



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 339
Thursday, September 19, 2024

Speaker: The Honourable Greg Fergus



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 19, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

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

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, presented on Friday, October 27, 2023, be concurred in.

I will be sharing my time with the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Colleagues may have noticed that it is a very brief motion. I will read it. The report is very simple. It is that “the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities recognizes Canada is in a housing crisis that requires urgent action by the federal government to end homelessness, and that this motion be reported to the House.” That is a fairly brief report, but we think it is a really crucially important report because housing is a crisis in this country right now. In short, that simple, brief, pithy report is to the point and more than appropriate today.

We all recall when the Liberal government launched its national housing strategy in 2017. Everybody remembers that there was great fanfare. The Prime Minister was surrounded by many of his colleagues and his ministers in front of a big building that was being constructed. He announced a \$40-billion program. It was going to be “life-changing”.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Scott Aitchison: My colleague should keep clapping, Mr. Speaker; they will love the change we are going to talk about.

The Prime Minister said it was to be a life-changing, transformational national housing strategy. Of course, it has evolved over time to be more like \$80 billion. Not all of it is from federal money; a lot

has been from matching provincial dollars. However, the Liberals continue to talk about this national housing strategy being a great thing.

If people are living in housing that is unaffordable, that does not have enough bedrooms or that needs major repairs, and they cannot afford to live somewhere else in the community, they are described as living in core housing need. In fact, that is a statistic that the CMHC, the government's own bureaucrats, tracks and reports on regularly. Those in core housing need are obviously some of the most vulnerable in our society.

In 2018, just after the Liberal government started this national housing strategy, 11.3% of households in Canada were in core housing need. In 2022, the Canadian housing service survey, which is the latest data from CMHC on core housing need, said that core housing need is now at 11.6%. It has actually gone up a little bit. This means that the national housing strategy, when it comes to core housing need and homelessness, has done nothing. There is an \$80-billion plan, but core housing need in this country is effectively the same. This is not just about the numbers. This is not just the data. We see the results of the Liberals' ineptitude all across the country. There are tent cities in every single community in this country. It used to be just a big city thing. Now they are everywhere.

When I was the mayor of Huntsville, housing was already a crisis there. We had done all kinds of things as a municipality, but it was not enough. Parry Sound—Muskoka has often struggled with people in what we call “hidden homelessness”. It is not always visible. Maybe they are sleeping on couches of friends and family. Living in a van is not entirely uncommon for seasonal workers and resort staff. I will give the example of Lions Lookout in Huntsville. It is a beautiful hill from which we can see the whole town. It is gorgeous. Periodically there would be a van parked up there overnight. People would be staying there. Today this happens all the time, and not just with one van, but with multiple vans. Rental vacancy rates in my community of Huntsville and my neighbouring communities of Bracebridge, Gravenhurst and Parry Sound have been close to 0% for over a decade.

Routine Proceedings

The government talks about affordable housing and homelessness, but after nine years, the situation is worse. More than 235,000 people are estimated to be homeless in Canada. From the core housing need, now we are talking about people who are actually homeless, who do not have a home. In addition to these visibly homeless individuals, 450,000 to 900,000 are among the hidden homeless, so they are staying with family and friends because they have nowhere else to go.

In 2018, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that the number of homeless people in Canada has increased by 20%. The Auditor General said that the federal government does not really know if its initiatives aimed at reducing chronic homelessness are actually working. What a stunning indictment of the Liberal government's record.

The Liberals are very good at having photo ops and talking points. They are very good at announcing big ideas. However, they are absolutely inept at the follow-through. The price is in the suffering. It is not just in the big cities. As I mentioned, there are encampments everywhere.

Northern Ontario is pretty cold in the winter. There are a lot of hard-working folks in northern Ontario. Sudbury, as an example, sees the situation getting worse and worse as well. According to the report card on homelessness for 2023, the number of homeless encampments in Sudbury jumped from 25 at the end of 2022 to 113 at the end of 2023.

Canadians are feeling it. It is reported that 28% of Canadians said they are considering moving to another country for greater affordability. One-quarter of Canadians say they are reconsidering whether they can start a family. The number of young people in this country who have given up on the dream of ever owning a home is shocking.

What are we doing on housing starts? If the Liberals have not really done a very good job on homelessness, what about market housing and obtainable housing? Housing starts are down. Across Canada, we had a total of 16,857 housing starts in August. In August 2023, it was 19,459. That is a 13% drop in one year. In Ontario, the drop was 25%; in British Columbia, housing starts are down 31%. These drops are in the same time period. In Quebec, housing starts have dropped 9%.

If we narrow in on places such as Toronto, the housing starts have had a 48% drop in the same time period. In Vancouver, there has been a 34% drop. In Victoria, it is a 33% drop. In Montreal, it is a 4% drop. What is the government's plan when it comes to housing? The Liberals know that, apparently, we need to speed things up in cities. Therefore, they came up with something really well-named called the "housing accelerator fund". It is borrowed money. They use that fund to give money to cities. What do cities do in return when they get their money? They increase their fees and charges, making it more expensive to build.

The City of Toronto, where housing starts have dropped 40%, got \$471 million from the housing accelerator fund. Then it turned around and increased its development charges by 42%. It has increased its development charges by over 1,000% in a decade, yet the government gave it \$471 million to accelerate housing. The

City of Vaughan, just north of Toronto, got \$59 million, and its development charges are up 400% since 2010. Ottawa just introduced an 11% increase in its development charges. It got \$176 million from the government.

If talking points and photo ops could solve problems, there would not be a problem in this country. The government has shown that it is long on performance and dismal on results. We need to hold cities accountable, and we need to start making sure that they not only move the process along faster and get development approvals done quicker but also make it cheaper. This concept that growth can pay for growth means that young people will be paying the bill forever.

Now the Liberals have made this great move to extend the length of amortization. They have missed the point. We do not want to saddle young people with more debt for longer and longer in their lives. We need to make it cheaper. Nobody makes more money on housing than governments. Governments make the most. We need to get government out of the way and reduce the fees and charges, and the government does not understand that. It just keeps doubling down, giving more borrowed money to cities that make it more expensive and slow it down. The housing accelerator fund is little more than a pay-for-promises fund and a photo op fund.

We need results in this country. We need a federal government that will hold cities accountable and get the job done. On this side, Conservatives are ready to do that. We are ready to deliver for Canadians because they cannot wait any longer.

• (1010)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I found the comments very riveting from a Conservative. The member and I were both elected to city councils at the same time during the Harper years. He would be very aware of what Stephen Harper's government did for affordable housing. My community got absolutely nothing from the federal government between at least 2006 and 2014, when I was on city council. Since 2015, when the government was elected, over \$40 million has come into my community alone to build housing at 40 Cliff Crescent, 1316 Princess Street, 68 Cowdy Street, 1 Curtis Crescent and 805 Ridley Drive, to name a few. They are finished constructed housing where people are living right now.

• (1015)

Mr. Dan Mazier: Five houses.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: No, Mr. Speaker, they are actually buildings.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind folks to go through the Chair. Let us keep the conversation going, but let us do it appropriately.

The hon. deputy House leader has the floor.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, apparently Conservatives are not aware that a unique physical address could represent an entire apartment building, but I digress. My point is, can the member name just one project that the former Conservative government built in his riding when he was a city councillor and later the mayor? I want just one.

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I always find it entertaining when the member for Kingston and the Islands starts talking in here, because it is clear he does not understand the math. If announcing billions of dollars could solve the problem, we would not have a problem in this country. However, I have just given the Liberals' own data, which shows the situation is worse today than when they started.

I do not care how much money they spend; they make the situation worse. Cities make it more expensive every single year. The charges cities charge to get homes built have gone up exponentially every single year, and the government just rewards them instead of making them reduce those charges and make it cheaper for people to buy homes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, indeed, we cannot ignore the fact that there is a housing crisis, and our out-of-control migration policies have something to do with this. In Quebec we know this only too well, since we are the ones receiving the majority of the temporary residents. These policies certainly have something to do with this.

I do not believe, though, that the solution proposed by the opposition leader, namely to insult city mayors who are in a position to build housing, is ideal. What Ottawa could do is reach an agreement with Quebec and transfer funds that would be used to build homes.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about the insults his leader has directed at mayors. Does he think they are constructive?

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, it is a question of whether we hold other levels of government to account or not, and cities have made it more expensive to build homes in this country. On average, 33% of the cost of every single dwelling unit built in this country is government. Nobody makes more money on housing than governments, so it is sanctimonious to stand in this place and say we need to give more money.

We need to reduce the charges. We need to reduce the fees. We need to make it easier to get homes built so young people are not saddled with debt forever and they can actually get into the market. That is the solution.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are all very aware there is a huge housing crisis happening right now. In my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith, people are being particularly hard hit. For example, a two-bedroom in Nanaimo right now costs \$2,459 per month. Who can afford that? Not many Canadians can.

Unfortunately, a problem that both the former Conservative government and the Liberal government have been allowing is for large

corporations to swoop in and buy up affordable homes, yet the Conservative member is now saying he has the solution. When the leader of the Conservatives was the minister of housing, he built zero affordable homes in British Columbia.

When will the Conservatives actually take the problem seriously and build affordable homes that people can live in, not just allow rich developers to be propped up?

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Mr. Speaker, I will just simply say that it gets a little tiring listening to the NDP demonize private sector developers, because we need literally trillions of dollars of investment in housing in this country. We are not getting that done without the private sector. I think it is time that the NDP and its friends stop demonizing private sector investment. Let us start finding ways to attract that investment to this country.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka for his excellent contribution. He did a good job explaining and presenting what we are discussing today. This subject is of interest to a great many Canadians and Quebecers too. The housing crisis we are facing today was caused by this government, which has mismanaged its files since it came to power in 2015.

My colleague spoke about this government's incompetence, which I believe takes many forms. I hope to have the opportunity to point to some of the factors that led us to this housing crisis, which has sadly affected all of Canada and all of Quebec, including in places where homelessness would have been unthinkable. This has caused terribly unfortunate situations in our cities as well as in our small towns.

As my colleague was saying, people are having to sleep on couches. This is a hidden form of homelessness, and even our small towns are not immune to it. In fact, this is happening in my riding and pretty much across Quebec. Other forms of homelessness are increasingly visible, and that is so unfortunate to see. It is truly sad that people in Canada, a G7 country, a G20 country, are not even able to put a roof over their heads. Plenty of ordinary Canadians are now finding themselves on the streets, homeless.

This week I heard a man on a call-in show describe his situation, which was pretty cut and dried: He was forced out of his home because the landlords were taking over the property. This is allowed in Quebec. He found himself on the street because there is no housing. He bought himself a tent and that is where he lives today. Does anyone think we have palm trees and sunny skies year round in Canada? October is coming. November too. In December the snow comes, along with temperatures in the negative twenties and thirties.

These people will be sleeping outside. As parliamentarians and members of this legislature, we cannot simply look away. It borders on the criminal to do so.

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Thomas Mulcair, a well-known former politician who used to lead the NDP, is now a high-profile political commentator in Quebec. He said that the Prime Minister and his government promised affordable housing in 2015. They promised they would build homes so that everyone would have a roof over their head. Where are we today? The situation, as my colleague pointed out, is worse than it was nine years ago, when this Prime Minister came to power.

Many people of all backgrounds and circumstances have entered our country in recent years, and it was the Liberals who did this. However, they built less housing. How can it be that they did such a poor job? Let us crunch the numbers. Fewer homes were built in 2022 than in 1972, despite the population having doubled. How can they have done such a poor job? I repeat, fewer homes were built in 2022 than in 1972, despite a doubling of the population. In my opinion, someone somewhere is not doing their job. Someone, somewhere, on the other side needs to wake up, because this is not working.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, has indicated how many homes must be built by 2030 if we are to try and get a handle on the situation.

• (1020)

We will need 8.5 million housing units. I am not the one saying this. It is the CMHC. They are the experts. Here are some figures. I do little summaries like this on every sector in Canada. I can also talk about the budget and a whole host of other things, but since I only have four minutes left, I am going to focus on the housing question. Rent has doubled since 2015. Mortgage costs have doubled since 2015. Of all the OECD countries, Canada is the slowest to build. Of the G7 countries, based on our land mass, Canada has the fewest homes, and yet, if one looks at a map of Canada, it is not for lack of space.

In Toronto, it takes 25 years to save for a down payment, when that should be the repayment period. That is unbelievable. I repeat: Fewer housing units were built in 2022 under this government than in 1972. Something is not working. Right now, money is being spent left and right. We do not know what is happening with that money. Right now, we are seeing just how overwhelmed Canada's big cities are with what has been happening, especially in Montreal. Does anyone feel like going to Montreal these days? Shots are being fired, there are guns everywhere and people are sleeping outside. That is the current situation.

Our leader introduced a bill to build housing and encourage the use of federally owned surplus buildings and land, but it was voted down. The bill stipulated that municipalities would have to build 15% more housing and meet housing construction goals. How could anyone think that voting against that bill was a good idea? I will tell the House why they voted against it. They voted against it simply because it came from the Conservatives. That is the only reason. It is a matter of partisanship, when what we are trying to do here is to take care of Quebeckers and Canadians, to put a roof over their heads. That is what we are trying to do here—

• (1025)

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Drummond on a point of order.

Mr. Martin Champoux: Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind my colleague that interpreters have devices in their ears that enable them to interpret speeches, and when members knock on the desk in the middle of their speech, it can cause problems that are best avoided.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a good reminder.

The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent comment. I apologize. I can be quite intense, and I get fired up with tough subjects like this. I am now seeing homelessness in Lévis, which was never the case. I had never seen it before, but it is there now. We see homeless people. There are young people sleeping in shelters, under bridges or in their cars. That is not normal. It is unacceptable. Our leader introduced Bill C-356, which was defeated. I do not understand how anyone could have possibly thought it was not a good idea. How could they think it was a bad idea? The bill died at second reading.

I only have 10 seconds left, so I will end on this note: When we are sitting on the other side of the House, we will get this done.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we can be passionate about the issues, but we have to respect the people who work here. I thank my colleague for his point of order.

Where I am from—

• (1030)

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Mégantic—L'Érable on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's comments are completely unacceptable. To suggest that my colleague, the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, disrespected the interpreters despite the fact that she apologized is shameful, unacceptable and should not be accepted in the House. I would ask her to withdraw that comment.

The Deputy Speaker: I understand. The member has already apologized.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, my question about—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Mégantic—L'Érable on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member clearly insinuated that my colleague showed a lack of respect for the interpreters, which is completely false. I would ask her to withdraw her comment.

The Deputy Speaker: I believe the hon. member has already apologized. Another hon. member has a question. We would like to close the matter. The member apologized to the interpreters. We would like to move on. Perhaps the member can apologize quickly so we can move on.

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The hon. member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the housing situation, I am very proud of the extremely interesting projects implemented in my riding recently. They were designed and facilitated by community groups with some expertise in affordable housing. These include groups like SOLIDES, the Société locative d'investissement et de développement social, and FROHME, the Fédération régionale des OSBL d'habitation de la Montérégie et de l'Estrie. These groups believe that their ongoing ability to take action is very important to get projects off the ground.

I would like to ask my colleague whether she is prepared to support these community organizations or, conversely, whether she is going to cut the budgets, funding, and grants that help these groups get the job done.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to what my colleague said at the start. I am an intense person, but I am also extremely respectful. At no time have I ever said anything in the House that might have been hurtful to a fellow member, irrespective of party. That has never happened. The member is suggesting the contrary. This saddens and pains me. She is absolutely right, I did knock on the desk, but I apologized. I got carried away. I wanted to emphasize that.

The member asked if I am going to continue supporting community agencies. A simple search of my background would have shown her that I got my start in the community sector and that I have promoted many community groups. I can assure the members of this House that I have nothing but the deepest respect and gratitude for the work done by community organizations, be it in the field of health, housing, transportation or radio, which is where I started. We are a government in waiting and an opposition that listens to people's views and maintains very close relations with the community sector.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Conservatives for starting this debate, because I think it is timely. We are in the midst of a housing crisis, so I think it only makes sense to talk about housing.

That said, my question has to do with the Conservatives' strategy for solving the housing crisis. Not too long ago, I had a conversation with people from the UMQ, the Union des municipalités du Québec. They told me they were concerned because the Liberals' strategy was to say they would invest a bit of money in municipal infrastructure but that they themselves would set the municipal regulations and decide how the cities should manage urban planning rules.

The Conservatives' strategy seems almost like a carbon copy of the Liberals'. They say they will dole out money to the cities based on what they build, but the cities will not get any money in the meantime. Cities need money to build infrastructure, however. At the end of the day, it seems like both parties have the same strategy. The Liberals and Conservatives—we might call them a coalition—are both saying that, ultimately, Ottawa will tell municipal elected officials how they should run their cities.

What does the member have to say about that? There are people who were elected in Quebec's cities to manage things. There are

people who were elected in Quebec City to manage things. Why must it always be Ottawa that decides for the cities?

