present a petition on behalf of residents of the North Okanagan—Shuswap and other Canadians.

Canadians with mental health illness should be provided treatment and support. The petitioners, therefore, call upon the House of Commons to reverse the law extending eligibility for MAID to people with mental illness as their sole medical condition.

* * *

● (1210)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed from May 9 consideration of Bill C-59, An Act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of Motion No. 1.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak on Bill C-59, an act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023, and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023. The bill would advance the government's economic plan to make life more affordable, build more homes faster and build an economy that works for everyone.

To build an economy that works for everyone, the bill delivers critical pieces of our fall economic statement. It would help make life more affordable. We are rolling out new measures to strengthen our economy, combat climate change and forge excellent career opportunities for Canadians, now and in the future.

The Liberals' plan is already yielding results and we continue to push forward. We are advancing Canada's clean economy with a clear timeline for deploying all investment tax credits by 2024. We are launching the Canada growth fund as the primary federal issuer of carbon contracts for difference. We are progressing the indigenous loan guarantee program.

Canada's economic prosperity increasingly depends on a focused strategy to boost growth, particularly in a globally competitive environment. The nation's future success relies on enhancing productivity, innovation and investments in pivotal sectors, such as technology, clean energy and advanced manufacturing. These fields are vital not only for generating high-quality jobs but also for maintaining Canada's competitive edge internationally.

Additionally, empowering small and medium-sized enterprises with supportive policies and tax benefits is crucial to foster entrepreneurship and economic expansion. Equally critical is attracting and retaining top talent. Policies that encourage skilled immigrants to settle in Canada, coupled with significant investments in the education and training of Canadians, are essential to develop a workforce capable of leading in a high-tech, competitive global market.

Canada stands out among G7 countries for maintaining the lowest deficit and net debt-to-GDP ratios, showcasing exceptional fiscal management. This indicates a more sustainable economic position compared to other G7 countries like the U.S., U.K., Germany, France, Italy and Japan, which generally face higher debts and deficits relative to their GDPs.

This fiscal prudence in Canada supports economic stability and investor confidence. Canada's strategic financial policies enable it to better manage economic fluctuations and invest in future growth.

Among G7 nations, Canada's credit rating is ranked near the top. Major credit rating agencies frequently cite Canada's prudent fiscal policies, low debt-to-GDP ratio and robust institutional framework as key factors supporting its high rating. This strong credit status enhances Canada's ability to attract foreign investment and borrow at lower interest rates, significantly benefiting the economic environment relative to other G7 countries.

On advanced technologies like artificial intelligence, our approach in promoting reflects a robust and proactive strategy aimed at both fostering innovation and ensuring responsible development within the sector. Canada is globally recognized for its influential role in the artificial intelligence sector, distinguished by its significant contribution to AI research and development.

The nation's focus on AI underscores its dedication to technological progress and strategic economic integration. Leading the way in AI innovation are Canadian universities and research centres, which are vital in producing cutting-edge research and attracting international talent. AI's relevance to the Canadian economy is substantial, serving as a key economic engine.

This is supported by major governmental investments, including the \$2-billion artificial intelligence compute access fund and the Canadian sovereign compute strategy, aimed at equipping Canada with the infrastructure and resources needed to sustain its competitive advantage in this critical field.

• (1215)

Artificial intelligence technologies in Canada find applications across diverse sectors, such as health care, environmental protection, agriculture, manufacturing and finance, promising to elevate productivity, competitiveness and job quality. For the companies in

Government Orders

these sectors to adapt these AI technologies in their operations, we have provided \$200 million. By proactively enhancing its AI ecosystem, Canada not only bolsters its global stature but also secures its economic future, positioning AI as a fundamental pillar of its national strategy for long-term growth and innovation.

Canada is strategically established as a significant contributor to the global supply chain for the critical minerals necessary for manufacturing advanced batteries in electric vehicles and energy storage systems. The country's abundant resources of lithium, cobalt, nickel and graphite make it a key player in the clean energy transition.

In response to the growing importance of these minerals for the global economy and environmental sustainability, we are actively expanding our mining and refining capabilities. This enhancement not only meets domestic demands for EV production but also serves international markets, especially those transitioning to greener technologies. We support this sector with favourable policies, substantial investment and collaborations with private companies and international partners. These initiatives aim to create a secure, sustainable and competitive supply chain that utilizes Canada's natural resources responsibly.

Additionally, we prioritize partnerships with indigenous communities in mineral resource development, promoting inclusive growth and sustainable practices, thereby reinforcing Canada's reputation as a reliable and ethical source of critical minerals internationally. We are also promoting "one project, one environmental impact assessment" to speed up the implementation of projects.

Our strategic focus on economic growth ensures the sustainability of social programs and the continuation of high living standards amid an uncertain global landscape. After a contraction of 0.1% in the third quarter of 2023, Canada's GDP rebounded with 0.2% growth in the fourth quarter. In February, Canada's inflation rate was 2.8%, down from 2.9% in January. It rose slightly to 2.9% in March, roughly in line with the Bank of Canada's forecast.

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Statistics Canada reported today that the economy added approximately 90,000 jobs, far exceeding the anticipated 20,000 positions. This marked the most robust month for job creation since January 2023. Nevertheless, the unemployment rate remained constant at 6.1%. These figures indicate that employers are ready and capable of hiring additional staff, despite the economic challenges posed by increased interest rates.

Bank of Canada governor Tiff Macklem has mentioned a possible rate reduction as soon as June. I have been saying for the last 12 months that we will see interest rate reversals starting mid-2024. Recent months have seen quicker-than-expected easing of price pressures, boosting the Bank of Canada's confidence that inflation is returning to target levels.

The current high interest rates, which aim to curb borrowing and cool inflation by making debt more expensive, may not need to be maintained much longer. We are achieving a soft landing of the economy, though many had predicted we would fall into recession.

* * *

• (1220)

[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2024, NO. 1

BILL C-69—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-69, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 16, 2024.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

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PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-64

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I give notice that, with respect to consideration of Government Business No. 39, at the next sitting of the House, a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate be not further adjourned.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I request that the ordinary hour of daily adjournment of the next sitting be 12 midnight, pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, February 28.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): Pursuant to an order made Wednesday, February 28, the minister's request to extend the said sitting is deemed adopted.

[English]

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2023

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-59, an act to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 21, 2023 and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 28, 2023, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of Motion No. 1.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I do appreciate some of the member's stories that he shared with the health issues in his family. Unfortunately, with the debate on this issue lately, there has been one huge gaping gap when we are talking about health.

I wonder if the member can describe for us what the challenges are with the fall economic statement and what was announced in the budget, and what is happening to ensure that indigenous health issues are addressed. They did not seem to be present in the budget.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been focusing on indigenous people's health, their economic security and their requirements since we came to power and over the last nine years. We have taken so many measures that we cannot explain it all, but in this recent budget we have brought in one particular program that I am really proud of, the indigenous loan guarantee program.

The economic empowerment of indigenous people leads not just to their economic prosperity but also the additional benefits of having good health and a good society.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech from my colleague over there, but can he tell me how his government is getting control of the agenda? In the same week, we are addressing the fall economic statement, something that was delivered in the House six months ago, and we are also debating the budget implementation act for a budget that was delivered three weeks ago.

Canadians are a little confused about the legislation being put forward by the government. It suggests what it is going to do, and then it has been taking a long time to put it into actual legislation. This budget implementation act, which was tabled this week, had a whole bunch of legislation from the fall economic statement. This is all very opaque.

Can the member tell us when the government is going to get control of the agenda and actually start moving at a pace that Canadians can understand?

• (1225)

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, the legislative agenda sometimes moves at its own pace, but the key thing is that the measures we have taken since the last fall economic statement and the budget that we announced have already started yielding results. Today, Statistics Canada came out with a report that shows a gain of 60,000 jobs against an expected gain of just 20,000 jobs. The unemployment rate has actually remained steady at 6.1%.