● (1035)

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree with my colleague. Elections are held, and the democratic will is expressed. That is perfectly true.

However, I would note that, when my leader pointed out what was happening in some cities, particularly in Quebec, including homelessness, things started to move a little. Neighbourhoods mobilized, people made decisions and long wait times for permits were shortened. The situation changed.

I think those are all good things. When people feel like others are watching, things get moving, and that is helping to resolve the housing crisis.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting day. Again, we have the Conservatives continuing a tradition that they started virtually since they have been in opposition, and that is to prevent legislation of all forms from passing. We have seen that day in and day out. Today, they are really eager about things of this nature, because they have such a thirst or a hunger for power that they put that over the interests of Canadians.

Our government has been there consistently to deal with the issues that Canadians face on a daily basis. We understand and appreciate the concerns, tensions and anxieties in our communities. We are developing public policies, whether they be budgetary or legislative measures, to deal with those real issues.

All I have witnessed, sitting across from the Conservative opposition for many years now, is a party that thinks of nothing else but the political far-right Reform-Conservative party. That is its preoccupation, a hunger for power, nothing more. Today really amplifies that fact. It wants to talk about housing as if it cares about housing for Canadians.

Let us look at the leader of the Conservative Party. What actions did he take when he was the minister responsible for housing. We only need to use two hands to count how many houses the Harper government built while he was the minister of housing. We barely need the second hand. The former minister of housing, today's leader of the Conservative Party, managed to build six homes. What a powerful record. I suspect even those six would have been by accident.

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When we think of national housing and addressing the housing needs of Canadians, the leader of the Conservative Party was an absolute disaster. Now he tries to come across as if he is a know-it-all and wants to deal with the housing crisis. Is a part of dealing with the housing crisis to slap the provinces and the municipalities around, as opposed to working with them?

Why would the government, or any member of Parliament, give any credibility to the Conservative Party today, when its leader was an absolute failure in delivering housing policy? In fact, had we had a more competent minister of housing back then, the issues that we face today would not be as great. Virtually no programming was put in place for non-profit housing under the Harper government and the then minister.

Does the leader talk about the homeless? If members search Hansard, they will see how often he talked about homelessness as minister of housing. I have a newsflash: There were homeless Canadians back then. Where was the leader of the Conservative Party when he had the chance to make a difference on this file?

Today is not about Canadians. It is not about addressing the concerns of Canadians. It is more about the Conservatives' hunger for power. They are preventing legislation from passing.

● (1040)

On Monday, we had the Citizenship Act. Instead of debating that legislation, the Conservatives brought in a concurrence motion, even though a majority of the members of the House wanted that legislation to pass. We even had one opposition member try to move for unanimous consent to have it pass through to committee. We are talking about citizenship for individuals who should have their citizenship. It is something that should be non-controversial, but the Conservative Party, during that debate, showed its hand, saying that it opposes the legislation.

I have been very clear that the only way that legislation would pass would be if we were to bring in time allocation to get it into second reading. However, with today's motion, now that the Conservatives want to talk about housing, what are they interrupting? What legislation are they filibustering today? It is Bill C-66. It is about the Canadian forces. The critic for the Conservative Party yesterday was criticizing the government for not passing the legislation fast enough, and today the Conservative Party is filibustering the legislation.

The first word that comes to my mind is "hypocrisy". How can the Conservative Party, with any credibility whatsoever, try to say that they are concerned about Canadians, when they filibuster important, non-controversial legislation, even the legislation that they support? They do this in order to talk about other issues that Canadians are concerned about, such as housing.

We know Canadians are concerned about housing. We do not know need to be told that by the Conservative Party of Canada. We are aware of it because we are on the ground; we are listening to what Canadians have to say about housing. That is why we have developed a number of housing initiatives.

I can tell the members opposite that housing is not just the federal government's responsibility. The federal government has stepped

up to the plate in dealing with housing, unlike any other federal government for generations, the last 50-plus or 60 years. We have a government that is investing in housing and that has had a housing strategy. If we want to talk about dollars, we are talking about something like \$51 billion. The impact of those expenditures and that money that is committed has had a very real and tangible impact on Canadians' lives.

An estimated 1.8 million Canadians have directly benefited from this government's commitment to housing. Had the previous government had the type of commitment that we have had to housing, I would argue that the housing issues today would be nowhere near to what they are now if we had had a prior Conservative government actually doing its job on the issue of housing. I do not say that lightly.

I was first elected in 1988, and my first parliamentary responsibilities were being the party whip and housing. I have been following the housing file for over 30 years. I understand the importance of housing. All of us should strive to ensure that everyone has access to housing. Municipalities, provinces in particular, and the federal government all have a role to play, not to mention the non-profit sector.

When I had left the Canadian Forces, one of the first things I did was participate in the West End residents association. They had a very proactive approach to dealing with housing. We established the West End housing co-op. We lobbied the provincial government to build houses in vacant lots and to take down derelict homes and replace them with infill housing. As a community, we were very successful.

At the provincial level, there is a number of things that were actually done to try to enhance things. We should recognize that, back then, there was a population of about 1.15 million people, yet we still had over 20,000 non-profit housing units, all of which were subsidized in good part by the federal government.

● (1045)

These are the types of issues that provinces have to deal with. When we think of municipalities building newer homes, yes, there is a bureaucracy there. There is a process that needs to be followed so municipal planning can be conducted in a way that is good for the economy and the environment. As a federal government, we have recognized all of those aspects of housing, the non-profits, the city, the province and, of course, the federal government.

Late last spring, the Prime Minister was in Winnipeg. I was at that particular announcement, which was out in the Transcona area, and so was the mayor of Winnipeg, as well as the premier of the province. I say that because it amplifies the fact that it is more than one government that has to deal with the housing issue we have today.

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As a national government, I would challenge any member, whether they are Conservative, Bloc or New Democrat, to show me a government, a national government, in the last 60 years, that has invested more in housing than the Prime Minister and the government.

That does not mean that our work is done. We understand that the need is high. That is why, as recently as Monday, we had the Minister of Finance taking a look at ways in which we can continue to support first-time homebuyers, how we can use the rules to ensure that they have more opportunities to purchase a home. There are some releases and information on that. If people are curious, they can look into it and get the details.

In virtually every budget, we see the federal government providing programs and incentives. A couple of years ago, we had the one dealing with trying to get more purpose-built apartments being constructed in the country. We have had a huge take-up on that. Thousands of units are going to be built as a direct result of that one federal program.

Members can contrast that to anything that Stephen Harper did. It does beg the question. People say that was eight years ago or nine years ago. We do not build a building overnight. Had the Conservatives done their homework, had they worked with the provinces, the municipalities and some of these non-profit organizations, I believe it would have made a difference. Because we have had some of these programs in place now for a number of years, it has had a positive impact. Recognizing that the need is so great, we continue to invest more.

As Liberals, we understand the importance of homes. I ask members to think of those non-profits. I have had the opportunity to go to a number of key ceremonies, as I suspect many of my colleagues on all political stripes have done. I am a big fan of Habitat for Humanity. Habitat has done so much in providing individuals that never would have gotten, or in all likelihood would have been very challenged in getting, the key to a new home. It has done so much, not only for the family unit but also for the communities in which they are built. I suspect that, when it comes to Habitat, Winnipeg North is probably in the top 10% of communities that have benefited the most because of it.

• (1050)

Habitat for Humanity Manitoba has built homes right from the Point Douglas area, going through the traditional North End into the Shaughnessy Park area, going up into The Maples. From the suburbs to the inner city, it is providing homes for people who otherwise would have been very challenged to be able to acquire one.

There are ways in which we can expand housing opportunities. We have a government that says it wants to see more housing co-ops. Housing co-ops matter. They make a difference. People who live there are not tenants. They are residents. For me, that is something we can and should be encouraging more of. That is why I was pleased that the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has provided more supports to ensure that we will see more housing co-op developments. We have continued to look at ways we can support different organizations and levels of government to address the issue of housing, which is so very important to Canadians.

What I do not support is the manner through which we are having this debate today. I believe that the Conservatives are preventing important legislation from passing. I am talking about the Canadian Forces bill, Bill C-66, which deals with civilian courts for victims within military ranks. I was a little optimistic yesterday when the Conservative critic stood up and said that the Conservative Party supports the legislation. If it supports the legislation, if it wants to see the legislation pass, it needs to allow the debate to occur. Instead of doing so, Conservative members brought in a motion of this nature to filibuster legislation, even though they agree with it.

Canadians do have an expectation of a minority government. There is an expectation that opposition parties would also contribute in a positive way in dealing with private members' bills and government bills. As an opposition party, it should not have to be shamed into doing the right thing. As I have said before, the Conservative Party's focus is more on character assassinations. Whenever Conservatives can slap on the word "scandal", or whatever other negative word, so they can post all sorts of false information on social media, that is what they will do.

That is why I say the hunger for power is what is driving the Conservative Party today, and it is a destructive force. It has nothing to do with the concerns of Canadians and their needs, which are what we need to be able to talk about. We need to be looking at and figuring out how we can pass legislation so that the lives of Canadians in all regions of our country will be that much better. As much as the opposition party wants to focus its attention on the negative side of things, the Liberals will continue, as a government, to be focused on Canadians.

As the Prime Minister has clearly indicated time and time again, we will continue to be focused on Canadians and improving their quality of life so that we have an economy that works for all Canadians. We will continue to focus attention on our middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, to build a stronger and healthier economy and continue to work on the issues of inflation, which is now at 2%. That is equal to inflation prepandemic. We will continue to build that stronger and healthier economy, which we are going to see in the months ahead.

Contrary to what the Conservatives continue to say, coast to coast to coast, Canada is not broken. Canada is the best country in the world to live in and call home. As a government, we are going to strive to make that the case, not only for today, but also for tomorrow.

• (1055)

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just listened, for 20 minutes, to the member opposite talking about the job the Liberals have done over nine years on the housing file in Canada.

I represent Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte and there are housing encampments all over our riding now. Nine years ago, these did not exist. Just this week, I read in Barrie Today, there was another fire at a homeless encampment at Milligan's Pond.

Routine Proceedings

Please, can the member opposite not admit that over nine years, things have become much worse in Canada, and homelessness is a serious issue now that did not exist nine years ago?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is not fair to say homelessness did not exist nine years ago. Homelessness has been around ever since I was first elected back in 1988. The severity and the complexities, dealing with homelessness as the country has grown, have become fairly extensive. It is one of the reasons, in the number of years we have been in government, that we have more than doubled the supports to deal with homelessness. We continue to recognize that the best way to deal with it is with a united front, by working with municipalities, provinces and non-profit groups in order to minimize homelessness; that is absolutely critically important. We deal with it on a daily basis when working with others, in order to deal with it appropriately.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my always eloquent colleague for her speech on a topic that is of the utmost importance in the riding of Shefford, for two reasons. I am talking about housing.

Granby has one of the lowest vacancy rates of all cities. That is the reality. The city took steps to address that. Now it needs help from the federal government. The problem affects seniors in particular. I was proud to stand beside my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert last year when he unveiled the Bloc Québécois's 12 proposed solutions for fixing the housing crisis. He went on an amazing tour last summer that included a stop in Granby. We suggested 12 compelling solutions, including one that I think would really help, which is to review the budget for the Reaching Home program. Granby has a homelessness problem too, but it is not considered a designated community. Community groups in my riding believe it is crucial that this be changed. More money needs to be earmarked for cities like Granby that are grappling with homelessness for the first time.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this. Did he take the time to read the report and the 12 proposals drafted by my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert? What about the Reaching Home program?

Granby deserves its share of the budget.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect there are many communities, like Granby, that have all sorts of ideas to deal with these issues. It is not just high-density urban centres that are having issues with homelessness and housing for seniors. Many seniors want to live in the communities where they grew up. The demand for non-profit, low-income and fixed-income housing for seniors is there and it is very real.

There are critical things we can do by working with provinces. They play a critical role in non-profit housing, especially the expansion of housing for seniors. There are also some things we can do, including housing co-ops. There is so much more we can do with housing co-ops. We should be looking at policy initiatives to support and encourage them, and provide a certain level of education because a lot of people do not truly understand the benefits of

housing co-ops. I do think that is a strong and viable option, in particular for seniors and low-income people on fixed income.

• (1100)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I represent South Okanagan—West Kootenay. I have always said that it is the most beautiful riding in this country and, because of that, people want to live there, and so housing prices are very high. However, average incomes are on the low side, because people work more in the service and agricultural sectors, and so we have kind of big urban housing prices and rural wages. I go to the city planners in my hometown of Penticton and ask what we are doing about increasing the housing market. The Conservatives are saying to just build more houses. The city planners say, "We are building more homes every day in Penticton than we have ever built before in history." Yet every day we have fewer affordable homes, because the new homes that are being built are being snapped up by investors rather than by people who need them. The people who need them cannot afford them, and the investors are keeping those prices up.

As the member just mentioned, we need more co-ops, more affordable homes that are built specifically for the people who need them, and yet this government is doing precious little to actually fill that need. This is where we have to be concentrating our efforts over the coming years: building affordable homes like we did after the Second World War when we built millions of homes that people could afford. I live in one of them right now. What is this government doing to build affordable homes?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, first off, we have a beautiful country in Canada. I appreciate the member's comments about his own riding, but there is something to be said when flying into Winnipeg and seeing these vast prairies full of food, the grain fields and canola fields, and there is a great deal of beauty. Canada is so rich in its diversity.

There is a lot of non-profit housing out there, from different agencies. I was over at 800 Burrows at St. Mary The Protectress Villa, a seniors' complex, non-profit organization, which was celebrating 35 years with a mortgage burning. It was a wonderful event. I raise this only to underline that this building existed because governments, plural, got behind it and supported it.

I think that the potential is real, it is tangible, but we have to have partners. The federal government has made it very clear that it is looking to expand in whatever way it can, and it is looking for partners.

I think our actions speak louder than words. We have provided significant finances, and we have provided opportunities for those partners to be engaged. We will continue to do so. We want to ensure that we have a housing program that all of us can take pride in.

• (1105)

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to give the member for Winnipeg North a chance to once again highlight what this government has done for housing in comparison to the previous government.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will just focus on the leader of the official opposition who was in the previous Conservative government and, in fact, was minister of housing. While he was minister of housing, he was very successful in building six houses in a country of 30-plus million people. To contrast that to what we have done, we are talking six-digit figures of renovating and building homes, and the numbers continue. We have a very ambitious plan. In fact, if the Conservative Harper regime had had a plan half the size of our plan, the issues we are having today would be nowhere near as severe.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my fantastic, esteemed colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères. I have had the pleasure and honour of sitting on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities since 2019. Why is my Conservative colleague, who sits on the same committee, bringing up a motion now that was adopted by the committee on October 16, 2023? There may be several reasons.

I should be in committee right now for an important study on the benefits of unionization, but instead I am here, discussing the merits of this motion that was passed by the committee in 2023. I would remind members that the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities recognizes that “Canada is in a housing crisis that requires urgent action by the federal government to end homelessness, and that this motion be reported to the House”.

Let me recap the context in which this motion was unanimously adopted. Following its late summer caucus retreat, the current government said it would be prioritizing the housing issue. It did not clarify what concrete measures it would take, however. At the same time, the current housing minister stated that there was a housing crisis. Our committee was acknowledging the minister's own words about the fact that there was indeed a housing crisis. We did not just dream this up.

Since then, the committee has had multiple studies on the national housing strategy. One of those studies, a very important one, dealt with the financialization of housing. We are finalizing the report for another, which highlights the disengagement of the two parties that have formed government since 2006, namely the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, as well as the repercussions this disengagement has had on Quebec and the provinces, as the minister himself recognized. These are major, important studies. What we have trouble understanding is why the need for urgent action on housing is not informing the federal government's policy-making in this area.

I would like to say a few words about homelessness because, clearly, this issue really relates to homelessness. The Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer released a very informative report in May 2024 that provided an update on federal spending to address homelessness. The report summarized the impact of the national housing strategy on homelessness. This 10-year strategy, from 2018-19 to 2027-28, aims to reduce chronic homelessness by 50%. In his report, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said the following:

We estimate that interventions funded by Reaching Home are reducing the point-in time count of homeless persons by about 6,000 individuals (15%), relative to what the count would have been without those interventions.

The situation in Quebec alone is unprecedented, with roughly 10,000 people experiencing homelessness. The Parliamentary Budget Officer goes on to say:

We estimate that achieving a 50% reduction in chronic homelessness would require an additional \$3.5 billion per year, approximately a 7-fold increase in funding over the National Housing Strategy average.

• (1110)

These are serious warnings. Does the current government have any idea how bad the current impasse is or how it is depriving entire families and individuals who live alone of the most important thing in life, the right to a home? The answer is no.