As I have been saying for the last 11 to 12 months, the interest rate will start getting reversed about the middle of this year. The Bank of Canada has already indicated that inflation is coming down. I think it is around 2.9%. It is within the Bank of Canada's range.

With the economy showing progress, we have achieved a soft landing, which many predicted would not happen. Rather, many had predicted that we would go into a recession, which has not happened. It does not matter when it is getting implemented. The effects of our measures have already started yielding results.

Ms. Lori Idlout: *Uqaqtittiji*, by the time the fall economic statement was presented in November, it was already well known that there was a major first nations, Inuit and Métis infrastructure gap. For first nations only, that gap was reported at \$350 billion.

It is so unfortunate that the government continues to ignore the plight of indigenous peoples. I wonder if the member can share with the House how he will make sure that indigenous peoples' needs are being met through important announcements like the fall economic statement and the budgets that are later presented.

Mr. Chandra Arya: Mr. Speaker, we have made tremendous investments in infrastructure compared to any other government that was in power before we were elected. Obviously, the infrastructure requirements of first nations are important and they, too, are being addressed.

Mr. Jamil Jivani (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today in opposition to the Liberal budget. I am confounded by the fact that it has been called “building a strong economy that works for everyone” when the economy is neither strong nor working for everyone. That should be quite obvious to anyone paying attention.

In the spirit of my former colleague at the National Post, Rex Murphy, I would like to take some time to speak to the concerns of everyday hard-working Canadians to try to help make sense of how a government can call a budget, at this time and in this economy, strong and working for everyone.

I have been in Ottawa now for just over a month. I was sworn in as a member of the House in April. One of my key observations is that we have a Liberal government that is living in an alternate reality from the one I lived in before I was in politics and the one I cling desperately to every time I am here. It seems as though, in this economy, we have Liberal elites experiencing one thing and everybody else experiencing something else.

There are some things I would like to share with the Canadian people that I have observed since April when I was sworn in. For the last two weeks, I have heard the Liberal member of Parliament for Whitby defend high grocery bills and make excuses for the fact that it is very expensive for families to purchase the food they need, never mind the healthy food they need. Earlier today, he went on and on about that.

Last week, he said, “Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite feels that grocery prices are too high, and they have been, certainly. However, the CPI index has shown that food prices are stabilizing in our economy, which is good news for Canadians.” I would like to point out the obvious. Canadians listening to me right now

might be asking if it is good that high grocery costs are stabilizing and if the objective of the government should not be to bring down the costs since they are so high. This is a good window into the kind of thinking going on. This is what I mean when I say we have an economy for Liberal elites and one for everybody else. Let us continue exploring this.

The day before the Liberal MP for Whitby made the comment that grocery prices are stabilizing, despite being obscenely high, a new food bank opened in Whitby. In his riding, the day before he said in Ottawa that things are going great and he has good news for Canadians, a new food bank opened up down the street from his constituency office. This is an alternate reality. The Liberals are creating some kind of bizarre picture of what is going on in this country, and people deserve to know that. They are saying how dare the Liberals produce a budget and call it “building a strong economy that works for everyone”.

Let me share some more observations from what I have seen since coming to Ottawa last month. Yesterday, across the street at the housing committee, Trudeau's housing minister, the member for Central Nova, said something that I had to ask him to repeat just so I could confirm it was even true because I was shocked. I thought I must have misheard him, but no, I heard him correctly. He said that the Liberal government's national housing strategy has exceeded its objectives. How is that possible? How is it possible that in this economy, they are running around Ottawa saying they have exceeded their objectives?

• (1230)

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know the member opposite is new, but I would remind him that he is not allowed to use the names of members in the chamber.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. member knows that members' names cannot be used. Rather, they must be referred to by their riding name or title.

The hon. member has a little over five minutes to finish his speech.

[English]

Mr. Jamil Jivani: Mr. Speaker, I understand the Liberal government is very sensitive when people draw attention to its numerous failings.

The Prime Minister's housing minister, across the street, said that his national housing strategy has exceeded its objectives. Maybe the Liberal member opposite is confused as to how he could have said such a thing, but he did. It was on video. He said it to put a positive spin on policies that are obviously failing the people of Canada.

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While the housing minister is sitting in Ottawa saying that his national housing strategy has exceeded its objectives, in my home community of Durham, the Clarington Municipal Council voted unanimously, calling for urgent action from the federal government and homelessness. In my home community of Durham, just like in many others across this country, there is a growing crisis of people without homes. Consequently, we have a growing crisis of homeless encampments being established so people have somewhere to sleep at night.

We are concerned in Clarington about this problem, but we are also concerned because we have seen in our neighbouring community of Oshawa a similar challenge. While the Prime Minister's housing minister is sitting in Ottawa trying to put a positive spin on the government's failed national housing strategy, there was a homeless encampment in Oshawa on fire. Smoke could be seen all across Durham region. In fact, one could see that smoke from Whitby. Maybe some of the Liberal members should be talking to each other about what is going on.

Why do we have a growing homelessness problem in Durham? Why are there a growing number of our brothers, sisters, friends and neighbours having a hard time finding an affordable place to live? It is obviously a complicated problem, but one of the contributing factors is that the cost of housing in Toronto, just to the west of us, is skyrocketing to an outrageous degree.

I know my friends in Toronto have had a hard time the last couple of weeks. We had to see the Leafs lose. We had to see Drake get trounced by Kendrick Lamar. Now we can go on to see ad listings for housing in Toronto. At the end April, I saw a bunk bed in Toronto for \$600 a month. It is not even a full bed. One has somebody sleeping above them, for \$600 a month. The listing said that eight or 10 people maximum could fit in that studio apartment in Toronto, and for \$600 a month, one does not get hot water, heating, air conditioning, a smoke alarm or a carbon monoxide detector.

These ads show the desperate situation in Toronto that many young people are in. This is the disconnect. It is why I say that, in this economy, there are Liberal elites and everybody else. What the Liberals have produced is an obscene situation, where they can come here to Ottawa, put their high-deficit and high-tax budgets forward and claim to be doing good things for people, and meanwhile, every time we go home, we see the consequences of what they are doing here.

The last and probably most egregious example is one my buddy Rex Murphy, may he rest in peace, used to write about quite a bit. He used to write extensively about the carbon tax and how it is an exemplary policy of Liberal elitism and bizarre ideology in action.

I sit in this chair every day, and I hear Liberals telling us that the carbon tax is helping people, that people are getting more money back and that it is good for our economy, yet I go home to Durham and I hear and see the complete opposite. I knocked on many doors in the by-election campaign before I came here, and one of the recurring themes was the carbon tax.

I would go to a family farm and they would produce a tax bill, just like the one that I have in my hand right now, and I would see that family farms are paying thousands and thousands of dollars in

carbon taxes and then being charged a tax on top of what they are paying for the carbon tax. That would then increase the cost of food for us in Oshawa, Curtis and Bowmanville. We could see within our own local community how the carbon tax is making it harder and harder for people to pay their bills.

• (1235)

When the Liberal government comes here to say that this carbon tax is good for us and good for our economy, that we should continue to pay more taxes and the cost of everything goes up to fill their coffers, it is just the latest example of Liberal elites and everybody else.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of the carbon tax, I would like to hear what the member's thoughts are specifically as they relate to the over 400 Canadian economists who have signed an open letter stating that more people get back more than they pay, confirming what the Parliamentary Budget Officer said. They state that it is good environmental policy and, most importantly, good economic policy, which one would think the party that purports itself to be the champion of running an economy would agree with.

Is the member then suggesting that those 400 Canadian economists are just Liberal elites? Maybe he is, and that is fine, but can he confirm that?

Mr. Jamil Jivani: Mr. Speaker, this is what I mean when I say Liberal elites and everybody else.