I said earlier that homelessness is on the rise in Quebec. My colleague from Shefford just spoke about the urgent need to take action in these regions to meet these needs. All of my colleagues here today could talk about extremely low vacancy rates in every region and the rising rates of homelessness. Today's debate is important because, if the government wants to set priorities, if it wants good press, it needs to recognize the role it could be playing in dealing with these issues.

My colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert toured all the regions of Quebec to shine a light on these issues. He even took it up again this year. The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities has been hearing from groups of witnesses. The government appointed a federal housing advocate, who recently came to tell us about her shocking reports on the issue of tent cities and the financialization of housing.

To deal with the current housing crisis, my colleague and the Bloc Québécois now have 12 measures that I could read out or let my colleague present. However, one of them applies everywhere, and it is our suggestion to prioritize the construction of social housing managed by non-profit housing groups, social housing that truly meets people's needs. Most witnesses, including the federal housing advocate, said that we need to increase the percentage of social housing by 20%. There is a difference between social housing and affordable housing. The housing crisis will not be solved purely through supply and demand by creating more housing units that are supposedly affordable. In my riding, Thérèse-De Blainville, an affordable one- or two-bedroom home costs \$2,000. For a single-parent family, for a single mother, for low-income individuals, that is not affordable. That is why we need social housing. We need to increase the stock of social housing by 20% to 30%. That applies everywhere.

Points of Order

In conclusion, the Liberal government has re-committed to investing in the national housing strategy. However, this strategy is already a failure because the government is not meeting people's real needs. It has invested \$82 billion, but if we look at the construction of housing units that really meet the needs of the low-income individuals who need them the most, the impact is minimal.

The government needs to change course, focus on tackling the homelessness crisis, and focus on increasing social housing managed by non-profit organizations and housing co-operatives.

• (1115)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I assume the member is talking about fully subsidized social housing, which is, in essence, supported by the federal and provincial governments. Usually, it is the provincial government that plays the lead role.

Does the member have any indication from the Province of Quebec of its intent, in the short term or even the long term, with respect to the development of social housing, and if it has approached the federal government to contribute more directly to a social housing project where, let us say, a tenant would only have to pay 30% of their income?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, I would return the question to him. He is completely right that Quebec is in charge of housing. As far as federal agreements are concerned, the federal government plays a supporting role, but it cannot go over Quebec's head.

What I am saying is that social and community housing are not the federal government's priority right now. Of the hundreds of programs that it put in place under the national housing strategy, only one worked really well, and that is the rapid housing initiative, or RHI, a rapid housing creation program under which community and housing organizations can apply for subsidies. That is what it should focus on. We have proposed all kinds of solutions. The CMHC's current strategy focuses on affordable housing. However, affordability is not clearly defined, since the definition varies from one program to another. We need to review that definition. Affordability should mean no more than 30% of an individual's income, not the median income of a community.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois regularly says that it listens to the Government of Quebec. It says that it listens to the Government of Quebec and its demands regarding federal files.

We know that the Liberal government has been piling up failure after failure over the past nine years, which is causing a lot of dissatisfaction.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Dominique Vien: I am getting to—

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I would like to check that the member's comments are relevant to the matter at hand, which is homelessness and housing.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the member is getting to that.

The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government keeps piling up failure after failure, especially on housing.

The Government of Quebec made its wishes very clear this morning. It wants the Bloc Québécois to support the confidence motion the Conservatives will be moving next week. Will the Bloc members listen to the Government of Quebec and vote with us, yes or no?

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I also appreciate the brevity of her answer just now.

I do have a question for her, though, because the Liberals suddenly have a new-found passion for co-op housing. They displayed a glimmer of interest in more housing co-ops six months ago in April 2024, but, since 2017—

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ALLEGED UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that, after the response by my colleague from Thérèse-De Blainville and before leaving the room, my colleague from Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis mentioned a lack of courage. I find that offensive and I would like her to withdraw that remark.

The Deputy Speaker: I did not hear that. We will continue.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope those remarks were not made by Conservative members. That would be extremely unfortunate. The point of order is a very good one.

The question I started to ask concerned housing co-ops—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Terrebonne is rising again.

• (1120)

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Mr. Speaker, other people in the room probably heard the remark. If I heard it, others would have, too. I would like the member to withdraw her remark.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Routine Proceedings

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have known the member for Thérèse-De Blainville for a long time. I know she has ideas. I am extremely surprised that she did not answer, other than to say that it was an excellent question.

The Deputy Speaker: I did not ask for an apology. I will listen carefully to what was said in the House.

The hon. member for Drummond.

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise on this point of order.

First, the question from the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis was completely off topic. Her question was not relevant at all. Second, I can confirm that we clearly heard the comments made following the member for Thérèse-De Blainville's response, or lack thereof.

This is also a matter of honour in the House. If the member has any honour at all, she will apologize and withdraw the remarks she made about my colleague.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, as to this point of order, we are all honourable people in this House. How dare our colleague from the Bloc challenge the honour of our colleague here.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I will look into this and come back to the House with an answer. For now, I would like the hon. member to ask his question.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

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

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to see the Conservatives using the same old name-calling and personal attacks. It is reprehensible.

Let us come back to the issue of co-op housing. The national housing strategy that was launched in 2017 made no mention of co-op housing. The Liberal government woke up at the last minute last spring and mentioned co-op housing in the budget.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

Ms. Louise Chabot: Mr. Speaker, my colleague asked a very important question. Co-op housing has never been a priority for the government. It has been a long time since a Liberal or Conservative government has invested in housing. Now the government suddenly wakes up, probably because stakeholders have spoken. Think of the recommendations that were made during my Bloc Québécois colleague's tour, the experts who testified or the federal housing advocate who had some strong words to say about this.

At the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, the

Bloc Québécois is lobbying to bring the issue of co-op housing to the fore.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we are taking up this report on the housing crisis by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. We have not really talked about this yet. Yes, Parliament is only just back in session, but we have not yet talked about it, despite it being such a major issue. Everyone is affected by this situation and people everywhere are talking to us about it. They are talking to us about it a lot, in fact, in LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, where the Bloc Québécois won the by-election not too long ago.

I would like to begin my remarks with an anecdote about my riding and local initiatives. There are often housing developers who say they would like to receive support from Ottawa, such as subsidies in connection with programs in place to promote housing construction, and even social housing.

There was a social housing project in the city of Contrecoeur. The idea was to build or buy back homes. I think it was about 30 homes. An administrative problem arose, however, with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC. All the towns in the regional county municipality, or RCM, were deemed to belong to the Montreal metropolitan area, and were thus entitled to the same subsidy level as that of the other towns in the Montreal metropolitan area.

For those who do not know, Contrecoeur is not very far from Montreal. Contrecoeur was placed in a separate category. It was the exception that was not entitled to the same level of subsidies, which made the project totally unsustainable. Contrecoeur was considered a rural community like anywhere else in Quebec. People need to understand that the price of housing in Contrecoeur is not the same as in many other remote regions.

The city of Contrecoeur wrote to the CMHC and was essentially told that the criteria were the criteria, and that they should deal with it. Municipal officials reached out to me, and I went to see the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities to tell him it was ridiculous and that Contrecoeur had been wrongly categorized. I told him that Contrecoeur met all of the same criteria as the other towns in its RCM, and asked him to do something about it.

Routine Proceedings

The Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, who is sitting on the other side of the House, is supposed to defend housing and support construction. His response was a carbon copy of the CMCH's letter. That says a lot about the government's real vision and real desire to solve housing problems. It would have many opportunities to take concrete action that would result in projects getting off the ground, but it lacks the will to do so.

I have another example that proves the same point. Not too long ago, the federal government announced funding for housing. We thought there would be money for housing across the country. We were thrilled. We wondered when Quebec would get its share. However, the federal government sent no money to Quebec. No, it fought for over a year with the Quebec government because it wanted to set its own conditions and procedures for our province. Finally, the federal government was more interested in encroaching on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction than in its priority, which should have been building housing units quickly. Why did the government hold back the money for more than a year in an emergency situation, during a housing crisis, when we needed it? Because the federal government's priority is to stick its nose where it does not belong.

Here is another example. My colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert toured every region of Quebec to learn about the housing problem on the ground. Two problems emerged, and he was told pretty much the same thing in every region.

The first problem that came to light was the federal criteria. The federal government believes that housing that costs \$2,000 a month is inexpensive. However, in Quebec, housing that costs \$2,000 a month is quite expensive. There is a disconnect between the federal vision of reality in Vancouver, for example, and its vision of reality elsewhere, like in Quebec. It seems as though the federal government cannot comprehend that it is not the same everywhere, that we cannot apply the same model from one coast to the other, and that there is something unique to Quebec that must be respected.

The second problem raised was that there has not been any money for housing for 30 years. There is not enough money for housing. It is chronically underfunded. In that context, it is clear that there is a housing crisis. Even if the government were to invest money today, there is so much catching up to do that it would take a lot more money than has been put on the table to be able to solve the problem.

Obviously, there is another problem underlying the housing crisis. When we talk about it, there are consequences to it. The National Bank has talked about it. I quote the National Bank because we are not allowed to say that. If the Bloc Québécois says that there are too many newcomers, we are automatically labelled as racists. English Canada, however, ended up saying the same thing, that the numbers were too high.

• (1125)

There is a record number of foreign students. There is record number of asylum seekers. There is a record number of temporary foreign workers because of the labour shortage. All of this puts more pressure on housing. These record numbers mean that all these people coming in from elsewhere need to be housed somewhere. When Quebec said that it was too much and that solutions

were needed, it was automatically considered a racist province that did not care. When the other provinces made a point of saying that there was a problem, suddenly they were heard. Suddenly, there was a problem to address.

What I find odd is that the other provinces that are saying there is a problem do not want to help solve it. That is at least true of the Conservatives. It seems as though some Conservative premiers are willing to acknowledge there is a problem, for example, the fact that Quebec is receiving half the asylum seekers when it represents about 20% of the Canadian population. That is having a disproportionate effect on services in Quebec compared to the rest of Canada. Why are the other provinces refusing to co-operate? That is odd, because the Conservatives are the ones who moved the motion to adopt the report we are debating today. However, the Conservative premiers are refusing to help with asylum seekers. There is a bit of a disconnect there.

I will take this a step further. When we talk about housing, we talk about the construction of housing. That means that investments need to be made in the construction of housing. That requires infrastructure. I will give two or three fairly recent examples.

Let us talk about the Canada-Quebec infrastructure program agreement, a bilateral agreement. It is like a treaty, when two countries—or, in this case, a country and a future country—sit down together. Canada says that it will transfer money because Quebec is still paying taxes to Ottawa and that Quebec will be entitled to a funding envelope for infrastructure. The problem is that Ottawa unilaterally decided to hold back \$350 million, just like that. Ottawa decided to use that money elsewhere. Unbelievable. Cities in Quebec protested. The Government of Quebec said it was ridiculous. Ottawa told them they could protest as much as they wanted, but Canada intended to keep the money for itself, even though the money it decided to hold back was Quebec's share.

We should also talk about the community assistance fund known as the TECQ program, or the gas tax and Quebec's contribution. The 2024-28 version provides 30% less funding for cities than the 2019-24 version. If cities have 30% less funding specifically for their infrastructure—because this program funds water infrastructure—adding new housing is complicated, since people need water. Unfortunately, cities have lost 30% of their budgets.

Cities have another problem too. Not long ago, I was talking to members of the Union des municipalités du Québec. They told me that the federal government had announced \$6 billion in new funding for housing infrastructure. Everyone was happy. Members of the Union thought they would get a little more money for housing infrastructure. In Quebec, it is quite a bit less than that, between \$1.4 billion and \$2 billion. While it may not be a game changer, it will help.

Routine Proceedings

However, when it comes to the conditions, Ottawa will now decide on the urban planning rules in exchange for this money. Ottawa will give money, but it will also come and manage the cities on their behalf. It boggles the mind. Cities have their own elected officials. The people of Quebec have elected their local representatives. Ottawa is saying that these people do not know how to manage things and that it will decide for them. What is even more peculiar is that this is exactly the same Conservative policy that the Liberals put in their last budget. How, then, do we deal with this?

First, we have to start by listening to the people on the ground who are talking about solutions, like the ones suggested by the City of Contrecoeur, like the ones suggested by the people who spoke to Denis Trudel during his housing tour. It is important to listen to people and stop thinking that Ottawa always has all the solutions, when, in the end, it is often Ottawa that causes the problem in the first place.

• (1130)

The Deputy Speaker: I think the hon. member was referring to the hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a big part of it is attitude. I have had a couple of discussions about the transitional fund and the accelerator fund. I met with the mayor of Winnipeg, and I do not see it as a territorial issue. What I see is governments working together for the betterment of the communities, which is something we should be promoting. This way there is more success, and the biggest beneficiaries are the people we collectively represent.

Would the member not agree that it is much more preferable to have governments working together? That does not mean the federal government just giving cash blindly; it means governments working together.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, what I find interesting about my colleague's question is that it has nothing to do with cities in Quebec. Cities in Quebec would totally disagree. In fact, representatives from Quebec cities told me that they are already working with the federal government. Money is already being directed into housing-related infrastructure through the TECQ program, and that money comes from the gas tax and Quebec's contribution. The money is actually being used for water infrastructure.

Why not just take that \$6 billion and send it to the TECQ program?

The problem would be solved. However, that is not what is happening. Instead, Ottawa has to invent new programs and new criteria and stick its nose into other jurisdictions.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's speech.

There were a number of things that resonated with me, but a key one he mentioned was that we need to listen to the people on the ground. We need to listen to the people in our communities. I know that my community, my region of Cariboo—Prince George, has unprecedented levels of homelessness that it did not have nine years ago. I know that our colleague is probably experiencing the same in his neck of the woods.

If we are to truly listen to the people who elected us to be here, will the member and his colleagues vote with our Conservative caucus next week in the confidence vote and let Canadians choose in a carbon tax election?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is extremely interesting. It brings the Conservatives' hypocrisy to light. In fact, my colleague's question is not about the motion or the report on the housing crisis we are discussing today, despite the fact that the Conservatives are the ones who started the debate. If they really wanted to resolve the housing problem, I think they would ask questions about housing. That is not what they are doing. Instead, they are asking whether we will vote with them or against them in a non-confidence vote to bring down the government.

I find that interesting because it gives us a glimpse into their priorities. Do they really want to resolve the housing crisis, or do they want their leader to sit across the aisle in the Prime Minister's seat?

Let me explain something. We in the Bloc Québécois are not Conservatives, and we are not Liberals, so we are not obliged to vote for one or the other. What we decide, who we decide to vote for and why we decide to vote is based on what is good for Quebec and what will improve living conditions for Quebecers.

• (1135)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is something that bothers me in the debate on housing and that I have heard too often; that is, for the Bloc Québécois, it is always the federal government's fault and, for the Liberals, it is always the Quebec government's fault. We lost three years in the federal-provincial agreement, and Canadians with inadequate housing or no housing at all are paying for it. I do not want to play the game, which the leader of the Conservative Party is also playing by attacking the mayors of Montreal and Quebec City.

Can we please stop pointing fingers and looking for someone to blame? Can we work together to build housing Canadians can afford?

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval: Mr. Speaker, I would like to applaud the statement made by my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. I totally agree with him.

That is similar to the solution the Bloc Québécois is promoting. Oftentimes, there are already agreements and arrangements, whether we are talking about the TECQ, the gas tax and Quebec's contribution program, or infrastructure agreements.

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Why can they not just extend the existing agreements, send the money and avoid the endless red tape instead of fighting over jurisdictions, like the federal government always does, sticking its nose where it does not belong?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the admirable and extraordinary member for New Westminster—Burnaby. I think he will have some very interesting things to share with us about the reality in his region and in his province.

I will start this intervention by thanking the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for this motion. I find it interesting that we are having this debate in the House today. In fact, it is as though the committee told the Liberal government that there was a problem, that something was happening and that it has to wake up because there are people living in the street. There are people sleeping outside, in their car, in their trailer, in their truck. There are people sleeping on their friend's sofa or living in a two-bedroom apartment with five people because they can no longer afford housing. People are getting sick staying in bacteria- and fungus-infested apartments where the owners refuse to make the necessary renovations.

This crisis has been growing worse for years. The situation has really become dire. Every July 1 in Montreal, more and more families are ending up on the streets because they do not have a place to live. The rate of homelessness is rising everywhere. People are being forced to live in parks, in tents. We are seeing it in Ottawa, Montreal and across Quebec and Canada. That makes no sense.

Successive Conservative and Liberal governments have allowed this situation to get worse. For years, the leader of the Conservative Party, who used to be the minister responsible for housing, did not build even a single housing unit. In actual fact, he lost 800,000. During their nine years in office, the Conservatives lost 800,000 affordable housing units. The Liberals are no better. They lost nearly 300,000 and they are proposing completely ridiculous definitions of affordable housing.

Three years ago in Montreal, a two-bedroom apartment that cost \$2,235 a month was considered affordable housing. Who can afford that? It just does not make sense. This is all because market logic and profit have been allowed to take over the entire real estate sector for years. Successive Conservative and Liberal governments have stopped viewing housing as a fundamental human right. Instead, they see it as a source of profit and returns.

It is fine for real estate to be a source of investment for people, for their retirement, for example, or to bequeath something to their child. I have no problem with that. However, if there is no off-market, social, co-operative, community and student housing, this vicious circle will simply continue. It only serves the interests of big investment companies, the real estate giants that have taken up more and more space in the real estate landscape.

In the 1990s, almost no homes were owned by these real estate giants. Today, these large corporations own more than 20% of the housing stock. They have no human connection to the people on site, to the tenants. They think strictly in terms of profits and returns. That is the crux of the problem. That market logic has taken

over the entire housing sector in the past 30 years while the Conservatives and Liberals were on watch.

We can do things differently. We must do things differently, through what we call social housing or non-market housing. It currently represents just 3% of our housing stock here in Canada and a little more in Quebec. That is nothing compared to Finland, where it amounts to 10%, or Denmark, 20%. For years now, every time a piece of land, a house or an apartment comes up for sale in Vienna, Austria, the municipality invests to control the price of the lot, house or apartment. Today, in Vienna, the municipality owns 60% of the housing stock, which is under government control.

There are different ways of doing things. We need to reserve federally-owned land for non-profit organizations that can develop truly affordable housing. Since that is their primary mission, they are in the best position to do it.

● (1140)

Now the federal Liberal government is starting to wake up. I mentioned this earlier. It did nothing about co-op housing for eight years. Now, in the latest budget, it hinted that housing co-ops might be a good solution. Co-ops were a good solution in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. All across Quebec, there are successful housing co-ops where people are happy. People have a new way of thinking about housing. They work together to take care of their housing co-ops. The government needs to build more housing co-ops and take care of existing housing co-ops. Some of them need major work, and the federal government is not stepping up to support them. I think that is an important thing to consider. We need more housing co-ops, but we also need more programs to take care of housing co-ops so they last a long time and so we can control rents and keep them truly affordable.

The Minister of Housing just announced 56 locations that have been selected for affordable housing to be built on federal public lands. This is a good thing. The NDP has been calling for this for quite some time. However, we hope that this will not once again be handed over to private developers who just want to make a profit. The project must be assigned to non-profit organizations, or NPOs, and to organizations that can build housing that people can afford.

Let us not forget one very simple rule. People must not spend more than 30% of their income on rent. Paying more than 30% puts people in a precarious situation, sometimes under the poverty line. We need to stop thinking about housing based on the median price in one's region and start thinking about how we can ensure that people do not spend more than 30% of their income on housing.

Routine Proceedings

Housing is not a luxury. Housing is a fundamental right. I welcome the recent reports from the federal housing advocate. She is doing extraordinary work. I think the Liberal government should take a page out of her book.

Too many measures in the Liberal housing strategy focused on private developers. The NDP wants to put a stop to that. One way to do that is to have an acquisition fund. We can take existing federal land, use it for truly affordable or social housing, give those contracts to non-profits, allow them to acquire the land or have a truly affordable lease so that they can build housing that will really help people.

We could also follow the example of Montreal and have an acquisition fund to buy private land or buildings and convert them into social or truly affordable housing. There is a fine example in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie: the Bellechasse site. It is public land with community groups, where the community has come together to create a new neighbourhood with a human face, where there will be mixed-income housing, but also social and truly affordable housing with public services, a school, and a park. It will be a nice place to call home. The federal government needs to work with the municipalities and the provinces to be able to complete such projects.

Too many people are just a hair's breadth away from losing their homes and ending up on the streets. We are seeing it more and more, in all our towns and municipalities. Vacancy rates are so low that people no longer have options. They are no longer able to find housing.

The Conservatives' approach of leaving everything to the market and the big corporations will just exacerbate the problem because that is exactly where the problem originated. We cannot move in that ultra-capitalist direction, where everything is seen only in terms of profit, while there are people suffering.

In my constituency, 15% of people spend more than 50% of their income on housing. That is obscene. More than half their income goes to housing. When you look at the cost of groceries on top of that, these people are obviously forced to make absolutely heart-breaking choices, and sometimes go and live in their van, truck or car. Alternatively, they might go and live with friends or relatives, where they will share a room, sleep on the sofa or on the floor, all of which is far from ideal. There is the visible homelessness, but there is plenty of invisible homelessness as well.

That is the result of 20 years of Conservative and Liberal inaction and bad policies.

● (1145)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on housing co-ops. I think the oldest co-op happens to be in Winnipeg North, the Willow Park Housing Co-op. Since I left the Canadian Forces back in 1985 or 1986, I have always been a big advocate for housing co-ops. In fact, it was Pierre Elliott Trudeau's administration that brought in the first federal housing co-op program. Interestingly enough, it is his son who is reinstating and building up that program once again.

I wonder if the member can highlight his understanding of the benefits of a housing co-op versus a rental unit. I have always said that people in a housing co-op are residents, not tenants, and that means a great deal. I wonder if he could add some thoughts on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that it was under a Liberal government in 1994 that the federal government withdrew, disengaged from social and affordable housing. Co-op housing and social housing help people so much.

Someone told me that having access to social housing gave them back their freedom. The Conservatives often say that government intervention undermines freedom. Not having to worry about being able to pay for housing, not being afraid of losing one's housing and ending up in the street — that gives people freedom. There is a sense of freedom that comes with having a calm spirit, reinvesting in life, taking charge, entering the workforce and helping the community without the constant fear of ending up in the street.

[*English*]

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the speech of my hon. colleague from the NDP. I found it a little rich, because the NDP has been propping up the government for the last nine years and has been complicit in all of the horrific conditions in our communities.

We have a leader, our Conservative leader, who has said that he will axe the tax and make things more affordable for Canadians. He will fix the budget. He will build the homes and help those experiencing homelessness. He will stop the crime, because as we have seen, our communities look like war zones. Whether it is on safe supply or decriminalization, the NDP has propped the government up. I will remind the member that it is the provincial NDP government that has helped contribute to the way our province is today.

I would like to know how he reconciles that with his constituents when he is on the doorsteps asking for their vote. He has propped up the government, one of the costliest and worst governments in the history of our country, and one of the most corrupt prime ministers in the history of our country. How does he reconcile that with his constituents?

● (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I am rather surprised that the member is concerned about what people in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie are going to do, but I look forward to hearing what the Conservative candidate in my riding has to say about that in the next election.

Routine Proceedings

I would remind the House that, after the Liberals made cuts to the construction of social and affordable housing, Stephen Harper's Conservative government did not do any better. It continued to abandon that sector, leaving it all up to the market. It is not true that simply increasing supply will help people find a place to live. If the supply is unaffordable, these people will still not be able to afford an apartment or a house, so that is a false solution. This type of neo-liberal idea of the trickle effect, where the government helps the wealthy and hopes that it trickles down to the poorest members of society, does not work.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I agree with most of what my colleague said.

There is one thing that he did not really talk about that I would like him to elaborate on. It is a suggestion that the Bloc Québécois has made many times. My colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert has spoken about it at length. I am talking about the creation of an acquisition fund that would enable non-profit organizations, the community sector, to acquire affordable housing on the private market and then make it available.

What does the member think about that suggestion?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, that is another solution the NDP is proposing.

With regard to an acquisition fund, I mentioned Vienna, which has truly set an example internationally. Montreal increased its fund recently, too. I think we need to do our part and use public land for truly affordable public housing. However, we also need to work together to be able to buy private land in order to break free from this market logic.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after the disastrous years of the Harper government, it seems ridiculous to me that the Conservatives claim to be mildly concerned about housing. We remember the huge cuts made to social housing during the grim Harper years. It was appalling. Half of the problems we see today result from the unfortunate fact that the Liberals followed too closely in the Harper government's footsteps. Half of the problems we face today were caused by the Conservatives. Not a single Conservative is prepared to stand up and apologize for all the years when no housing measures were taken. The Conservatives slashed social housing budgets and upheld the Liberal practice of having no national housing program.

I find it a bit ridiculous now to hear the Conservatives talking as if they care about housing when half the problem results from their poor governance during the Harper years. This is evident across the country. As my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie said, it is unfortunate that neither governing Liberals or Conservatives showed concern for social housing or co-operative housing or took an interest in solutions already discussed many times in the House by the NDP.

An NDP government will address the housing crisis and will regard housing as a fundamental principle. All Canadians must have a roof over their heads and have access to affordable housing. We feel confident making that promise because in every province where the NDP has formed government, we have managed to get more social housing built than Conservative and Liberal govern-

ments. What is more, NDP governments have invested more to ensure that people are housed.

[English]

We have already been through a situation when we had problems with building enough affordable housing for Canadians, and it was during the Second World War. We put everything into the war effort to beat Nazism, that extreme right-wing ideology that devastated Europe. When the women and men who served overseas came back to Canada, we put in place, structurally, a budget in which corporations paid their fair share and we devoted money to housing.

Members will recall that the CCF, the NDP's predecessor party, was leading in the polls in the first postwar election, and the Liberals took the CCF's push for affordable housing and, with the agreement of all parties in the House of Commons at that time, embarked on a massive national affordable housing program.

We as a country succeeded in building three million affordable homes over the course of four years, including my home, where my wife and I live, in New Westminster. In fact, in New Westminster—Burnaby, almost every house from Sixth Avenue to Tenth Avenue was built under that program. They were comfortable, well-built, affordable bungalows that were built throughout the Glenbrooke North neighbourhood.

Right across the country, we see the housing stock that was built at that time. In Toronto and Montreal, in every city in the country and in many rural areas, we succeeded in ensuring that for every single person who served in the Canadian Forces overseas, there was affordable housing available to them when they came back.

We had at that time a fair tax structure. What has changed? What changed, of course, was the intent in the 1990s, which we saw with both Conservative and Liberal governments, to try to change the tax system so wealthy corporations and wealthy Canadians paid less, and this became most apparent during the disastrous Harper government years.

• (1155)

As the Parliamentary Budget Officer tells us, we lose \$30 billion each and every year to overseas tax savings, thanks in large part to the famous, or infamous, Harper tax-saving treaties, where the wealthy and privileged in this country, and very profitable corporations, can take their money offshore, pay no tax on it and then bring it back to Canada.

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That \$30-billion fiscal hole was created by Conservatives. No Canadians wanted to thank them for that. In fact, it is one of the principal reasons the Harper government was thrown out in 2015. That fiscal hole meant we have seen little or no investment in social housing and co-operative housing that could make a difference for so many Canadians.

Why? Co-operative housing, social housing, is based on 30% of income, which is affordable for all. When we have a co-operative housing sector with clean, well-built, affordable homes, people can live their lives there. At 30% of their income, they are no longer struggling to put food on the table, to make ends meet or to skimp on their medication to try to pay their rent.

It allows Canadians to live with the quality of life that is important, especially when it comes to people with disabilities. In this country, about 50% of those on our streets who are unable to find affordable housing are people with disabilities. This is catastrophic, yet the government has done very little to address it.

On the housing front, the NDP has forced investments, and we are going to see, I think, in the coming months, more of that affordable housing built. The government was not willing to do it on its own. It was the NDP forcing the government to make those investments that has started to make a difference.

What we really need is something on the size and scale of the undertaking after the Second World War, when we said we would make sure every Canadian was housed and we built millions of units of affordable housing. It stimulated the economy and created many jobs for tradespeople; it made a difference.

The disastrous previous Harper government was the worst government in Canadian history and the most corrupt government. We have never gotten to the bottom of the scandals that occurred during that time, because committees were completely shut down during the Harper majority. We could not get to the bottom of the ETS scandal, with its nearly half a billion dollars in misspending, because Conservatives shut down parliamentary institutions.

A cutback in the Auditor General's department ensured that independent officers of Parliament were starved of funds. The disastrous Harper government was the worst government in Canadian history in terms of fiscal management and, of course, in terms of oversight. Not a single Conservative has ever apologized for that disastrous period of time when the Auditor General and the PBO were starved of funds and we saw record deficits each and every year.

The Conservatives did take care of two groups. Billionaires and big corporations got their \$30-billion-a-year tax break; they could take their money to overseas tax havens, thanks to Stephen Harper and the Conservatives. The other group was the banks; \$116 billion in liquidity supports was given to them in a heartbeat.

Of the \$116 billion in liquidity supports, tens of billions of dollars came from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. There is a sad irony in both Liberal and Conservative housing policies. They are willing to use the CMHC to prop up the banks; both Liberals and Conservatives have done that. The NDP is willing to use the CMHC to build affordable housing and not willing to use

the CMHC funding now given to corporate landlords to say they have to cap rents.

There is no doubt we could be doing so much more in housing. The member for Burnaby South and the entire NDP caucus have raised these issues repeatedly, and we are looking forward to a time when an NDP government could ensure that affordable housing is built across this country. Every Canadian deserves to have an affordable roof over their head at night and the NDP will continue to work to that end.

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the NDP Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate some of the comments the member has put on the record this afternoon. We are now into day two of the fall session. On the first day we were debating the citizenship bill, which I understand a majority of members of Parliament want to see go to committee. In fact, the member's own party had a member stand up for unanimous consent to get it to committee, but it was frustrated in part because of a concurrence motion.

Today, we are interrupting Bill C-66, which deals with sexual assaults and violence in the Canadian military, and with an option. All political parties support that legislation, and yet instead of having that debate, we are now debating another motion for concurrence. I am wondering if my colleague across the way can provide his thoughts. It is not to take away from the importance of the issues, but, relatively speaking, what about important legislation that does need to proceed at some point?

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I have said this in the House before: There are two bloc parties in the House of Commons, the Bloc Québécois and the "block everything" party. What the Conservatives have done by blocking everything is block measures that would actually bring support to their constituents.

The NDP dental care plan that the NDP forced through the House of Commons with the support of the Liberals has now served 700,000 Canadians across the country. On average, for every Conservative riding, 2,000 of their constituents have benefited from dental care, and Conservatives blocked that. They have blocked pharmacare. They have blocked every measure the NDP has been pushing through to actually help their constituents. I think their constituents will judge the Conservatives on that in the next election.

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Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have to say that I found the member's speech rather interesting. He criticized the Harper government of nine or 10 years ago, in which his version of history is definitely different from what most Canadians remember. The member then went on to criticize the Liberal government, which he was a part of. Now, because the New Democrats have ripped up the agreement, the member says he is no longer a part of it. He does not take any responsibility for when he supported the Liberals in their actions on housing.

It is time for the member to put up or shut up. Is he going to vote with the Conservatives next week, have no confidence in the government, and go to the polls and take his ideas to Canadian voters so they can decide?

• (1205)

Mr. Peter Julian: It is very rich, Madam Speaker. The Conservatives say, "Oh yeah, we are really concerned about housing", but they have not asked a single question about housing through this debate, which shows the hypocrisy of the Conservative Party. They say they want to have a debate on housing but they do not really want to have a debate on housing because their record was absolutely abysmal.

The member pointed out that the NDP has forced the Liberals to actually invest in affordable housing again and he is right on that point. Yes, the NDP has succeeded in the first investments in 20 years. However, my point back to the member is this: Why did the Conservatives do such an abysmal job on housing and why will they not take responsibility for the fact that many people who are homeless today are homeless because of the cuts in social housing that the Harper government forced on Canadians when it was in power?

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, we in the Bloc Qu b cois completely agree with the expression used by my colleague from New Westminster—Burnaby. In fact, it was my colleague, the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, who talked about a sort of Marshall plan, a wartime-style effort to invest in housing.

My colleague spoke at length about investments in housing. I think it is important to recognize that, when it comes to housing, what the federal government can do is invest. It must not withhold funding based on any conditions. His party supported the federal government while it was withholding the \$900 million owed to Quebec. Then again, it is no better if cities' jurisdictions are not respected and if Quebec's municipalities are punished, like the Conservatives want to do, despite the fact that many, like Granby, have great plans.

What we need to do now is support the cities that have plans, not punish them and withhold federal money. That money needs to flow to Quebec and the provinces. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I could not agree more. The federal government should support municipalities and cities like Granby, New Westminster, Montreal and every other city in Canada. That money should be flowing.

The NDP managed to get billions of dollars out the door to build new housing. I hope we can reach a consensus in the House to keep increasing funding for affordable housing so that everyone in this country can have a roof over their head.

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in the debate today. I will be splitting my time with the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

I find this to be a fascinating debate. We are debating concurrence in a committee report that says that the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities recognizes Canada is in a housing crisis that requires urgent action by the federal government to end homelessness and that this motion be reported to the House. We are talking about it being a crisis that requires urgent action.

It was interesting to hear the exchange between the Liberal member and the NDP earlier. The Liberal member for Winnipeg North in particular was complaining about the fact that we were discussing this today. He consistently complains about these things. He referred to Bill C-66 and made an urgent call for us to get back to that. I know all parties support the bill. It has been before the House for over 180 days. We sat until midnight virtually every night in the spring and the government did not bring the bill forward. We did not have the conversation, so it was not urgent at that point in time. Our shadow minister has signalled that we support this. We recognize that there are some things all parties in the House support, and that bill is one of them. Hopefully it will be a priority for the government and will pass very soon.