These guys want me to stand here and listen to them quote their buddies from the universities instead of listening to what people on the ground across this country, everyday hard-working families, are experiencing under their rulership. This is exactly what I am talking about. They disregard the evidence from everyday people, who are struggling today, and they want to say, "Well, my friend with a Ph.D. said everything's all right." Well, I am not here to represent their buddies with a Ph.D. I am here to represent people who are lined up in grocery stores, people who are concerned about making mortgage payments and rental payments after these guys have doubled them.

It is also interesting that, earlier today in the debate, their friend, the Liberal MP from Whitby, was quoting Warren Buffett, as though he is an authority on whether we are having a good experience or not. I might need to go back and ask Warren what he thinks.

• (1240)

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the commissioner of the environment appeared before the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development yesterday. He has a different perspective with respect to homes and mortgages. Here is an excerpt from his presentation:

...a major lender recently announced that it would no longer accept new mortgages for homes in high-risk flood zones. The consequences of such decisions on the value of residential housing, which for many households is the main asset, could prove quite dire.

Although the Conservative Party is always focused on the carbon tax or on what is happening with the environment, it never comes up with any solutions for people who are dealing with floods, droughts and deteriorating health.

[English]

Mr. Jamil Jivani: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I think our colleague has conflated a couple of things. The carbon tax is not an environmental plan. The carbon tax is a tax plan. We have advocated for, and I am very proud to say this because the riding I represent, Durham, is home to a fantastic nuclear energy facility, is technology and not taxes to respond to environmental concerns across this country.

The idea that the carbon tax is somehow going to address the hon. member's concerns seems completely misguided to me, and the idea that middle-class families have to pay more for groceries at the grocery store to respond to these environmental concerns seems like a completely backwards connection between the decisions made in Ottawa and the consequences at home.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we see that corporate landlords are increasing renovations. Rents are being increased, and corporate landlords are swooping in and buying up affordable homes. However, I do not hear from the Conservatives often about the importance of having rent protections in place. Could the member please share the Conservative stance on making sure that people have an affordable place to live?

Mr. Jamil Jivani: Mr. Speaker, I share the member's concerns about big corporations buying up a bunch of residential properties, being able to control the cost of rents and whether middle-class families can afford a house in this country.

The thing I would draw her attention to is that the NDP's partner in the government, the Liberal Party, just approved a merger of Blackstone to purchase Tricon, which would allow an American company to control an insane amount of residential property in Canada.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today in the House of Commons and speak to this motion, the fall economic statement.

I will note it is May 10 and we are debating the fall economic statement here in the House of Commons. Earlier this week, we debated the budget implementation act. Nothing shows the government's lack of control over an agenda more than debating the fall economic statement on May 10, three weeks after the budget address, which is the main financial statement made by the Government of Canada.

There is a problem here. There is a pace that has to happen in the House of Commons for legislation to get through and become law so that Canadians understand what their economics are going to be going forward. Today, once again, we are debating the fall economic statement, which is something that was delivered in the fall that we have not implemented into Canadian legislation. However, the government is acting as if that legislation has passed. Everything we see is the government pretending that there is no debate to be had here, that it has already been instituted into law and it expects this to be had going forward. Likewise, it put the budget on the ta-

ble three weeks ago, and we debated the budget implementation act for the first time in the House in the last few days.

I am going to note for the sake of Canadians that the budget implementation act has very little to do with the budget that was delivered in the House of Commons three weeks ago. A number of measures in the budget implementation act, which was debated earlier this week, are from the fall economic statement. Somebody needs to explain to Canadians how these things do not match going forward. There is a litany of all kinds of virtue on paper but no plans to implement what is going forward here. The problem with understanding the budget implementation act is this: If the government is going to put the fall economic statement into the budget implementation act, people are going to have to understand what their budgets will look like. There is no detail or announcement of any of the government's tax increases in the budget implementation act; there are no details at all, so Canadians are still left guessing about the details it is putting forward here in the budget.

Budgets matter to Canadians and to businesses across Canada, but it is my job here in the House of Commons to try to bring some financial discussion about what is in these budgets, so let me talk about some of the issues the government talks about.

In Canada, real GDP is down. The government talks about an economy that is going well, but real GDP continues to decline. GDP per capita continues to go down. That means the amount of economic output per person in Canada is continuing to decline at a steady rate. The government uses a ratio here called the debt-to-GDP ratio. I know I have gone on about it previously, but I will go into some detail here because I hope that people will understand it a little better.

Canada's debt right now is approximately \$1.3 trillion. That is the federal government's accumulated debt. Canada's GDP last year was approximately \$2.1 trillion. If we take \$2.1 trillion divided by \$1.3 trillion, it gives us a debt-to-GDP ratio equal to 62%. That is our debt-to-GDP ratio, yet our government pretends it is in the 40% range, at 42%. Although 40% was the number it said it would not cross several budgets ago, it continues to cross that and let it grow.

How did the government get to this number of around 42%? It added back the pension fund assets of Canadians. That includes about \$600 billion from the Canada pension plan, which is money that is deducted directly off the paycheques of Canadians. Those contributions by Canadians into the Canadian pension plan fund were raised again this year, so there is about \$600 billion sitting in Canada's pension savings to distribute to Canadian pensioners when they retire.

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• (1245)

The Quebec pension plan, similarly, has about \$100 billion of savings in it for Quebecers alone. In total, it is \$700 billion, but this is not a \$700 billion pool for the government.

The thing about pension accounting is that it is about assets and liabilities, as is all accounting. Although there is a balance on their financial statements, there is also the liability of paying that to the people who paid into it for years. Last year, Canada's chief actuary determined that, all things going well, the Canada pension plan system is sustainable to pay the pensions that Canadians expect for 75 years.

What that means is that it is okay; it is balanced. However, the assets and the liabilities are in balance; everything collected in there is going to be paid out to the people that put the money into it. Therefore, if I may say, it is not the government's financial asset. It belongs directly to Canadians, from money that was deducted from their paycheques, and it should not be used in their debt-to-GDP ratio.

I am also going to talk about where we are going with this, because pensions are a major part of Canada's sustainability going forward. Pensions matter in many respects. The government is moving in a direction to try to change that pension management system; it wants to oversee the system through its regulatory arm, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions. That has to stop.

These are organizations that need to manage one thing, and that is the outcome for the people whose money they are saving. That is what they should be doing. Whenever anyone asks a regulator to go in and change what is happening at an organization, such as a pension, they are effectively saying, "Take your eye off the ball about what is supposed to be done here, and put your eye on something else."

Let me tell the House what that leads to. That leads, as in the United States, to bank failures. There were bank failures at smaller banks, where they were not matching their assets and their liabilities. As a result, when interest rates changed, a whole bunch of smaller banks had a run on their capital and could not meet their liabilities. They went under.

That is an example of where people in the financial industry are distracted by other regulations being put on their plate by governments and regulators. This takes away from what they should be doing for their client base, which is managing their money effectively. Every pension manager, every money manager in the world has one mandate, which is to make sure that they are not losing money for their clients and are actually making money, hopefully at greater than the rate of inflation. We are not doing that in Canada right now. This is the reason we have falling GDP per capita. We have more Canadians coming into the country, and they are not keeping up in the economy.

Now let us look at and tear down what actual gross domestic product is. It includes the contribution of everybody. It also includes the contributions of governments. Government spending goes into GDP. I am going to suggest that, if the government's spending going into the GDP increase was not there, we would ac-

tually be in a very negative scenario. Pardon me, Madam Speaker, I should say overspending; again, the planned overspending is \$40 billion this year.

The problem is that these things have to balance over time. We are a productive economy. We had a good economy before the current government monkeyed around with it and decided that it could replace private sector investment with direct public sector investment. It is wrong.

We continue to run deficits. There is a cliff we are going to hit at some point in time here, where we are no longer able to meet our needs going forward, because everything that we put into our savings is going to be whittled away into interest payments on our debt. This coming year, that interest payment is \$54 billion. This is the government's number of what that is going to be. I suggest it might be higher, as the debt is going to be higher than it realizes.