I believe this report also passed unanimously, recognizing the crisis situation and the urgent need to have conversations.

The wording and type of language is very familiar. In the Liberal 2015 platform, close to a decade ago, the Liberals said:

We will conduct an inventory of all available federal lands and buildings that could be repurposed, and make some of these lands available at low cost for affordable housing in communities where there is a pressing need.

About a decade ago, and recognizing the similarity in wording, the Liberals promised to make this a priority and recognized that there was a "pressing need".

Nine years later, in the 2024 budget, the Liberals almost used identical wording. They talked about the federal government conducting a "rapid review" of its entire federal land portfolio to identify more land for housing. That was an active sentence, that the federal government is conducting a rapid review. I guess "rapid", by the Liberal definition, is nine years for something urgent, and the situation has only become worse.

Routine Proceedings

I found it really interesting to listen to the NDP interventions on this, particularly that of the member for New Westminster—Burnaby, who talked about the current government and how terrible it was, forgetting the fact that up until two weeks ago he was, for all intents and purposes, a part of the Liberal government through the Liberal-NDP coalition. I will note that, as terrible a fiscal situation as we were in in 2021, when the NDP joined the Liberal Party, things only got dramatically worse for Canadians after it joined the then completely incompetent Liberal government. We are sitting in a situation right now where rents, down payments and mortgage payments have doubled. Canadians who have mortgages coming due right now, after five years, are going to, without a corresponding increase in their income and their ability to pay, be paying hundreds of dollars, in some cases over \$1,000 more, in their monthly mortgage payments without any increase in their income. The NDP members have supported the situation that has gotten us to this place, this predicament right now, every single step of the way for the last three years.

There has been a lot of talk about the Harper years. I was a part of that government from 2006 to 2015. I had the privilege of serving on the cabinet subcommittee that looked at ways to get the budget back to balance, which we did by 2015.

• (1210)

However, I would go back to the situation in 2014. There was a pretty interesting conversation going on, driven by the New York Times and some international research institutes. They found that in 2014-15, Canada had the richest middle class in the world. I am sure there were challenges for some Canadians, but, by and large, we were in a better fiscal situation than any country in the world. Even people like Hillary Clinton were lamenting this in conversations in some of the articles that were written at the time. Experts from around the world were pointing to Canada as an example of how to deal with a difficult financial situation coming out of the global meltdown. That was in 2014.

Let us fast forward 10 years to 2024. We are no longer the richest middle class in the world. Our middle class is, as a percentage of our population, by all measures, contracting. Regular people, people who never, ever even contemplated the fact that they would need to use a food bank, are now lining up at food banks with their kids in cities across Canada.

Let us look at the situation we are in again, and listen to the NDP talk about the housing crisis and where we are right now relative to the past. This crisis did not exist in the same way in 2015. Let us look at cities across the country. Housing starts in August were down 13%. At this time, when we need to be building houses, housing starts are down 13% across the country.

I would note that in the Liberal member's city of Winnipeg, housing starts are down 16% from August 2023. In B.C., under the provincial NDP government, housing starts are down an astonishing 31%. In Vancouver, which is very close to New Westminster, where the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby is from and represents, housing starts are down 34%. In Toronto, under the leadership of a former NDP member of Parliament, Olivia Chow, housing starts are down 48% over the last year. Those are just astonishing drops in housing starts across the country.

We have a real crisis. I think all parties have recognized that this is a crisis and that we need to deal with it urgently now.

One member of Parliament in the House has been dealing with this issue right from the start. That member of Parliament is our Conservative leader. In 2021, at the start of the pandemic and the explosive additional spending by the Liberal government, which was eventually propped up by the NDP, he brought up the effect of the increase in interest rates over and over again. He was mocked for bringing it up by the finance minister and by the Prime Minister on a regular basis.

A year ago tomorrow, we were talking about a private member's bill that our leader had put forward, a bill that would deal with the housing crisis in an urgent way, in a common-sense way. I will not have time to read all the highlights of that bill, entitled the "Building Homes, Not Bureaucracy Act". Canadians can look that up on ourcommons.ca. However, I will point out that when we put out this common-sense, good-faith bill to get more houses built in Canada, every non-Conservative member of the House, Liberal members, along with members from the Bloc and NDP, voted against that private member's bill that would have created significant action toward housing over the last year.

• (1215)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is truly amazing. The member even admitted that he was a part of the Harper government when the leader of the Conservative-Reform party today was then the minister of housing.

The minister of housing at that time, today's current leader of the Conservative Party, was an absolute and total disaster. He did absolutely nothing about housing. In fact, because of his incompetence back then, he has added to the problem we have today with respect to housing. To try to champion him as some sort of a leader on this file is absolutely ridiculous.

My question for the member, who was there supporting the minister of housing at the time, is this. Why does he believe his current leader has any credibility at all when it comes to housing?

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, that hon. member lives in a fantasy world that I can only imagine visiting one day.

If we look at the facts around that time, our Conservative government took on a global economic disaster and we set out a plan to get back to a balanced budget by 2015. In 2014, Canada had the richest middle class in the world.

Fast forward 10 years and we are running unthinkable record deficits. The cost of housing, mortgage payments, down payments and rent is double what it was when our current leader was the housing minister.

Prices have doubled in that time, yet that member has the audacity to celebrate in the House the imagined success of his Liberal government. That is ridiculous.

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[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech, but after hearing what he had to say, I have some questions.

I would like to know what the Conservatives plan to do about housing, other than the Conservative leader's bill, which would basically impose conditions on cities and punish them. It completely ignores cities' existing development and environmental protection plans. That is not productive.

Cities already have their plans. They already have ideas for housing. We put forward a 12-point plan. What cities need now is cash transfers so they can put their plans into action. They do not need additional conditions that will just slow them down.

• (1220)

[English]

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the hon. member. When we look at the current situation, and we have heard this from members from all parties, we have to acknowledge that the status quo is not working.

Certainly the answer cannot be to throw more money at the problem. The amount of record spending that the government has done over the last decade has led us to the fiscal crisis we are in, as well as the inflation crisis, the housing crisis and all of these different things.

Again, I would urge Canadians to look at our leader's building homes, not bureaucracy bill. I could read through some of the bullet points, but beyond the measures that talk about transfers through municipalities, one of the areas is to withhold transit and infrastructure funding from cities until sufficient high-density housing around transit stations is built and occupied. Cities will not receive money for transit until there are keys in doors. That is just common sense.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is so much to say, but I will try to keep it short and simple.

I kept thinking about one thing while the member was talking about his time in government under the Harper government. While the Harper government was in power, while the current Leader of the Conservative Party was the housing minister, 800,000 affordable homes were lost.

We know that we have lost affordable homes under the Liberal government as well. I do not know if we want to ask who is doing worse here, but we did not get here overnight. It has been consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments that have led us to the position we are in now.

My question for the member is as follows. In that plan, does he talk about large corporate greed swooping in and buying up affordable homes?

Hon. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, again, the situation we are in right now is infinitely worse than the situation a decade ago.

We are sitting in a situation where, in the member's province, run by an NDP government, housing starts in the middle of a housing

crisis are down 31% over the last year. We can go back a decade in history, but what is probably more relevant to this conversation is the last three or four years in which the NDP and Liberals have worked together to create the absolute crisis that demands urgent action right now.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Rents are up, unemployment is up, food bank usage is up and time is up. Who tells us this? The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, which I have sat on in previous Parliaments, does. In its study on the housing crisis in Canada, it says, "That the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities recognizes that Canada is in a housing crisis that requires urgent action by the federal government to end homelessness, and that this motion be reported to the House", which is why we are here today discussing this. I am going to cover three areas where I think we need to start looking at this.

The word "crisis" actually stems from a Greek word that essentially means to cut away. It means that of all the different choices we have, a crisis is meant to actually cut away from certain choices and stick to other ones. Unfortunately the current government is listless. It talks around the issue of housing. It says that it will create housing, but really the Government of Canada does not create housing. It can help finance it through CMHC insurance. It can use its fiscal power, which the current government knows because it is the only power it seems to want to use.

However, the Liberals have not convened the provinces to have big discussions around development cost charges reform or about zoning reform. They have chosen not to. Instead, they have sprinkled money at the problem, and as the previous member who spoke, the member for Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, said, they have simply decided that they would do a review of existing lands and try to see whether they could do more to give lands, but they are not telling whom they would give the lands to.

It is actually developers who largely provide housing, but as the member previous said, we have seen a drop in places like British Columbia, where I am from, of over 30% in the last year in housing starts when we need them the most. The member is right; the David Eby government has largely failed on this issue since he took office. He had 100 days of action, and unfortunately, like the Prime Minister, he has floundered on the issue.

The three areas I am going to talk about are what we need to do a better job on, which is for workers, seniors and youth.

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First I will talk about workers. I am from the Okanagan. I am very proud to represent three different valleys, but the Okanagan is known not just for its peaches and beaches, great wine or golf courses, but also largely for its retirement communities. There are a significant number of people who retire there for the weather and for the natural beauty. However, the problem I have noticed is that people who have money, especially when they cash out from Calgary, Vancouver, or some other place, often move to the Okanagan to live out their retirement.

As we get older, the question we have to ask ourselves in the Okanagan, particularly because there is very much a housing crunch, is this: Who is going to look after people as they age? Where are the younger doctors, nurses, firefighters, police officers and the support staff for many of the services seniors require going to live?

People with money always land on their feet, so I have encouraged every council that I know, and every mayor, to work on purpose-built rentals. I have to give the Kelowna multiple councils a big thumbs-up because they have done a lot of purpose-built rentals. However, it is not enough. I hear regularly, from tech employers to others in the industrial area, such as welders, etc., that they cannot keep welders and tech operators because there are very few places to rent. No one wants to stay in a community long-term, even as beautiful as Kelowna can be, or West Kelowna, if they cannot secure a home. Workers are being let down by both the Eby government in British Columbia and the Liberal government here in Ottawa.

The other side for workers is because of the problem of gatekeeping in this economy. We know that many municipalities have made it difficult to build.

• (1225)

Lots of people want to live in places like Victoria. Where do they end up? They go to places like Langford, where a lot of housing has been built to accommodate the demand. It is the gatekeepers in communities that make it harder. What are they gatekeeping? They are not just gatekeeping the homes that people will eventually live in; they are also gatekeeping the investment of billions of dollars that would be put into our economy and would allow workers to then be able to build homes. It would support the people who work in mills like Aspen Planers or the Weyerhaeuser mill in Princeton and Merritt, respectively.

There would be benefits to our economy, such as realtors and lawyers as they do some of the conveyancing. There would be so many knock-off effects in a place like British Columbia. The problem is that the government does not see the economic opportunity, nor does the provincial government see that the skilled trades have a huge opportunity to grow in this area. We are letting existing workers down because they cannot stay in places like Kelowna or West Kelowna, or if they can, they find short-term rentals, with no chance of ownership.

We are also letting down seniors. I will give an example because the particularly concurrence report before us speaks to homelessness. There have been renovations in places like British Columbia. Why is that? It is because property values have gone up and because mortgage rates have gone up. People have bought homes, in-

vesting all of their sweat and equity, and rented them, and due to the government's policies, they have seen inflation and interest rates rise. Those go up and down, but we cannot negate the fact that people make economic decisions.

Many people have said they cannot afford a variable mortgage or to remortgage, so they sell. One senior did that and was living in her car at Tim Hortons. Someone asked me whether I could help that person. I went to that particular Tim Hortons three times at different times of the day, but I did not see the individual. Eventually, though, I gave information to the senior to help connect her with social services in British Columbia. However, she would have to drive to a place like Penticton because places like Summerland and other areas in the Similkameen Valley and the Nicola Valley do not have the same kinds of supports that are in bigger urban centres like Kelowna or West Kelowna.

By governments' not allowing more building, seniors do not have affordable places to rent right now. The NDP likes to say we should get not-for-profits to build more housing, or get government to build more housing, or co-ops or whatnot. However, those take a long time to form, and guess what, they are in the same queue, waiting behind the same people, because everyone is begging under the same bridge, so to speak, to get their approvals to be able to proceed under the gatekeeping economy.

The last thing I would like to talk about is youth. Partisanship aside, if we do not show young people in this country that they have the same opportunities that their parents and grandparents had to find a place that they can call home, that they can invest in and raise a family in, they will feel shut out by our economic system. There is a danger in that, because if we do not show that our current system works for young people, that they are not locked out from pride of ownership, then what will they do? They will go to radical voices that will promise them the moon and the stars, and then that will create all sorts of chaos, I believe.

This country, yes, feels broken to many, especially young people. The leader of my party, the member for Carleton, has been speaking to them directly, saying that we must do better. Not everyone in the room may like what the member of Parliament for Carleton has to say all the time, but I hope members get the message, because we need to do better, particularly for the next generation of Canadians, so they can have the same opportunities that we had.

• (1230)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, development cost charges, of course, are necessary to pay for water and sewer hookups, and I would not mind the member's reflection on the general policy of municipalities that new pays for new, and whether or not there are some alternatives to that over and above a reasonable ask that development cost charges be lower.

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One other thing I would not mind the member's reflecting on is speculators. The number of homes in Canada owned by a speculator, an investor, has gone way up. More than that, though, property, land, in municipalities is being brought by speculators. They get upzoning on it and then sit on it, waiting to flip it. That is another area where we should look to the municipalities to put sunset clauses on zoning and do a bunch of other things.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, as a former municipal councillor for the great community of Penticton, I learned that under the Local Government Act, yes, municipalities are authorized to create development cost charges to capture some of the costs for building new. However, let us be remindful of two things.

First of all, when a development cost charge is added, without explaining what can be charged and what should be considered a development cost charge, there will always be bureaucratic over-reach over a period of time. Things like community art, which should be paid by all taxpayers in a community, are now being jammed into DCCs.

I will just be mindful that places like my old community of Penticton, just before the new council took office in the current term, said that Kelowna raised its DCCs and that Penticton should increase them by 50% to play catch-up. This is the problem. People are not asking whether development cost charges are correct or whether they are the right items and at the right costs. They are playing follow-the-leader, and the leader is more expensive. What does that mean? It means young people have less opportunity to own a home, because that is who pays for it.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member started off by talking about the Greek word for "crisis" and the words about cutting away choices. I know that people in my community are worried about Conservative cuts. They are worried about seeing the same thing they saw in the Harper government, where there were cuts to health care and investments in housing. We need to invest in building more housing and getting non-profit housing providers the funding and support they need to buy up buildings and protect them from real estate investment trusts and corporate landlords.

I am curious whether the member supports the idea of investing in a rental protection fund, investing in building housing and ensuring that we are increasing our housing supply. What I would like to see cut—

• (1235)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do have to allow for one more question after this.

The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola has the floor.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I believe that the member also served as municipal councillor at one particular point, and I want to let her know that while there are gatekeepers, I am sure she was mindful, when she made her votes at Victoria council, of young people and their opportunities.

However, first of all, the Harper government worked with the Campbell government at the time, and instead of having duelling agencies, it gave all the money to the Province of B.C.. I remember

that the B.C. government at the time said it was the best way it could invest soundly across the whole country, including in places like Penticton at the Kiwanis housing facility, which I was happy to open with Bill Barisoff.

What I would also say to the member is that at the same time, we need to have a government that tries to remove the gatekeepers. We need to have a system that is responsive to youth. While we can point a finger at what happened during the Harper years, we are here to focus on the government and what it has done during its tenure. It has become worse.

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will start off by saying a few things that I know have never been said before in the House: axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Has anyone heard that before? These are not just slogans. These are four lines that capture the real-life struggles of real Canadians, and one of the struggles we are talking about today is about homelessness and housing.

I have an announcement to make. After nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, we have a housing crisis in Canada, in case anyone did not know, particularly in the Liberal benches across the way. It is a crisis caused by the worst housing policy ever in Canadian history. I thought I would lay out, for all those watching, some of what I call the Liberals' greatest hits of housing.

Let us start way back in 2017, when the Liberals announced to much fanfare that they would reduce chronic homelessness by 50%. That was only seven years ago. Then in 2020, they said they had upped their commitment and declared their focus to be on entirely eliminating homelessness in Canada. Back in 2018, they brought in their national housing strategy and spent \$82 billion on housing. What is the result? The result is the worst housing crisis in Canadian history.

The cost of housing has doubled. Rent has become so expensive that a woman living in Kingston is spending 100% of her income on rent. It is reported that a man in Abbotsford had to continue living with his separated partner because he could not afford to move out. Mortgage payments have doubled. Canadians are living through a housing hell. The Building Industry and Land Development Association is reporting that 73% of GTA residents are dissatisfied with the availability and affordability of homes.