That is \$54 billion from Canadian taxpayers to pay bondholders, and it is going up. Even the government's documents say that ratio has doubled in the last few years. That is a significant increase, a significant weight on the pockets of Canadian taxpayers, who need to make sure that they are sustainable going forward here. It is madness.

• (1250)

I am telling the few people that I see actually taking notes on what I am telling them here that we have to get back to balance. This budget, every budget, should be about getting to balance. I request that they go back to the drawing board and look at what they can do here to get our economy back to balance and actually sustain this country going forward.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It being 12:54 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Thursday, May 4, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

[Translation]

The question is on Motion No. 1.

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. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the division stands deferred to Tuesday, May 21, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you can find unanimous consent to see the clock at 1:30 p.m., to start Private Members' Business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1255)

[English]

NATIONAL STRATEGY TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE AND COMBAT FOOD INSECURITY

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.) moved:

That:

- (a) the House recognize that,
 - (i) over 20% of food produced in Canada goes uneaten and wasted, costing the Canadian economy tens of billions of dollars,
 - (ii) individuals, families, and communities across Canada face critical levels of food insecurity,
 - (iii) surplus food unfit for human consumption may serve as animal feed, supporting farmers and reducing national methane emissions,
 - (iv) in 2015, the United Nations set Sustainable Development Goals that included a commitment to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030,
 - (v) national strategies have been developed across the world to reduce food waste by incentivizing food donations and preventing the destruction of unsold yet safe and edible food products; and
- (b) in the opinion of the House, the government should develop and implement a national strategy to reduce food waste and combat food insecurity to,
 - (i) establish a National Food Waste Hierarchy,
 - (ii) align municipal and provincial regulations concerning food waste reduction and food donations,
 - (iii) lead efforts to reduce the adverse environmental impact of unused food resources,
 - (iv) establish protocols and partnerships to facilitate food redistribution and rescue efforts,
 - (v) identify policy and fiscal incentives to reduce food waste,
 - (vi) raise public awareness regarding food waste, food insecurity, and associated government initiatives.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today and speak to my motion, which calls on the House to recognize the problem of food waste and food insecurity in our country and which advocates in favour of creating a national strategy to combat this challenge.

Fundamentally, what I address today is a question of resource efficiency. Every year, billions of dollars' worth of food goes to waste in Canada. In 2019, it is estimated that up to 58% of our national food production, amounting to a staggering 35.5 million tonnes, was lost or wasted. It is also estimated that over one-third of such food waste is avoidable and can be recovered. Such waste occurs right across the food production supply chain.

A variety of factors contribute to food waste. Price fluctuations and incorrect forecasts can leave farmers with surplus food that they are unable to sell and do not harvest. Produce graded by processors can also be deemed of incorrect size or visually subpar to be sold to retailers. Overstocking by grocery stores is also a common practice. Furthermore, a variety of public regulations and private practices regarding best-before dates, food labelling, and vendor supply agreements frequently lead to the destruction of unsold but wholesome food. As such, we should make every effort to ensure that we channel such resources to our communities.

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The direct economic costs are substantial. A 2019 report from Second Harvest estimated that the annual retail value of recoverable food waste is \$49 billion. The downstream effects are also significant if we consider that wasted resources such as energy, land, labour and capital could be poured into producing food. These are costs that directly impact farmers and firms across our food supply chain and are ultimately reflected in higher costs for all Canadian consumers. As with many injustices, this is a cost that those people with the least resources, such as family farmers and lower-income households, bear the brunt and burden of.

Compounding all of this, food waste represents a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Food disposed of in landfills is left to rot, where it decomposes into methane gas. Methane is a highly potent greenhouse gas. According to some calculations, methane traps 80 times more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide. Accordingly, methane emissions from food waste represent approximately 56.5 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, approximately 10% of our national total in 2019. Food waste in landfills also contributes to local soil and groundwater pollution. Due to such considerable environmental impacts, the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals included a global commitment to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030.

Most significantly, food insecurity is on the rise in our country. After considerable progress over many decades, food insecurity has increased since the global pandemic in 2020. Regrettably, 18% of Canadian families are estimated to have experienced food insecurity at some point throughout 2022. While food recovery efforts alone cannot address this challenge, it can play a key role in expanding access to charitable and community-based food organizations. Furthermore, by implementing national initiatives to reduce and recycle food waste, we can avoid food loss in households and potentially create downward pressure on food prices as inefficiencies are ironed out of the continuum of the supply chain.

It bears highlighting that our food supply chain is lengthy and employs well over two million Canadians in the production, transportation, processing, distribution and sale of food. This, I might add, represents well over 10% of our total workforce.

Food waste throughout the continuum from farm to fork impacts households throughout our beautiful country and harms our environment. Clearly, a robust and comprehensive national strategy is much required.

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• (1300)

Food waste and food insecurity are economic and social challenges that affect every province and territory in our country. We must therefore introduce prudent policies at the federal, provincial and municipal levels. By crafting a national strategy built in full consultation and close coordination with other levels of government that also incorporate the expertise of industry, stakeholders and the non-profit sector, the federal government can play a crucial role in curbing and mitigating the challenge of food waste and food insecurity.

In addition, sustainable food policy is an important hallmark of any healthy society. While we cannot eliminate food waste, we can ensure that beneficial and effective pathways exist for farmers and manufacturers. We should also consider recycling initiatives. Considering innovative policies and programs is very much in line with recommendations adopted by Parliament's Standing Committee on Agriculture, in particular in its eighth and 10th reports tabled in 2023.

I would also be remiss if I did not recognize efforts adopted by numerous other countries around the world. We can be guided by the efficacy of new initiatives adopted by our peer countries in the G7, as well as more broadly among the OECD countries. For example, initiatives adopted in South Korea have increased that country's national food waste recycling rate from 2.6% in 1996 to 95% in 2022.

Another country that has achieved impressive results is Japan. According to the United Nations Environment Programme's "Food Waste Index Report 2024" released earlier this year, Japan has succeeded in reducing its per capita food waste by 28% since 2008 after it commenced quantifying food waste and ushered in a variety of reduction initiatives. Another good example is the concerted efforts made by the French government since 2016 that incentivize surplus food donations and reduce waste in accordance with EU food waste prevention targets. Italy has also been busy introducing reforms over the last several years.

More recently, the United Kingdom announced a comprehensive government food strategy in 2022 that includes provisions to tackle food insecurity, food waste and sustainability. Similarly, last December, the U.S. Department of Agriculture published a draft national strategy for reducing food loss and waste, and recycling organics. It is indeed high time that Canada join these countries in identifying innovative approaches to reduce food waste.

My motion outlines several key pillars such a national strategy should adopt. In an ideal world, not a single kilogram of food waste should be dumped into a landfill and left to rot into methane gas. While we cannot ensure that food waste is entirely avoided, we can certainly take steps to ensure that it is reduced considerably. Wholesome foods should be rescued, recovered and redistributed by non-profits, and what waste remains should be disposed of in a renewable manner.

Reduction initiatives are the most effective way to combat food waste. Tools are also available to ensure that efforts are made to economically benefit every link in our food supply chain. Frankly, food waste is currently treated as a part of the cost of doing business and is reflected in every individual Canadian's weekly grocery

bill. The motion before us could begin the process of departing from the status quo.

The food industry should be encouraged to set reduction targets and to improve efficiencies in its operations. On the consumer side, the government can examine guidelines concerning packaging and best-before dates. Initiatives have been adopted in other peer countries that optimize packaging requirements to preserve food longer, while less restrictive best-before dates could ensure that consumers are not compelled to prematurely dispose of groceries that are wholesome and healthy yet past their retail prime.

Speaking of rescue, the federal government can play a crucial role in creating protocols and guidelines and in forging partnerships that can significantly incentivize the donation of surplus food.

• (1305)

For example, during the pandemic, the Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food created a surplus food rescue program. The program is estimated to have redirected 8 million kilograms of food that would otherwise have gone to waste. It clearly demonstrates how the federal government has supported and can continue to support food recovery programs.

While certain large retailers are currently donating a percentage of their food waste, further action is required to incentivize donations and to connect smaller retailers, producers and processors with community-based food programs. As such, the federal government should examine policy barriers and business practices that obstruct donations, establish clear national guidelines and regulations and adopt best practices for best-before labelling and perishable food donations.

An opportunity also exists to create information systems to enable food rescue organizations to effectively track and share the need for specific produce at various community food programs. We should also examine fiscal incentives that encourage food donations that have been adopted by several of our provincial governments as well as by other peer countries.

We must encourage private actors to create partnerships and logistical pathways that would allow wholesome food to be channelled towards community food programs. Farmers in Ontario, British Columbia and Nova Scotia who donate produce to such programs can claim a non-refundable tax credit worth 25% of the fair market value of the donation. A similar tax incentive exists in Quebec that permits tax credits for up to 50% of the value of food donated. According to Food Banks Canada, during the first year of Quebec's program alone, an additional 460,000 kilograms of nutritious food was donated to Quebec food banks.

Such initiatives simultaneously reduce waste, help Canadians in need and support our hard-working farmers. Accordingly, a national tax credit for food donations could reinforce existing provincial incentives. Such a tiered approach has been used effectively in the United States since early 2011, as the U.S. federal government and all but one state government offer such tax credits.

Finally, food waste can be recycled into other economically valuable products. In doing so, firms can profit while reducing associated environmental impacts. There are many ways to accomplish this. Surplus agricultural produce that cannot be donated can frequently be processed into animal feed, providing an economic boon to farmers and ranchers alike. Composting on an individual, municipal or industrial scale is also a sustainable way to treat and eliminate food waste. Composting also creates soil conditions and fertilizer that can be returned full circle to help our nation's food producers. Lastly, anaerobic digestion facilities can utilize bacteria to create biofuels or fertilizers out of food waste.

To supplement the initiatives referenced above, the government can also increase efforts to raise awareness of the true costs and impact of food waste, and identify steps that can be taken by households and private firms to combat the problem.

All parties of the House have explicitly recognized the need to reduce food waste, and I have no doubt that every member of the House can recognize the need for our country to tackle food waste and food insecurity. I therefore hope that each of them will see fit to support my motion to commence a comprehensive national dialogue on the need for our country to step up in tackling this challenge.

● (1310)

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his excellent speech. Yes, we need to do more to prevent food waste. However, as he said, a lot is already being done, both by the federal government and by the provincial and municipal governments.

The problem that we have with this motion is that, once again, Ottawa is being set up not as a government that is equivalent to the others but as one that is above the others. For example, the motion seeks to “establish a National Food Waste Hierarchy” and “align municipal and provincial regulations”. The motion is an order from Ottawa to the provinces and municipalities. Ottawa is going to dictate what to do.

Obviously, the Bloc Québécois has a major problem with that approach. As the song by Jacques Brel says, “il y a la manière”, or

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there is a right way to do things. I also want to paraphrase author Michel Folco by saying that with this government, it often seems as though even good intentions can turn out badly.

Why infringe on provincial jurisdictions and why put the federal government above the provinces and municipalities?

[English]

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Madam Speaker, perhaps I was not as clear in identifying the fact that it is imperative for the federal government to work and to collaborate with our provinces. I do not mean to suggest for a second that the federal government should be telling the provinces what to do. Rather, I think it is important that we have a national framework and that this framework is developed in close collaboration with the provinces.

As the member will note, I made many references to what some of the provinces have been doing. They are, in certain respects, at the forefront of making sure that we are eliminating food waste, and it behooves our government to actually listen and collaborate with the provinces, as well as incorporate suggestions that would be obviously forthcoming from various stakeholders.

Given the reality that other countries are doing this, that provinces have also been active and that, as the member noted, this discussion has been ongoing for some time, I have no doubt that we can all come together and come up with a sensible approach.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wanted to share that there is a program in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith that may be of interest to the member. It is the Loaves & Fishes Community Food Bank. It provides food security to many who do not have access to food. It also provides this incredible food recovery program: getting fruits, vegetables, meats, breads and milk from grocery stores and sorting through that. Food that is good goes to people so they can eat it, and the rest goes to farmers and those who can compost it. It is a really great program.

Can the member share his thoughts as to whether the Liberal government should be prioritizing projects just like this one so that local communities can have the investment they need to be able to truly have food security and food recovery programs?

● (1315)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that suggestion. It is great to see that various organizations in B.C. are at the forefront of innovative change. They are certainly filling in gaps that are very important in terms of ensuring that we do have food security in this country.

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Far be it from me to suggest how the government should prioritize these things. What I would like to underscore is the need to actually have that discussion and dialogue with organizations such as the one in Nanaimo, which have proven that there are many inspired ways to make sure that we tackle this challenge. We see better results, and these are results that are important to Canadian families from coast to coast to coast. We can all benefit from listening to each other and adopting pathways that have proven successful.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the motion to create a national strategy to reduce food waste and combat food insecurity.

I do believe that this motion put forward by the Liberal member is presented with good intentions, but like most of the things that the Liberals have done for the last nine years, the unintended consequences of good intentions would cause more problems than it would solve.

Let us start with the facts. Over 20% of food produced in Canada goes uneaten and is considered wasted. It is also true that many Canadian families are dealing with critical levels of food insecurity. The government thinks that reducing food waste is the solution for the problem of food insecurity. That is where, of course, the narrative falls apart. It is not food waste that is causing spiralling food prices. Canadians, by and large, could afford to put food on the table just nine short years ago.

In a single month last year, there were two million visits to food banks in Canada. Today, food banks are expecting to see a million more people use their facilities on top of last year's record high, and a third of food banks say they will have to turn hungry Canadians away.

It is incredibly saddening that the Liberal government has put parents in such a precarious position that we now seem to need a national school food program in order to make sure that children have food to eat, when their parents used to be able to afford to buy it for them.

Food waste is not necessarily the most pressing issue. The reason that we are even speaking to this motion today is due to the inflationary spending and outrageous agricultural policies that have been implemented by a government that clearly does not understand the industry. The result of these disastrous policies is that the average Canadian family will have to pay up to \$700 more in food in 2024 than it did just last year in 2023. That is just one year's worth of inflationary increases.

After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, the price of beef is up 30%; chicken, 34%; rice, 30%; eggs, 38%; apples, 39%; butter, 45%; tomatoes, 63%; fish, 28%; lettuce, 48%; flour, 25%; potatoes, 60%; and baby formula is up 27%. I could continue, but I think Canadians who are watching get the point. It turns out that there are consequences to taxing our farmers, truckers and grocers.

What are the examples of some of these disastrous policies? A prime example, of course, is the carbon tax. This tax has done little for the environment, but has driven up the cost of food, as the cost of carbon pricing compounds through the supply chain with every single transaction that the food system endures.

Conservatives understand the cost borne by our agricultural sector. That is why my colleague from Huron—Bruce introduced Bill C-234 to expand carbon tax exemptions, of course, for our struggling farmers and the agricultural sector. The bill would have saved \$978 million by removing the carbon tax on natural gas and propane for drying grain, as well as heating and cooling barns, greenhouses and other structures. That is \$1 billion that has to be added into the price of food for Canadians.

Recently, the Liberal Party-aligned senators masquerading as independents gutted most of the exemptions from Bill C-234. With Liberals proposing a 30% fertilizer emissions reduction target on top of this, which they claim is voluntary, even though it is not, it is no wonder that Canadian farmers clearly mistrust the current government.