I will just pause for a moment to mention that I will be splitting my time with the great member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Routine Proceedings

To get back to the facts, 90% of those living in the GTA believe there is a housing shortage, 83% think affordability is a significant issue and 59% say the cost of living is the most pressing issue. Let us talk about homelessness. In my hometown of Winnipeg, over 1,200 people are homeless. Last week, I had the great privilege of meeting with Jim Steep. Jim Steep is the executive director of Agape Table. Every day, it serves meals to the homeless. It has done this since 1980. I volunteered there several times giving out meals. Agape has been doing this for over 40 years. The day I was there last week, they served 1,010 meals in just the morning, the highest number in its 44-year history.

At the finance committee, we have been studying the housing crisis for about a year. Last October, I had the chance to question Cam Guthrie, mayor of Guelph. He was elected in 2014. On the record, I asked him how many homeless encampments were in Guelph in 2015. He said zero. I asked him how many there were today. He said 20.

Two million Canadians are now lining up at food banks. One alarming statistic is the increase in the working poor who are visiting food banks. These are people working three jobs, working single mothers having to choose between paying rent and feeding their children. The Liberals have spent \$82 billion on their much-vaunted national housing program since 2018, but the PBO reports that since that same year, the number of homeless people has increased by 20% and the number of chronically homeless people has increased by 38%. Something is clearly not working.

● (1240)

According to the Homeless Hub, the number of homeless in Canada ranges from 150,000 to 300,000. Then there are the hidden homeless, the couch surfers, estimated to be up to about 900,000 people. The Auditor General says the federal government does not even know if its initiatives aimed at reducing chronic homelessness are working.

In Vancouver, homeless services found 4,820 people were homeless this year, compared to 3,634 in 2020, a whopping 32% increase in three years. In 2018, the number was 2,181. In Halifax, the number of homeless jumped from 119 in 2019 to 879 in 2024, an increase of 637%. Let us talk about Toronto encampments. In that city, on March 15, 2023, there were 82 encampments at 24 sites. One year later to the day, March 15, 2024, there were 202 at 72 locations. These are just facts.

The Government of Ontario estimates that nearly 250,000 people, roughly three out of every 200 residents, are homeless. In Mississauga, as of May 5 of this year, there were 256 encampments. It has been reported that so many people are homeless that they are being turned away from homeless shelters. It is so bad, that people have resorted to sheltering in ERs in cold weather. ER visits by homeless have skyrocketed by 68%.

In Saint John, New Brunswick, the number of homeless has reached 600, according to Fresh Start. In Quebec City, the number of visible homeless increased by 36% between 2018 and 2022. In Sudbury, it is up, from 164 to 237. In Waterloo, it is up 129% since 2020. In Montreal, it is up 33% since 2018. I could go on and on, but the reality is that there is a tsunami of homelessness across this land.

I find this debate ironic. Every day, we are privileged to come here to work in the House of Commons, the people's house, but the stark reality is that after nine years of the Liberals, while we work in the people's house, the people do not have a house. It is a catastrophic failure of the Prime Minister.

Last year, CMHC came to the finance committee and told us that to get back to housing price equilibrium, Canada would need to build three million additional homes by 2030. In 2023, Canada built 240,267 homes. Three million additional homes by 2030 would mean that, on top of that number, we would need to build an additional 500,000 homes each year. That is not going to happen. We have never built more than 270,000 homes in a single year, yet just last April, the Prime Minister announced to much fanfare that he would build 3.87 million new homes by 2031. It is just not going to happen, like so many of his promises.

I remember that they were going to plant two billion trees, reduce cellular costs and balance the budget by 2019. Instead, the Prime Minister doubled the national debt in just nine years. The reality is that Canada's housing inflation is now the worst in the G7 relative to income.

I could go on and on, but my time is almost up, so I will just point out that the Conservatives brought forward a common-sense bill, the building homes not bureaucracy act, which would have incentivized municipalities to build more homes. The Liberal-NDP coalition voted it down. The reality is that only common-sense Conservatives would build the homes that Canadians can afford by firing the gatekeepers and tying infrastructure funding to housing starts. Let us build the homes.

● (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, over the years, the Government of Canada has provided literally hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars in support for dealing with housing and the homeless. We have been working very closely with provincial governments, non-profit organizations and municipalities and we are making a difference.

We can contrast the Liberal plan, or the Government of Canada's plan, with the leader of the Conservative Party, who, while he was the minister of housing, did absolutely nothing. There is no doubt about that. No minister has been more of a disaster on the housing file than the current leader of the Conservative Party when he was the minister of housing. That is a plain fact.

Why should Canadians believe that the Conservative Party will be able to deal with the issue of housing and will work with the different levels of government and non-profits to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

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Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, I will note that my colleague from Winnipeg said in his question that the Liberals' policies made a difference, and he is absolutely right. Their policies made it far worse. I went through the litany of statistics proving that they made it far worse.

I was not here back when the next prime minister of Canada was the housing minister, but I have heard him speak eloquently in this House about his formidable record of low housing costs, low interest rates, low mortgage payments and low rent. That is a pretty good record.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it seems to me, from what I understand, that the Conservative idea for housing is to build more houses. As I said in an earlier intervention, it is a simplistic approach that would not work and is not working.

In Penticton, my hometown, we are building more homes every day than we have ever built. There are new big buildings going up with new condos and apartments. Every day in Penticton, according to the housing experts there, we have fewer affordable homes because all those new homes are being built by clearing out affordable homes and creating investment opportunities for investors who can afford them. None of the people needing a home in my hometown can afford these new homes, and the new homes the Conservatives want to build would be unaffordable.

• (1250)

Mr. Marty Morantz: We heard it here, Madam Speaker. The Conservative slogan is “build the homes”, and the NDP's new slogan is “build fewer homes”. It is hard to believe that they are the folks who were allowed to run the country for the last two years. Thank heavens, after we win the non-confidence vote next week, they will be gone.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, we talk a lot about the need for housing affordability and housing attainability, but there is another crisis looming, and that is the mortgage renewal crisis. Right now, there are moms across this country who are worried about renewing their mortgages and the impact that is going to have on overall costs and the ability to put food on the table to take care of the future for their families. I am wondering if the hon. member can speak about that.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, the mortgage crisis, despite what the Liberals will tell us, was caused by them. They allowed the bank governor to jack up the money supply by 23%, and the \$600 billion in cash printed spiked inflation. It was not the war in Ukraine that caused inflation. It was not supply chains. It was the watering down of the value of our currency that spiked inflation, which directly led to this mortgage crisis. Now, on top of the affordability problems and on top of everything else, we will start to see people lose their homes. It is catastrophic and very sad.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House. It is not my first time rising in the House in this new session, but it is the first time I do so with a lengthy intervention.

This is an important debate. I do not think there is a member of Parliament, whether from the Liberal side, the Conservative side, the Bloc side or the NDP side, who can go out into their communi-

ties, into their ridings, and say that things are good. If they are being truly honest, taking a look in the mirror and taking a look around, they are seeing that our communities look like war zones. There are encampments we did not have nine years ago. That is the honest-to-goodness truth.

I ask Canadians paying attention to this debate today and all those in the gallery to really ask themselves if we are better off today, nine years after the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party came to power. The housing crisis in Canada is no longer just a crisis; it is a catastrophe that has robbed a generation of hope, stability and the dream that home ownership is within reach.

Let me start by addressing the stark reality. Canada's housing market is broken, and it is broken because of nine years of inaction, empty promises and failed policies from the NDP-Liberal government. For the last nine years, the Prime Minister has promised time and time again to solve the crisis. For every election he has been a part of, he has stood in front of the cameras, put his hand on his heart and promised to sell off federal lands, to build new homes, to build millions of homes for Canadians and to end homelessness. Every time, he has broken that promise.

The Prime Minister and his government have failed at housing. They can try to cast blame on the leader of the Conservative Party or the former Conservative government. They can try to deflect and deny and give some obscure, convoluted answer as to why this crisis is happening. However, at the end of the day, they have had nine years and they have failed.

Let us talk numbers; numbers do not lie. They paint a disturbing picture of just how badly the Liberals have let Canadians down over the last nine years. In Vancouver, one of our largest cities, it now takes over 100% of a person's average household income to afford a home. We should think about that for a moment. People would need to spend their entire income, and more, just to get out of their parents' basement. That is before taxes, which have risen to a level that is crushing our middle class under the Liberal government.

This is not only unsustainable but also absurd. How can we expect our children or our grandchildren to ever afford a home in these conditions?

Toronto is not far behind Vancouver. These two cities are now among the most overvalued housing markets in the world. This is not just a Canadian problem; rather, it is an international embarrassment.

Housing bubbles in Vancouver and Toronto have made headlines globally, but the real stories, the ones that matter, are the stories of the people who live in these cities and every other city and town across Canada. They are the stories of the young professionals who work hard and save diligently; still, they look at the housing market and feel nothing but despair.

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They are the stories of paramedics who live in their vehicle. They work a nine-to-five or a 12-hour shift serving our communities but cannot afford a home and have to shower at the local pool or recreation centre. This is a real story.

They are the stories of young families forced to live hours away from their jobs because they cannot afford a home in the city where they work. They are the stories of seniors who, after a lifetime of contributing to society, now find it impossible to downsize because the cost of housing is skyrocketing everywhere.

They are the stories of dozens and hundreds of homeless encampments that have sprung up in our communities, where such encampments were unimaginable just nine years ago.

● (1255)

Rest areas along our public highways have turned into mobile home camps, with trailers and RVs, where people are forced to live because they cannot afford a home. A staggering 63% of Canadians aged 18 to 34 now believe that they will never be able to afford a home. Can we imagine? There is a generation of Canadians who no longer see home ownership as part of their future.

It is more than just a statistic. It is a reflection of broken dreams and lost opportunities. When young people lose faith in their future, we lose the backbone of our community, of our society. We lose innovation, creativity and growth. We lose what makes Canada, Canada. How did we get here? The answer is clear; it is failed leadership.

Since taking office in 2015, the Prime Minister has promised time and again to address housing affordability. He claimed that housing was a priority and his government was taking action, but the facts tell a different story. Housing prices have doubled since the Prime Minister took office. Rent prices have doubled, and in some cases, tripled. Mortgage payments have doubled. Meanwhile, the measures that the government has introduced have been nothing more than band-aids on a wound that requires surgery.

Under the Liberal government's watch, foreign speculators have been allowed to buy up homes, driving prices skyward, which has pushed middle-class Canadians out of the market. Now, the Prime Minister is grandstanding, saying we are going to build four million new homes by 2031. That equates to a new home every 57 seconds, every day of the year, for the next seven years. That means the Liberals should have built over 236,000 homes since the 2024 budget was tabled on April 16. I wonder how they are doing on that. I can say it has not happened. In fact, housing starts are now down by 13% across this nation. I know math is not the Prime Minister's strong suit, but how can he possibly expect Canadians to believe him when he uses such blatant fantasies to try to cling to power?

It is not just about the numbers related to new home builds. It is about the experience of Canadians. People are seeing their rent increase by 20%, 30%, 50% or 100% in some cities. A single-bedroom apartment in Vancouver that was \$1,300 in 2015 now rents for over \$3,000 a month. A two-bedroom apartment in Toronto is unaffordable for most middle-income families. For many Canadians, home ownership is no longer the dream; it is just about surviving. In my riding, in Prince George, the average home price jumped by 140% from 2016 to 2020, and it is even worse now.

Alia Landry, a single mother of two from Prince George, "used to be able to rent a [whole] house with a backyard for \$800 a month." Sadly, under the NDP-Liberal government, rent has skyrocketed, forcing her and her children out of their home into a smaller unit, where she was forced to share a bedroom with her daughter. She said this: "There were nights I went to bed crying because I just didn't know what I was going to do".

I heard the same story from Prince George resident Dara Campbell, whose mental health suffered after being forced to move. At that time, she and her partner strained to find an affordable home on a limited budget. She said this: "I was really, really anxious.... I would cry in my car. It was really hard, just not knowing [where I was going to live]."

Over 5,000 new homes are needed in Prince George by 2031 just to meet the projected population growth. If we do not get them built, people will end up homeless. Prince George already has the highest homelessness rate in British Columbia. My constituents are calling out for help from the federal government, only to be met with empty promises and soaring costs. However, hope is on the horizon. When Canadians get the carbon tax election they deserve, they will be able to vote for a prime minister who will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget, finally stop the crime and bring home a Canada that they can be proud of.

● (1300)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the federal government is usually just the ATM that helps make things happen. The actual policy, regulation and control usually rest with provinces and municipalities. Would the hon. member reflect on the share of responsibility between provincial governments, municipal governments and the federal government? Maybe he can spread the news around about who needs to do what and do so a little more equitably than he has today.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, the government has continued to funnel billions of dollars to municipal gatekeepers. Municipalities, in turn, have raised the prices on permitting and the length of time to get homes built.

Our colleague from the NDP is right. We need more affordable homes. A government led by our hon. colleague, the member for Carleton, would incentivize municipalities to build more affordable homes. That is how things are going to get done under our Conservative government.

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Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to hear the member talking about the importance of affordable housing. I also think it is important that we focus on this. I want to point this out, though: When the Conservatives were in power, they lost 800,000 affordable homes. I also want to point out that, when the current leader of the Conservative Party was the housing minister, he built zero affordable homes in British Columbia.

Exactly how would the member suggest we do it? Why does he never talk about the fact that both the former Conservative government and the current Liberal government have allowed rich CEOs to swoop in and buy up affordable homes, leaving people without the basic human right and dignity of a home, a roof to put over their head?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, I wonder how this member is going to reconcile the fact that, for the last nine years, she has propped up one of the most costly and corrupt governments, under her leader and the Liberal leader, the Prime Minister. She is going to have to answer for this on the doorsteps when she goes door to door, asking for votes in what is looking like a Tory seat, coming up.

Through you, Madam Speaker, I would just say that the member is casting stones right now, and she should really look inwards and look in a mirror.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

• (1305)

[English]

Mr. Scott Aitchison: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until later today, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition for the first time in the fall on behalf of constituents.

I rise for the 44th time on behalf of the people of Swan River, Manitoba, to present a petition on the rising rate of crime. The rural region of 4,000 is overwhelmed by the out-of-control crime caused

by the Liberal government's soft-on-crime laws, such as Bill C-5 and Bill C-75. Jail has become a revolving door for repeat offenders as Bill C-75 allows violent offenders to be in jail in the morning and back on the street the same day. Bill C-5 allows criminals to serve their sentences from home.

The people of Swan River are calling for jail, not bail, for repeat violent offenders. They demand that the Liberal government repeal its soft-on-crime policies, which directly threaten their livelihoods and their community. I support the good people of Swan River.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today and present a petition from constituents concerned about the question of how people who are dealing with addiction, in need of rehabilitation and treatment, are handled by society. The petitioners note that there is a policy of treating those who suffer from drug abuse as criminals. That policy has proven ineffective in alleviating the burden of drug abuse on our society; instead, it has driven those with a potential to be rehabilitated into the streets and exacerbated issues of mental health and homelessness.

The petitioners call for the government to cease incarceration of those who suffer from drug abuse and rehabilitate them as quickly as possible with wraparound treatment programs. They cite Portugal as an example.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to table a petition about international flights signed by a number of my constituents. They are looking to encourage airlines or different levels of government, those who have an impact on flights, to ensure that we see more direct international flights, ideally between Canada and India and particularly from my home city of Winnipeg. There is a growing population and a growing demand to go to India.

Failing that, petitioners would like to see more direct flights to Europe, just more international flights, particularly out of Winnipeg.

PORNOGRAPHY

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

It is respecting the general thrust of Bill S-210, which looks at the pernicious effects of the consumption of pornography, particularly for young people who have not yet reached adulthood. The petitioners advocate for online age verification.

[Translation]

PALESTINE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have here an important petition signed by thousands of people who are telling us that the state of Palestine, governed by the Palestinian National Authority, currently does not have membership in the United Nations.

Since the State of Israel currently has illegal settlements in the West Bank, there are concerns regarding potential illegal occupation of Gaza. As of 2024, the state of Palestine is recognized by 75% of the United Nations member states, which amounts to 145 out of the 193 member states, recently joined by Spain, Norway, Ireland and Slovenia.

These people are calling on the Government of Canada to formally recognize the state of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations.

[English]

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have four petitions to table today.

My first petition relates to one of my favourite issues.

The Calgary Co-op is unable to use plastic compostable bags. The petitioners want to draw the attention of the Government of Canada to the following points. The Calgary Co-op has successfully kept over 100 million plastic bags out of landfills with the use of its compostable shopping bags. The City of Calgary supports the use of the Calgary Co-op's compostable bags, stating that they do fully break down in their composting facilities. Further, the federal ban, as it stands now, allows for Calgary Co-op to sell its compostable bags on store shelves but prevents it from selling these same bags a few feet away at the checkout. This makes little sense and does very little to limit their actual use.