Ironically enough, the Liberal government laments the issue of food waste, when one of their own misguided policies has actually exacerbated the problem. In 2022, they put a self-imposed ban on P.E.I. potatoes being exported to the United States. In doing so, the government is mis-characterizing the entire province of P.E.I. as being infested with potato warts. During this incident, the government spent \$28 million to destroy almost 300 million pounds of potatoes, and that sounds like fairly significant food waste to me. Maybe the government should indict itself as part of this new strategy.

If the past is any indicator of the future, then it seems that the Liberals have not yet learned from their failures in the realm of agriculture. Not long ago, the government indicated that it was looking at a P2 plastic ban as part of its commitment to move toward zero plastic waste. This policy seeks to ban plastic non-compostable price-lookup stickers and plastic packaging for fresh produce.

Although the government has paraded this plastics ban as an environmental initiative, a report commissioned by the Canadian Produce and Marketing Association and produced by Deloitte has found that this simply is not the case. They concluded that the P2 plastics ban could increase greenhouse gas emissions by 50% or 22 million metric tons of CO₂. Deloitte has also found that it fails at reducing waste.

• (1320)

Alternatives to plastic packaging have consistently failed to meet modified atmosphere requirements. They also fail to meet the standard for food-borne illnesses. It has been estimated the reduction in shelf life engendered by the loss of these plastic products could increase fresh produce waste by more than 50%. This would constitute a loss of more than one million tons of fresh produce every year. Woke packaging laws are creating food waste.

Finally, it has been reported that the loss of these products could raise the cost of food by 35% and could reduce the availability of fresh produce by 50%. This would cost our industry \$5.6 billion, and the cost would, of course, be borne directly by the consumer. These are the same consumers who are already struggling to put food on the table.

Furthermore, the lower consumption of fresh produce would have a trickle-down effect, costing roughly a billion dollars a year to our health care system. This increased cost would be borne disproportionately in rural and remote regions of Canada, which are already struggling with the increased cost of shipping.

I would now like to delineate what this new national strategy to reduce food waste and combat insecurity would actually do and why we actually do not need it. It calls for strategy to “establish of a national food waste hierarchy,” which sounds like a lot of bureaucracy to me, as well as to “align municipal and provincial regulations concerning food waste reduction and food donations”. We already have many organizations across the country doing their own thing with their own initiatives. They do not need any further direction, especially from Ottawa.

The national strategy would “lead efforts to reduce the adverse environmental impact of unused food resources, establish protocols and partnerships to facilitate food redistribution and rescue efforts, identify policy and fiscal incentives to reduce food waste”. It sounds like it would be creating a lot of jobs for bureaucrats, but I am not sure we would actually be putting more affordable food on tables for Canadians. We can see what a list of good intentions looks like, but it is actually not necessary in any way, shape or form.

To us Conservatives, this reads as an excuse to expand the bureaucracy. Little emphasis is being put on doing work to solve the issue, but it would create more administrative positions and more government. The government has already grown by over 50% since 2015. Inflationary pressure is putting pressure on the economy and interest rates, and driving up the cost of food even more.

The Liberal government has already spent \$20 million toward this initiative under its food waste reduction challenge in 2020, and the industry is making rapid strides in reducing food waste on its own. If the Liberals wanted a ready-made strategy without spending any more money, they could adopt the National Zero Waste Council's report, entitled “A Food Loss and Waste Strategy for Canada,” referencing its work as a national strategy.

I would like to conclude by stating that a national strategy to reduce food waste and combat food insecurity is not needed at the federal level. The issue of food insecurity can be placed squarely on the shoulders of the government and its ideologically motivated

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policies, and it has learned nothing from the previous mistakes it has made.

Imagine being a government that has mismanaged so much of the economy and the cost of living that salvation somehow lies in feeding food that is destined for the waste stream to millions of now hungry Canadians.

One cannot be the solution when one is the problem, and the NDP-Liberal government is simply not worth the cost. It is time for a Conservative government that will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, this motion calls once again for federal interference into municipal and provincial regulations. Whether we are talking about supply chain losses or waste-related losses, for the most part the rules for managing these products and food donations fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces and the municipalities, the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

What is more, despite the fact that this motion has good intentions, most of the initiatives it proposes are already being implemented by the Government of Quebec, but also by the federal government through its food policy for Canada.

I am going to say a few words about waste. It is not limited to unused products and food that is thrown out by consumers. We are also talking about losses identified at every stage of the supply chain. Food waste includes waste as we understand it, plus the losses.

A UN report released in 2021 shows that Canada is the undisputed champion of waste. I will quote an article that talks about this report:

According to the study, every Canadian throws out...175 pounds of food a year, or...44 pounds more than the average American.

In 2019, three million tonnes of food ended up in the garbage in Canada.

The UN Environment Programme report estimates that nearly a billion tonnes of food was wasted in the world in 2019....

Let us now look more closely at the points in the motion.

First, it proposes to “establish a National Food Waste Hierarchy”. The waste hierarchy ranks the actions that need to be taken to reduce or avoid waste in order of priority. This is an important step, but one that has already been taken, particularly through the work and the research funded by the Quebec government and Recyc-Québec.

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Second, it proposes to “align municipal and provincial regulations concerning food waste reduction and food donations”. Third, it proposes to “lead efforts to reduce the adverse environmental impact of unused food resources”. Fourth, it proposes to “establish protocols and partnerships to facilitate food redistribution and rescue efforts”. These last three points are obviously a logical extension of the first. It makes sense to come up with the most appropriate solutions and then find a way to apply them.

However, most of the laws and regulations governing food waste fall under the jurisdiction of the Quebec and provincial governments. Once again, the intention behind this motion is yet another example of the centralizing, Ottawa-knows-best attitude. It implies that the relationship between the federal and provincial governments is hierarchical, not complementary. This interpretation of federalism is a reason in itself to oppose this motion, even though it is well intentioned. Let us set the record straight.

Quebec and the provinces handle all of this by working together with municipalities and with the businesses and organizations involved in the production, processing, sale or donation of food products. While agriculture is a shared jurisdiction, resource and land management, processing and marketing within the province are Quebec's responsibility. The federal government helps with the development and funding of certain risk management, research and interprovincial and international trade programs. As for waste itself, municipal regulations, not federal ones, govern the management of residual materials and certain food donation and sharing projects. Similarly, Quebec is responsible for enforcing environmental and sanitation laws.

The federal government has a role to play in labelling in general and in food safety when it comes to importing or exporting. However, in the context of this broader issue of waste, Ottawa has no concrete role to play.

I want to come back to the points of the motion itself. Fifth, it proposes to “identify policy and fiscal incentives to reduce food waste”. Sixth, it proposes to “raise public awareness regarding food waste, food insecurity, and associated government initiatives”.

The federal government could try doing these two things. However, it would have to take into account the specifics and initiatives of communities that already have programs in place, like in Quebec. We have seen examples in several other sectors where the federal government believes it is helping, but it is actually making things more complicated by creating overlapping programs and unilaterally adding criteria that are not adapted to every situation. It will have to take into account the established environmental rules, the community structure and the connections already made by the groups.

Let us now look at the food policy for Canada. The implementation of this policy was announced in budget 2019. It was included in the mandate letter for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food that same year. I will read from the mandate letter:

• (1330)

Lead work across government to move forward with the new Food Policy for Canada introduced in Budget 2019. This policy has four areas of near-term action, including:

Help Canadian communities access healthy food;

Make Canadian food the top choice at home and abroad;

Support food security in northern and indigenous communities; and

Reduce food waste.

Obviously, Canada's food policy is very vague. It offers guidelines, and frankly, that is a good thing. For example, the 2019-24 policy aims to achieve six outcomes.

The first outcome is vibrant communities. The policy talks about innovative community-led initiatives that “contribute to vibrant and resilient communities that support individuals and households facing immediate and long term food-related challenges by providing culturally diverse solutions in an inclusive manner.” The style smacks of government policy writing. The federal government has been directly involved with organizations since last year through the local food infrastructure fund, or LFIF. This program lacked sufficient funding when it was created, so the government tweaked its terms along the way.

The second outcome is increased connections within food systems. The policy states that “Increased collaboration on food-related issues across sectors of government, society, fields of work, and academic disciplines is a central component of food policy.”

The third outcome is improved food-related health outcomes. The policy refers to “Improved health status of Canadians related to food consumption and reduced burden of diet-related disease, particularly among groups at higher risk of food insecurity.”

The fourth outcome is strong indigenous food systems. The policy states that “The Food Policy for Canada will help advance the Government of Canada's commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, build new relationships based on respect and partnership, and support strong and prosperous First Nations, Inuit and Métis food systems—as defined by communities themselves.” How can paternalistic Ottawa claim to have any credibility when it comes to indigenous health when it is still unable to provide clean drinking water to some indigenous communities? That is unacceptable.

The fifth outcome is sustainable food practices. The policy mentions “Improvements in the state of the Canadian environment through the use of practices along the food value chain that reduce environmental impact and that improve the climate resilience of the Canadian food system.” If the federal government wants to get involved, then it can fund research on green practices.

The sixth outcome is inclusive economic growth. The policy mentions:

Improved access to opportunities in the agriculture and food sector for all Canadians within a diversified, economically viable, and sustainable food system.

There is tremendous potential for economic growth within Canada's food system given the growing global demand for high-quality food that is nutritious and sustainably-produced.

That is what I had to say about what is already covered at the federal level. Now, let me say a few words about Quebec. In Quebec, it is the ministry of agriculture, fisheries and food, along with the ministry of municipal affairs and housing, that regulates food waste initiatives. Many groups and organizations are also involved in tackling this problem, including the Association pour la santé publique du Québec, Recyc-Québec, community groups and municipalities.

Quebec also has a 2018-25 bio-food policy that includes two suggested courses of action that recommend reducing food waste and loss and promoting food donation, and supporting the circular economy and recovering co-products. Food waste was one of the themes identified as requiring further reflection at the May 2019 bio-food policy partners meeting and in the 2018-23 bio-food policy action plan, which was released in 2020.

The 2021 edition of the 2018-2023 action plan reminds us that the bio-food action plan provides for the implementation of a food waste project in co-operation with bio-food and government partners. The purpose of the project is to take stock of the situation and to propose and implement a concerted plan to coordinate partner initiatives, both at the sectoral and government levels. As I was saying, this policy is what triggered Recyc-Québec's research.

I could continue to talk about other measures that the Government of Quebec has implemented, but we think that Quebec already has this issue covered. Finally, since the motion seeks to establish a hierarchy of levels of government, it is difficult to support.

• (1335)

[English]

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to Motion No. 110, a national strategy to reduce food waste and combat food insecurity.

We know that people across Canada, too many in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, are struggling to make ends meet and to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table. While people are going hungry, a tremendous amount of food is being wasted. Much of this wasted food is nutritious and healthy foods that could be eaten by those who are hungry. Instead, it is shipped to a landfill to rot.

At the same time as food is being wasted, we are seeing the cost of food continuing to rise at insurmountable rates while grocery CEOs earn record profits. Everyday Canadians, including families, seniors, people living with disabilities and workers, and I could go on, are all having to make impossible choices between which basic need to prioritize.

At the same time as Canadians are grappling with these unfair choices, the total value of wasted or lost food in Canada is tagged

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at \$49 billion each year or roughly \$1,766 per household. That is \$49 billion of wasted food each year that never makes it onto people's tables, and \$49 billion that could serve to feed every single person in Canada nutritious food, three meals a day, for five full months.

Knowing all this, I cannot imagine any member of the House not being in favour of legislation that would address wasted food and food security. Motion No. 110, advanced by the hon. member for Willowdale, addresses food waste reduction, food insecurity, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, reaching the UN's sustainable development goals and policy to increase food donations to those in need.

While this motion contains goals I agree with, it seeks only to express an opinion of the House and not to enshrine anything concrete into law. Motions in the House are important mechanisms that allow members to express the opinions, wishes and will of their constituents and those they represent. They have their place, but I wonder: Why not a bill?

My hon. colleague, the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, has introduced two very strong bills, Bill C-360, the wasted food reduction and recovery act, and Bill C-304, the national food waste awareness day act. These NDP bills would have the power to enshrine many of these same objectives in Canadian law, which I hope to see supported by members in the House.

This follows work by past NDP members of Parliament, like Ruth Ellen Brosseau, who introduced Bill C-231, the fight against food waste act, in the 42nd Parliament, before my time. Unfortunately, the majority of Liberals voted to defeat this bill at second reading in February 2016. An interesting point is that of the Liberals who voted against this motion to fight against wasted food was the sponsor of today's motion. Had the member for Willowdale actually understood and voted accordingly with the urgency of this issue eight years ago, I believe we would be in a different place today. A motion today is good, but solutions and actions eight years ago would have been better.

Those in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith have been particularly impacted by food insecurity and wasted food. I am incredibly proud to share the important work of Loaves & Fishes Community Food Bank in addressing both of these issues. Loaves & Fishes provides free food services to more than 40 communities across Vancouver Island, including 15 indigenous communities. Not only is Loaves & Fishes feeding more than 10% of the population on Vancouver Island, it is also actively counteracting food waste and reducing greenhouse gas emissions through a successful food recovery program.

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The Loaves & Fishes food recovery program collects all surplus food from grocery stores regardless of quality and redirects it to the highest and best use. This surplus food is primarily fruit, vegetables, meats, bread and dairy items that grocery retailers have traditionally thrown out in a dumpster. I participated and saw first-hand this process at Loaves & Fishes Community Food Bank. Because of the work of an incredible team composed of many dedicated people, over 21 million pounds of food have been diverted from landfills since 2012. In 2023, the organization sourced and distributed 8.2 million dollars' worth of food through 33 food recovery partners.

● (1340)

Food collected that is unfit for human consumption has also been diverted from landfills by partnering with farmers to provide animal feed and with other organizations working to convert organic waste. Loaves & Fishes has been so successful in its food recovery that it has been asked by Food Banks BC to develop a food recovery guide that would help other food banks in the province to create programs of their own that could provide a national model for food recovery.

However, doing this important work requires space, and that is something Loaves & Fishes currently does not have enough of. Although it fully utilizes every inch of the space it has, to see the food recovery program do all that it can and needs to do, Loaves & Fishes is seeking necessary federal funding for a new warehouse distribution centre. The Province of British Columbia, the City of Nanaimo and the Regional District of Nanaimo have all committed millions of dollars to support this project, while the federal Liberals have yet to contribute.

Those reaching out in support of this project continue to come in. It is evident that this is a vital project for Vancouver Island. It is for these reasons that I personally handed these letters of support to the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, urging the federal government to contribute its part. It is also for these reasons that I and my NDP colleagues, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, the member for North Island—Powell River and the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, wrote a joint letter to the minister in February highlighting this important project and requesting a path forward to see this project funded.

I bring this forward as investing in a new Loaves & Fishes warehouse distribution centre is exactly the kind of project the Liberal government needs to be investing in to put words to action and truly give communities the infrastructure and investment required to increase food security and reduce wasted food. This is an opportunity for the government, an opportunity that I hope it will take.

My NDP colleagues and I will be supporting Motion No. 110, as the contents of the motion are important for us all. It is essential that we see more than just words from the government. Instead, we need true investment in real solutions, because food should not be wasted and people should not continue to go hungry.

Because I have spoken faster than I anticipated, I am going to add a few extra pieces. I wanted to take a moment to add a few thoughts around the important work of my NDP colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who is also the NDP agriculture critic. He has been championing the issues of food insecurity and

food waste and is meeting with stakeholders on an ongoing basis to address these issues. I know he has met with stakeholders including Food Secure Canada, Second Harvest, Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Canadian Produce Marketing Association, Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada, Cowichan Green Community, Deans Council—Agriculture, Food and Veterinary Medicine, and the list goes on.