The Calgary Co-op says the unnecessary ban could send signals that would stifle the adoption and development of environmentally responsible products. Petitioners call on the Government of Canada to recognize that compostable bags do not constitute single-use plastics and are therefore worthy of an exemption to the upcoming ban.

- (1310)

HONG KONG

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition, e-4937, has over 15,000 petitioners, who note the following for the government.

The permanent residence pathway for Hong Kong residents took effect on June 1, 2021, and expires on August 31, 2026. The petition draws the attention of the House to the fact that more than 8,000 Hong Kong citizens are in Canada and are awaiting PR processing as of April 2024. The target number for permanent residents based on humanitarian and compassionate grounds will be reduced by the Government of Canada to 13,750 in 2024 and then lowered to 8,000 in 2025. This reduction raises a significant questions about whether Hong Kong citizens would still be accommodated.

Petitioners call for the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to accelerate processing, ensure that Hong Kong citizens' applications for PR will not be rejected due to target restrictions and will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and renew stream A and stream B applicants as they apply if they are found to meet the criteria eligibility.

Routine Proceedings

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, my third petition is on medical assistance in dying. There is now a delay on this but not a complete ban.

The petitioners are asking for Parliament to reconsider it as a priority issue and to ensure that there are supports for people with mental health illnesses for everyone in Canada. They are calling on the Government of Canada to definitively stop the expansion of medical assistance in dying for those who solely have a mental illness as an underlying condition.

DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, this final petition is signed by petitioners I met at their doors.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to have a vote of non-confidence and a federal election within 45 days of that successful vote.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the first petition that I am tabling today is in support of the recognition of the universal dignity of the human person.

The petitioners contend that it is always wrong to will the death of a child. Regardless of age, stage or circumstances, it is always wrong to intentionally kill a child. That basic moral proposition did not used to be controversial, and petitioners were horrified to hear a proposal from Dr. Louis Roy of the Quebec college of physicians recommending the expansion of euthanasia to babies from birth to one year of age who come into the world “with severe deformities and very serious syndromes”.

This proposal for the, in effect, legalized intentional killing of children is deeply disturbing, and petitioners call on the Government of Canada to block any attempt to allow the killing of children in Canada.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition is in support of Bill S-210, a common-sense bill that would protect very young children from exposure to violent sexual images online.

Petitioners recognize that exposing young people to violent sexual images is a form of abuse, yet we know that the average age of exposure to pornography in Canada is 11. It is very common for very young children to access this material because there are no meaningful checks on that access.

Routine Proceedings

Petitioners note that Parliament should recognize the harmful effects associated with exposure to pornography at a very young age, including the development of pornography addiction, the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, the development of attitudes favourable to harassment and violence, including sexual harassment and violence, and particularly an increase in violence against women. Petitioners further note that online age verification technology is increasingly sophisticated and can effectively ascertain the age of the user without creating concerns for privacy rights.

Anyone making sexually explicit material available on the Internet for commercial purposes should have a responsibility to ensure that that material is not accessed by young persons, and this is precisely what Bill S-210 would do. Online age verification was the primary recommendation made by stakeholders during a 2017 study by the Standing Committee on Health. The issue has been extensively studied before. The bill has also been extensively studied, particularly by multiple committees in the Senate.

Therefore, petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to adopt Bill S-210, the protecting young persons from exposure to pornography act.

• (1315)

UKRAINE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is in support of the people of Ukraine in their struggle against the illegal, genocidal invasion of their territory by the Russian Federation. In particular, petitioners are in support of Bill C-388, my private member's bill, which would advance a number of measures aimed at giving Ukraine the support that it needs, particularly in the area of weapons.

Petitioners note that the government has previously rejected Conservative proposals that would have expedited the delivery of urgently needed military equipment to Ukraine.

Petitioners call upon the government to immediately follow through on long-delayed promises regarding military support for Ukraine, to send any surplus military equipment to Ukraine on an urgent basis and to support the passage of Bill C-388, which I have tabled in the House.

VENEZUELA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition deals issues in Venezuela. The petition does predate the most recent events in Venezuela, and I know petitioners would strongly support the people of Venezuela in their struggle for freedom and democracy, and for the recognition of the real results of the election. Sadly, the government has thus far failed to recognize the opposition victory in Venezuela, and we continue to call on them to do so.

This petition, though, predates those most recent events and deals particularly with political prisoners. It calls on the Government of Canada to include political prisoners with close ties to Canada, particularly Ígbert José Marín Chaparro and Oswaldo Valentín García Palomo in any discussions or negotiations regarding diplomatic ties and to advocate for the unconditional release of the

prisoners of conscience, Ígbert José Marín Chaparro and Oswaldo Valentín García Palomo, due to their strong family ties in Canada.

The petitioners seek the release of all political prisoners in Venezuela before any concessions are given to the Venezuelan government, request the release and permission to come to Canada of these political prisoners and request that no further strengthening of the relationship take place unless and until all of these political prisoners are released.

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I would like to table deals with natural health products. The petitioners are deeply troubled by the fact that the Liberal government has threatened access to natural health products through new rules that would mean higher costs and fewer products available on store shelves. They note that new so-called cost recovery provisions would impose massive costs on all consumers of natural health products and undermine access for Canadians who rely on these products. They note how provisions in a previous Liberal omnibus budget, supported by the NDP, have given the government substantial new arbitrary powers around the regulation of natural health products.

There is a private member's bill from my colleague from Red Deer—Lacombe that seeks to remedy these changes. I should clarify that it is from my Conservative colleague from Red Deer. If anyone has any doubts about Red Deer, it is certainly a strong Conservative place.

Therefore, the undersigned call on the Government of Canada to reverse the changes made in the last Liberal budget regarding natural health products. I am pleased to table this petition.

• (1320)

PASSPORTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the time I have left I would like to table a petition about Canadian identity and heritage, an issue that has not been discussed in this place for some time, but remains very important to many of my constituents.

The petitioners note how the Canadian passport has long had images significant to Canadian heritage, including the Fathers of Confederation, the Vimy Memorial and Terry Fox. The government made a series of outrageous changes to the images on the passport, erasing these images.

The undersigned petitioners call upon the government to reverse this plan that erased these symbols of national heritage and identity and to restore the celebration and appreciation that we should have for these great heroes of Canadian history and the reverence for these important monuments and memorials of our proud shared history.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed from September 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-66, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, today is an important day for many survivors. I want to begin by recognizing the women and men who are watching this debate on the bill today. There are generations of survivors of military sexual trauma who will be closely following the debate on the legislation. I have heard from many of them. They told me about how they felt invisible. Some have felt invisible to the institution they committed their lives to in the Canadian Armed Forces. Some have felt invisible to the senior leadership of the military they served. Some have felt invisible to the greater public, who do not know all the complex layers of their experiences. Some have felt invisible to us, the few hundred Canadians with the rare privilege to serve in the House of Commons, who hold a sacred obligation as decision-makers to protect those who protect us.

Every day these survivors are working for change. They build resilience by supporting and holding each other up when the institutions will not. They empower each other and assist with making claims when institutions will not. They organize and demand reforms to politicians when our priorities do not meet them where they are at. They come together to support each other when they choose to make the impossible decision to share and reshare their trauma to the media or to parliamentary committees.

Today is another chapter in their fight. I want to highlight this to the women and men watching, to those brave survivors. This piece of legislation is not the last chapter, but one step in a large list of changes that are needed, and I am with them. We will not stop until there is justice for survivors and until everyone who steps up to serve their country can do so in a safe environment. I want them to know they are not invisible. They are remarkable, and they are not alone.

Today, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-66, the military justice system modernization act, which, among other things, is legislating Justice Arbour's fifth recommendation of the independent external review to remove criminal sexual offences from the military justice system. This will give exclusive jurisdiction to the civilian justice system.

This legislation also works to implement some of the recommendations by Justice Fish's third independent review of the National

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Defence Act, expanding the eligibility criteria to be appointed as a military judge to allow non-commissioned members to become judges, not just military officers. This legislation removes the minister's power of appointing and removing the director of military prosecutions—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Point of order. There seems to be a problem with interpretation. Is that the issue?

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Madam Speaker, the interpreters are saying that there is a phone on vibrate near a microphone, so they are having difficulty doing their job.

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

Sorry, I will put my earpiece in.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: The interpreter said that there was a phone on vibrate next to a microphone.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This happened during presenting of petitions as well. I want to remind members to please put their telephones away from the mic, not even have them on the desk or put them on airplane mode, because it does interfere with interpretation. We want to make sure that the interpreters are able to interpret properly, and make sure that their health and safety is taken care of.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

• (1325)

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, this legislation would remove the minister's power of appointing and removing the director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services. Instead, these would become Governor in Council appointments, with the minister having the power to request a public inquiry into potential remedial or disciplinary measures against these directors. It would remove the ability of the judge advocate general to issue instructions to the director of military prosecutions on individual cases. While the director would still be operating under the JAG and could get general instructions, the JAG would no longer be able to direct individual cases.

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It would change the title of the Canadian Forces provost marshal to provost marshal general, putting that individual on the same level as the judge advocate general and reporting directly to the minister instead of reporting to the vice chief of the defence staff. It would reverse a component of Harper-era Bill C-15, which gave the vice chief of the defence staff power to issue instructions to the provost marshal on particular cases. It would expand eligibility to submit an interference complaint to the Military Police Complaints Commission. Currently, complaints of interference can only be made by a member of the military police. It would now allow a victim, an individual acting on behalf of a victim or any other person affected by the performance of the policing duty to make a complaint. It would codify some practices from Bill C-77, including that military judges cannot oversee summary hearings and that a military judge cannot be charged with a service infraction.

There would be some major changes to how Canada will treat criminal sexual offences in the military. Again, it is another chapter in Canada's ongoing military sexual trauma crisis, which has spanned decades. For many Canadians, this was first brought to their attention in 1998, when brave women spoke out to Maclean's magazine. There was a four-part series on the systemic sexual harassment and sexual assault in the Canadian Armed Forces and it discussed how violence against women was covered up and how the chain of command looked the other way far too often. This coincided with a public trust crisis in the Canadian Armed Forces, driven by the Somalia affair. The two events spurred several reforms. This included the creation of a Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces ombudsman, the Military Police Complaints Commission, a military grievance external review committee and the decision to move criminal sexual offences into the jurisdiction of the military police, the exact policy this legislation is looking to reverse.

This is the critical point I have heard from many service people. For decades, survivors have felt that while they deserve justice, they have not received that justice. Women, 2SLGBTQ+ and marginalized communities have felt that the Canadian Armed Forces and the federal government are not making the reforms to create space for them. Instead, they feel that the government is reacting to bad press, treating them like a problem to be managed instead of people to be valued. Decades after the government's decision to bring criminal sexual offences into the military police's jurisdiction, The Globe and Mail reported that those feelings were real. Through historic cabinet documents, they found that the then-minister of defence, Art Eggleton, made the transfer simply to end the media coverage of sexual assault in the military. The federal government did not make this change to protect women and men in the armed forces but instead did so to protect itself, hoping people would forget.

However, survivors have continued fighting for a change, and their organizing has brought the spotlight onto harmful military culture again and again. Their perseverance has led to multiple investigations into the military justice system. To date, this has included the 2015 report by Justice Deschamps, the 2021 report by Justice Fish, an Auditor General's report, two reports by the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, and, of course, Arbour's report. I want to also include the recent history-making report by the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs on women's health.

Supporting survivors of military sexual trauma is generational. Even before my time in the House of Commons, my mother, Irene Mathysen, worked on this issue and spoke with many women about their experience. They have told me that, for so many, she was the first member of Parliament to believe them and to hear them. She saw the urgency of this crisis, and she fought for women in the military and victims of military sexual trauma. When I was elected, I joined the NDP team as the critic for the status of women. When the scandals broke, involving the most senior military officials being perpetrators and enablers of sexual misconduct, we saw the Standing Committee on National Defence get caught up in the partisan politics of this place. I saw parliamentarians weaponize the experience of these survivors to score political points against each other and I saw endless filibustering. However, women parliamentarians from across the political spectrum knew that survivors deserved better.

● (1330)

We brought this study to the status of women committee, and I heard the stories of these brave survivors. I promised them and myself that I would fight for them and I am honoured that they trusted me with their experiences and asked me to help them make the change. I can never forget that promise. I now serve as the critic for national defence, and I have used every opportunity to push for that change. I have challenged every minister, every departmental official and every senior CAF official to move on the long list of recommendations that can create meaningful culture change.

The Canadian Armed Forces has been criticized for being slow to enact recommendations from these reports. Justice Arbour emphasized the need for greater civilian input and oversight within the military to cut through the systemic resistance to change. When the current President of the Treasury Board was the minister of national defence, she announced, on December 13, 2022, that she would accept all of Justice Arbour's recommendations and bring forward a plan to enact these changes, including this legislation. The government announced an immediate transfer of all active criminal sexual investigations to civilian courts. However, this did not happen entirely. Approximately half of cases remained in the military justice system without a clear explanation as to why.

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Of the cases that were transferred, the existing concurrent jurisdiction between the military police and civilian authorities caused major problems. Retired Corporal Arianna Nolet was one of the first military sexual trauma victims to have her case transferred to civilian courts. Last September, her case was stayed due to time delays in the back-and-forth between military and civilian police. The cause of the delays was twofold. First, civilian authorities were wary of taking over the case and, due to concurrent jurisdiction, they were not mandated to accept the case. Second, the transfer of the case files by the military police was significantly delayed. Military police dragged their feet every step of the way, leaving what the judge called an “albatross of nine months of delay under the military justice system clasped suddenly around [the case’s] neck, [which] was irretrievably locked up in the civilian system”. That albatross meant a survivor was denied her day in court. The case was thrown out of court under timely-trial rules. When that case was thrown out, the minister of defence said it was a unique circumstance, but we have seen several cases have the same fate.

One of Canada’s most prominent military law experts, retired Colonel Michel Drapeau, said the law must be changed to end concurrent jurisdiction, and as long as we transfer cases between two jurisdictions, we will see more and more cases stayed. Drapeau, who wrote the main book on military law in Canada, said the government should have immediately brought forward a short bill, a page, to amend the National Defence Act and simply add criminal sexual offences to the list of crimes the military cannot handle. With that simple change, we could have prevented the cases that were transferred from being stayed.

That is why, last year, I brought forward my bill, Bill C-363, which would have done exactly that. Because of my place in the lottery for Private Members’ Business, the bill was not debated. However, I wanted to send a message to the minister that we need urgency. We needed action as soon as possible to end the tug-of-war over jurisdiction and ensure that all survivors who have their cases transferred would have their day in court.

There are still many cases moving forward in this confusing tug-of-war, and there is no indication that the transfer is getting smoother because this is not about procedure and it is not about making technocratic deals with provinces; this is about power. This is about a system designed to cover up problems, to revictimize survivors and to maintain the status quo. That is why there is so much urgency to fix this problem and why the NDP is supporting bringing this bill to committee quickly.

However, let me be clear: With just this legislation, the government is not fully delivering the changes needed and this cannot be the last chapter in our fight. When the Minister of National Defence announced the legislation, I heard from countless women and men, survivors of military sexual trauma, about their frustration with the current government. They told me that they were never consulted by the government on the legislation. Much like they saw in 1998, they were seeing another checking-of-a-box exercise, so they once again felt invisible.

We cannot make legislation about survivors without survivors. We cannot treat survivors as a communications problem to be solved or a legal liability to be avoided. They are women and men who have stepped forward to protect our country, who are willing

to put their lives on the line when the federal government deploys them. Parliamentarians have a moral, sacred obligation to do everything they can to protect them and not revictimize those who have faced institutional betrayal.

I have spent the summer in conversation with dozens of survivors with first-hand experience of reporting their cases in the military and civilian justice systems and they need to be consulted. That is why we need to get this legislation to committee quickly, where we can centre on the voices of survivors and, through amendment, give them a voice in this change.

● (1335)

I do not have enough time to speak about all of them, but some of the feelings and ideas I heard about need to make it to the committee study. I would like to provide a bit of context today.

First and foremost, we need to end the framing of this problem as a criminal justice issue alone. It is easy to say the sexual misconduct was carried out by a few bad apples, that it was the old boys’ club covering up for their buddies, and by swapping people around, we could end it, or that this is about a handful of truly horrific random acts of violence. Criminal sexual offences do not come out of nowhere. This is a result of a permissive environment, a culture that encourages gendered and power dynamics, that allows powerful men to test and push boundaries over and over without anyone speaking up.

If we only focus on criminal justice reform and not on tough conversations around institutional culture change, we are not doing justice for survivors. It is not enough to hold perpetrators accountable. We must get to the roots of, and prevent, sexual violence. We cannot put all the resources and energy for change into a legal reform basket. We need a top-down review of the CAF, from recruitment and training to the health care system, promotions and so much more.