We need to see all members of Parliament doing the work to speak to those in the community who know first-hand how to get these projects done to reduce food insecurity and to increase the amount of food being put on the tables of those who need it, instead of tragically being wasted. We know that New Democrats have been fighting this fight for a long time, so I am happy to see this motion coming forward today. I would also like to see those real actions and investments being put forward by the government.

I would like to thank the member for putting forward the motion. I look forward to supporting it, and I look forward to seeing the true investments we need.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to have the opportunity to get up and speak to this issue today because it speaks to issues that are dear to my heart, such as a food policy, the environment and food security. Therefore, it is about how we make sure we support Canadians with respect to issues of affordability and access to healthy food.

I really want to thank the member for Willowdale for bringing forward this motion. It has been a very interesting debate. I think there are moments like this, when we can hear people sharing ideas and stories from their different communities. It is so important for us to be able to have these very real conversations here, so I appreciate that.

I also want to thank advocates across Canada who have worked hard on issues regarding food waste, and perhaps most importantly, those who have been working on food security. They are the heroes on the ground. We have heard stories about some of these people in the debate so far, people who are working on a community basis to really uplift the community members around them and to make sure they have access to healthy food as well.

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I have a personal interest in food policy. It is actually what brought me to politics in many respects. In my own community, I had started a group that was part of Second Harvest. It would have these groups of people go out on foot and pick up food from restaurants or businesses that they were not using anymore, but that was still good, and bring it to local food banks. If it was too small of an amount to pick up by truck, then people would go out on foot and pick it up. Therefore, I started what was called the Danforth Hunger Squad, and people from the community would go out and pick up food from different restaurants and stores along the way. We would work with Newcomer Women's Services to provide that support. Overall, it worked well, but I think it also highlighted for me some of the problems with that model, so I will put that as a pin there.

The other thing I think worked really well was this: I worked with local farmers at farmers' markets in the community to help them donate food that had not sold at the end of the day. It was good food that had sold 10 minutes earlier but would not be good the next market day. Ontario has the Local Food Act, which allows farmers to use this as a donation writeoff when they donate food to charities, but it also meant that all those healthy greens and the like were able to go to a local food bank.

These are local examples of how people can work on some of these issues, not only with respect to food waste but also in terms of food security.

I also want to highlight, because it is my personal favourite, that we used to do a thing in the park called stone soup. It was based on the book *Stone Soup*. We would get the book, and somebody would read the story to kids. We would encourage people in the community to go out and collect vegetables, usually from the farmers' market we were trying to support, and we would make a giant pot of soup together and share in that soup. It was really important, because food is not just about how we keep healthy, but also about how we bring people together and build community. Therefore, when I was thinking about running, food policy was something that was really important to me. I am particularly excited to be able to speak to something like this motion.

When I look at the pieces I hoped to see come together when I started, one of them was to get a school food policy. Another was to get a food policy for Canada. Canada had never had a food policy before 2019, so in many of the earlier years, from 2015 to 2019, I was working on how we could develop a food policy and how we could make sure we had something in place that created a framework as to how to move forward and work on such issues as food waste, food security and those different pieces.

In our 2019 budget, we actually put in a food policy for Canada. It included many different elements, such as improved access to affordable food and ensuring access to safe, nutritious and culturally diverse food, especially for vulnerable populations. It included improved health and food safety to promote healthy eating habits, as well as safe food practices to protect Canadians from food-related illnesses. It included conservation and protection of soil, water and air, promoting sustainable food production practices to protect the environment, growing more high-quality food and supporting Canadian farmers and food producers to increase the availability of high-quality food.

● (1345)

Budget 2019 also included food waste reduction, directly on point to this motion, and implementing strategies to reduce food waste throughout the food system, as well as innovation in the agriculture and food sector and support for northern and indigenous communities. One piece of that food policy is a reference to a school food program, which is why I am particularly happy today to see that, in this year's budget, there is funding to bring that part forward.

There are two pieces that are interesting when we are talking about the issues that were brought up in this motion. Following that piece in budget 2019, there was a commitment to a local food infrastructure program. When we talk about these local programs, which people have been raising in their speeches, we see that that fund has had an amazing impact on community organizations. I have seen it support community kitchens in my neighbourhood and community gardens, which are ways to support people getting access to that healthy food. However, more directly on point, it also included the basis to move forward with what ended up being the food waste reduction challenge, which was launched two years ago. Its aim was to find innovative solutions to prevent or divert food waste and to advance technologies that extend the life of food or transform food waste.

Some people in the House may have seen LOOP juices when they go to a store. These are amazing juices that are created from perfectly good fruits and vegetables that would have otherwise been discarded because they had an odd shape or size, or maybe an aesthetic imperfection. This is the part that we are not talking about very much about in food waste. A certain amount of food just never ends up on our shelves in our grocery stores because they are kind of odd looking, but they are still absolutely good and healthy. LOOP Mission uses these rescued produce items and creates, as I mentioned, cold-pressed juices. It also uses the leftover pulp to make things such as soap bars. This is the kind of innovation that we want to support, and that is the kind of innovation that receives support through the food waste reduction challenge. It is a nice thing to see how the building blocks get put into place to move forward.

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I do want to be clear that, when we are talking about food waste, it does not have to be specifically tied to working on food insecurity or poverty, which I think are two separate issues. I, personally, support having a different approach to each issue. There is also an environmental impact from food waste, which produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas. There is also an economic loss. We put all that work into producing that food, but when it is wasted, all the way from the farm to the table, that is actually a wasted economic value. We really need to make sure that we reduce food waste for the environmental impact and for the economic impacts.

• (1350)

However, I will question slightly whether that entirely should be a way of dealing with food poverty. France, for example, has included a requirement that grocery stores donate unsold food rather than dispose of it, which has been very effective in reducing its food waste, so that is one method. I will say that, in my personal experience, I have seen that it sometimes results in less healthy foods going to food banks or maybe food that really is going to end up having to be disposed of by the food bank down the road, so I am not sure that is the right way.

There is also a potential stigma, and I would never want anyone to feel like what we are doing when we are trying to deal with food waste is to be diverting food that is not valued to people who are living in poverty. I think there are more important policies, and we have been building those building blocks, be it through the Canada child benefit, which is indexed to inflation; the GIS and the OAS; the workers' benefit; the disability benefit, which is new; or the school food program. There are other steps that we have to take, for sure, when dealing with that issue of food security and poverty, which, I would say, is not fully tied to food waste.

To conclude, it is so important that we have these conversations, and that we uplift community organizations and advocates. When we talk about how we can deal with food waste better, I think of those innovative solutions, such as LOOP Mission, and that we come together and say, "How are we going to make sure that we help people in our communities who are vulnerable to food insecurity so that we meet their needs?" I really appreciate the member of Willowdale creating that opportunity for us.

• (1355)

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to speak against Motion No. 110, a national strategy to reduce food waste and to combat food insecurity. This is another example of the Liberals rushing in to save the day, to solve a problem that they themselves created and have been creating over the last nine years they have been in office.

According to a recent report by Food Banks Canada, in March 2023, there were almost two million visits to food banks across Canada, representing a 32% increase compared to March 2022, and a 78.5% increase compared to March 2019, which is the highest year-over-year increase in usage ever reported.

Why is that? Conservatives have been raising the alarm bell for some time about the Liberal government's ever-increasing carbon tax and its out-of-control deficit spending, which is only serving to increase the cost-of-living crisis that Canadians are facing every day in this country.

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

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at midnight so that we can adjourn.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Accordingly, pursuant to an order made Wednesday, February 28, the House stands adjourned until Tuesday, May 21, 2024, at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1) and 28(2).

(The House adjourned at 1:57 p.m.)

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