I also heard concerns that the Criminal Code focus of this bill is not addressing the escalatory nature of sexual misconduct and could create problems with drawing the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. I heard that many survivors have lost faith in the justice system as a whole, and the divide between civilian and military justice does not address that loss of faith. The problems of the civilian justice system must be addressed.

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I heard concerns that this legislation could continue the rotten-apple theory that the problem is a handful of powerful perpetrators who need to be stopped instead of a wider institutional and cultural driver. I heard that there need to be more options for survivors to get justice, not fewer. There need to be greater opportunities and supports toward pursuing human rights court cases and non-criminal cases, as well as opportunities for restorative justice. Survivors need more agency and more say in how their cases move forward.

I heard that survivors need greater supports and information, including legal services, prior to reporting to be fully informed on the process. I heard many conversations about whether the bill is protecting investigations from chain-of-command interference. There are concerns around civilian police gaining access to conduct new investigations, collect evidence and access necessary information for historical cases.

I heard concerns about the expertise and preparedness of the civilian system with regard to military cases. These included concerns about local police units' connections with current or former military personnel, resources of civilian police, jurisdictions between and across provinces, willingness to open complex cases, the ability to understand and access military records and spaces, and the need for a dedicated national team.

I heard concerns about the creation of new senior positions, changes to military judge appointments, and the need to ensure accountability, scrutiny of appointments and an openness to voices outside of the old guard. I heard concerns about pursuing aspects of a criminal case that are illegal under the National Defence Act but not currently codified in the Criminal Code of Canada. I heard of the need to ensure that this reform is not set in stone forever and that research and legislative reviews are proactively scheduled to ensure this legislative change is having the intended impact.

I heard strong concerns about international misconduct cases, including the collection and preservation of evidence and the ability of the military justice system to handle these cases. I heard strong concerns that the members of the cadets, the reserves and the navy, and civilian employees on base were not adequately considered in this legislation. I heard strong concerns that members who are not on base cannot access the same quality of services and supports and that new supports in this bill do not adequately address this gap.

I heard that the new rules on the victim's liaison officer positions need to be reconsidered and strengthened and that there is a need for a legal and policy advocate independent from the chain of command. I heard some talk about the importance of underlining that this is not only a women's issue and increasing outreach to all service members.

That is just a bit of what I heard. However, there was one unified message from everyone we spoke to: This bill is simply not enough. This cannot be the be-all and end-all. Survivors will not remain invisible. Culture change is not something that happens overnight, and I understand that, nor can it be fixed by one piece of legislation. This is an issue that the government and all of us in this place must be committed to.

• (1340)

I will conclude as I started. Generations of military sexual trauma survivors have felt invisible. They have fought every day to demand that we fulfill our responsibility to protect everyone who serves. When the bill gets to committee, we will hear from survivors. We will centre their voices and their proposals, because we cannot make this legislation about survivors without survivors.

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to extend my appreciation to the member opposite for her lifelong dedication to ensuring that every member of the Canadian Armed Forces and all employees of the Department of National Defence are treated with respect and compassion and are provided with the appropriate supports.

I agree wholeheartedly with the need for action, and we are taking that action, but first of all we need to listen. We need to hear the voices of survivors, victims and witnesses. To hear their lived experience, their advocacy and their testimony is important. I want to assure the member that in this process the Canadian Armed Forces has interviewed over 16,000 of those people and heard their voices. Madam Justice Arbour interviewed hundreds of witnesses and advocates in order to reach conclusions.

I believe that what we brought forward in this bill is helpful and has important steps—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. minister might be able to get up for other questions after, but at this point it is time for the response from the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen: Madam Speaker, we can never do enough to hear, and it is true that we also have to listen. A lot of the people I heard from were referring to the fact that, specifically about this legislation, they were not consulted. It may have been in other formats, done by other people, but not by this government and not for this legislation.

I hope we can continue to work together to ensure they are brought to committee, but also to bring forward the recommendations we heard in the veterans committee study about women's health to be included in the work of the national defence committee.

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Mr. Don Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal soft-on-crime bill, Bill C-5, would allow criminals convicted of sexual assault to serve their sentence at home in front of a television. Does the member believe survivors of military sexual trauma should have to endure their attacker serving out their sentence in the comfort of their house right down the street?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, the member is new to this place, and I congratulate him on his win. I certainly congratulate him on becoming a new member of the Standing Committee on National Defence. I look forward to working with him in the future.

I think the Conservatives have a long way to go to understanding what listening to the voices of survivors of sexual trauma and violence truly is. I would point out that at the Conservative Party convention in 2023, one of their main spokespeople said in his speech that “Canadian values are being destroyed due to a lack of leadership and a woke movement that panders to narrow special interests.” He continued on a Jordan Peterson podcast and openly questioned the existence of a sexual misconduct crisis.

I would ask the Conservative Party to look within as to who Conservatives are listening to regarding sexual misconduct and violence instead of taking the time to listen to survivors.

[Translation]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from London—Fanshawe, with whom I have worked on this file, notably as part of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

What strikes me about her speech—what strikes me again today—is that we are still talking about this in 2024, when in 2015, before the Liberals even came to power, the Conservatives knew things about the general. The things they knew were simply accepted and tolerated. There was a report by Justice Deschamps. Even Justice Arbour, when she was appointed, said that recommendations had already been made several years earlier, yet she was asked to produce another report.

Does my colleague agree that the real lack of political will to change the culture within the armed forces is why we are still talking about this today, in 2024?

• (1345)

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her work. We worked very well together on the status of women committee. We were dedicated to hearing the women and the survivors who came forward, and I certainly am grateful for her continued work for women.

It is one of my concerns, and I addressed this in my speech, that there is just a shifting of responsibilities and not a true desire to shift the culture. It is absolutely true that in 2015, with the Justice Deschamps report, moving forward through the various reports and institutions, we heard the same thing and it was not acted upon. Even Justice Arbour said she feared her report would move into “the graveyard of recommendations”.

This is, again, one piece. There is a huge amount of work that we need to do, and listening to the victims is a huge part of that moving forward.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank all those across Canada who are serving our country. I want to acknowledge the victims of sexual trauma and assault serving in the armed forces who have not received the justice they deserve or the reassurance that things will be different for those who choose to serve after them.

I am thankful for the work of my colleague from London—Fanshawe. I want to ask my colleague about a bill she has worked really hard on, Bill C-362, which is calling to make the national defence ombudsperson an officer of Parliament.

Can the member share how the bill she put forward relates to the bill we are talking about today?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, that specific bill is one I brought forward at the same time I brought forward the changes moving sexual assault cases from the military system into the civilian system and to do it quickly.

I have met often with the national defence ombudsperson. He and his predecessor have asked that the role become one of an independent officer of Parliament in order to provide survivors with greater transparency, accountability and independence; to ensure their stories are heard; and to give the ombudsman the opportunity and ability to fully investigate in a safe and secure way, as opposed to having to go through chains of command within the military system.

That independence is really key, and it is something I will continue to fight for in collaboration with the new ombudsperson, who I want to congratulate today.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for London—Fanshawe and add my words to those of the members thanking her for her work. I also worked with her mother, and I would like to thank Irene Mathysen for consistent leadership on the issue of justice for women who suffered sexual violence in the course of their military service.

Having studied the bill, does the member believe it is possible to make sufficient amendments in clause-by-clause in committee to make Bill C-66 ready for speedy passage?

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen: Madam Speaker, it is a bit of a tug-of-war because we want to make sure the bill is moved through. I do not want any more women to find themselves in this tug-of-war between the two systems. It is unfair that they see their cases stayed because of it and that they have to go through that back-and-forth. It is also one of the reasons we asked for consistent reviews of this legislation after it is passed. It needs to happen, considering we are changing things back to how they once were in investigating and dealing with sexual trauma within the military.

Government Orders

I wish the consultation had happened with survivors before, so the legislation, slow as it was to come forward, had been done in a better, more fulsome way. It is work we can do in committee. We have to work together. We have to get through a lot of partisanship to do it, but it is possible. I have seen it happen in the status of women and I hope to see it in national defence.

• (1350)

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

[*Translation*]

It is truly an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-66 and the important work that our government is doing to modernize the military justice system and the culture of our armed forces.

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces work tirelessly to defend Canadians, our way of life, and this magnificent country that we call home. Military members are deployed around the world to defend Canada's interests and support our international partners and allies. They also help communities across the country in times of natural disasters or other emergencies. As the minister said in his speech, supporting members of the Canadian Armed Forces is one of our top priorities.

[*English*]

The Canadian Armed Forces are the backbone of Canada's defence and we have their backs. For our military members to contribute their best work, it is our responsibility to ensure that they can show up every day as their true and authentic selves.

[*Translation*]

Our government is fully committed to ensuring that military members continue to have confidence in the military justice system. We are taking deliberate, coordinated action across the defence team to create this change in a sustainable and meaningful way.

The changes proposed in Bill C-66 are designed to reform the military justice system, making it more transparent and more responsive to the needs of our constituents.

However, these crucial institutional changes are only one piece of the puzzle. For decades, the defence team has been grappling with the tough realities and experiences of military members and employees, including those who have been affected by misconduct, harassment and crimes of a sexual nature.

Since 2015, the Minister of National Defence has taken significant steps to prevent this behaviour and find solutions to the problem. One key step was the creation of the sexual misconduct response centre, which became the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre, an organization that provides support services to those directly and indirectly affected and is not subject to the military chain of command.

[*English*]

The sexual misconduct support and resource centre is available to current and former defence team members, as well as cadets and

junior Canadian Rangers aged 16 and older and family members of the wider defence community.

Other efforts put forward at this time were steps in the right direction and laid some important groundwork, but they did not meet the need, nor did they go far enough to achieve enduring change. That is why in 2021, the department launched the chief professional conduct and culture, or CPCC, to redouble its efforts to create this lasting change.

[*Translation*]

The CPCC is the single functional authority for professional conduct and culture at National Defence. The CPCC is responsible for developing policy and programs to address systemic faults, enhancing tracking mechanisms for reporting professional misconduct and leading efforts to develop a professional conduct and culture framework that tackles discrimination, harmful behaviours, biases and systemic barriers.

By making this organization the focus of our efforts to change the culture, we ensure that all of our institutions can move forward in a unified and coherent manner. The CPCC has taken the time to listen to defence team members past and present at all levels, so that efforts to change the culture reflect the experiences and suggestions of our members.

The CPCC's work contributed to the publication of "The Canadian Armed Forces Ethos: Trusted to Serve", which aims to ensure that military members carry out their duties professionally and with respect for the dignity of all persons.

The department's work is closely linked to the CPCC's efforts to respond to the recommendations outlined in four key external review reports related to culture change and the modernization of the military justice system.

The reports are the following: the independent external comprehensive review by Justice Arbour, which focuses mainly on the issue of harassment and sexual misconduct; the third independent review of the National Defence Act by Justice Fish, which includes recommendations for modernizing the military justice system; the report of the Minister of National Defence's advisory panel on systemic racism and discrimination, which aligns closely with the priorities of the Government of Canada; and the report of the national apology advisory committee board, which was developed to provide recommendations about the Government of Canada's apology to the descendants of No. 2 Construction Battalion.

We have already made significant progress on a number of these recommendations. We have taken measures to implement Justice Arbour's recommendation on how we define sexual offences in policies and how we talk about them. We have also repealed the duty to report in order to prioritize trust and safety, as well as the agency of victims, survivors and affected individuals. We also launched the Canadian Military Colleges Review Board, which is tasked with evaluating the quality of education, socialization and training at our two military colleges. Lastly, we published a new digital grievance submission form that allows armed forces members to access services and recourse options more easily, quickly and efficiently.

• (1355)

[English]

The department has also developed a plan to prioritize and sequence work across the defence team in a coordinated and collective effort to implement the remaining recommendations from all four reports. When the CPCC consulted with current and former defence team members from across the country, a common theme emerged: the need for the continuing evolution of the military justice system in response to developments in law and society, and the need to maintain trust in the system.

Through Bill C-66, we are introducing reforms to the National Defence Act to address key recommendations from the reports by former Supreme Court justices Arbour and Fish. They include Madam Arbour's fifth recommendation, as well as eight recommendations from Justice Fish's third independent review of the National Defence Act, designed to, among other things, increase confidence in the military justice system and help remove real or perceived influence from the Canadian Armed Forces' chain of command. Most notably, through Bill C-66, Criminal Code sexual offences that take place in Canada would be under the exclusive jurisdiction of civilian authorities.

[Translation]

Through Bill C-66, Criminal Code sexual offences committed in Canada will fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of civil authorities.

Bill C-66 also seeks to modify the process for appointing the director of military prosecutions, the director of defence counsel services and the Canadian Forces provost marshal. It will also expand the class of persons who can be appointed as military judges or non-commissioned members and it will expand the class of persons who can file an interference complaint with the Military Police Complaints Commission. It will enable those acting on behalf of a victim to have access to a victim's liaison officer under the victims bill of rights.

The well-being of the members of our armed forces is one of our top priorities. They work hard to defend us, our country and our partners around the world. It is our responsibility to ensure that they can work in an environment that is free from any kind of discrimination, harassment or misconduct.

Our government is committed to changing the culture within our armed forces so that every member of our defence team can be authentic and feel valued, included and encouraged to give the best that they can in service of Canada every day.

Statements by Members

The changes that our government is making to the culture within our armed forces and our military justice system are part of an ongoing process.

In closing, I would like to salute our armed forces.

[English]

I thank all our members here in Canada and abroad for their extraordinary service. I really hope the House will find a strong resolution to send the bill to committee.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

CENTRETOWN CITIZENS OTTAWA CORPORATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thrilled to recognize the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation, also known as CCOC, as it celebrates a phenomenal milestone: 50 years of transforming lives and building communities. CCOC owns and manages over 50 properties that provide nearly 1,600 affordable homes, primarily in the heart of Ottawa Centre. Its mission is to foster diverse, inclusive and sustainable communities for individuals of low and modest income.

It has been an honour for me to work with CCOC on many projects, like the Beaver Barracks community. This summer, we announced a \$12-million investment with CCOC that will help it retrofit and repair 1,200 homes. That is 75% of its total housing stock. This is not just about an investment in bricks and mortar. It is an investment in people, community, pride and the future of our city.

I congratulate CCOC for all its hard work in building a community for everyone.

* * *

WILDFIRE RESPONSE IN JASPER

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, this summer, the people of Jasper faced a devastating tragedy as wildfires tore through their community, destroying homes and threatening lives. In the face of that disaster, we witnessed the extraordinary strength of the people of Jasper. We saw an incredible response from nearby communities, which came together to support evacuees and relief efforts.

Statements by Members

Volunteers and first responders, risking their own lives, showed remarkable courage to protect what they could and support those in need. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to all who risked their lives, especially Morgan Kitchen, a young firefighter who made the ultimate sacrifice just weeks after his 24th birthday. The bravery of all who faced the flames will never be forgotten.

The road to recovery is long, but the spirit of Jasper is stronger. Together we will rebuild, and together we will heal.

* * *

RECONCILIATION IN THE HEALTH SYSTEM

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, yesterday, on September 18, the Canadian Medical Association apologized for its role and the role of the medical profession in the past and ongoing harms to first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples in the health system. This apology was delivered at a public ceremony in Victoria, B.C., on the traditional unceded territory of the Songhees and Kosapsum nations. In preparation for this apology, the CMA underwent a multi-year process to review its archives, social media accounts, parliamentary debates and committee records. An ethics review on these records was completed that outlined the ethical and professional commitments and responsibilities of the medical profession.

The CMA acknowledges that harm to first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples continues. It has developed a reconciliACTION plan that outlines how it will advance reconciliation, promote indigenous health, follow through on its pledge to act against anti-indigenous racism in health care and support the medical profession in making the system a safer place for first nations, Inuit and Métis patients and providers.

I invite members to visit the CMA website to learn more about the CMA's reconciliACTION plan and to do their part to invoke Joyce's principle to ensure equitable access to health care for all.

* * *

[Translation]

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF COPYRIGHT ACT

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the Copyright Act.

It might seem perfectly reasonable to everyone that an act of such importance to artists, authors, writers, musicians and so many others should be modernized, but no. The industry has been lobbying the government for years with simple proposals, yet nothing has budged. Modernization, however, would inject \$10 million more a month into the cultural sector.

Last night, I was honoured to host a reception on the Hill attended by members of the copyright community. They fail to understand why the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry still refuses to listen. Unless we properly and fairly compensate our artists, writers, filmmakers, composers, authors and all others, our culture will slowly disappear.

The ball is in the minister's court. It may not be too late, unless he wants to be remembered as the minister who did nothing when he had the chance to do something.

Happy 100th anniversary to the Copyright Act.

* * *

[English]

2024 OLYMPIC GAMES AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I want to take a moment to recognize the remarkable achievements of our athletes from the summer Paris 2024 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games.

We won an astounding 27 Olympic medals this year, making the Paris 2024 Olympic Games our best performing Olympics in history. This could not have been possible without the incredible efforts of our amazing athletes and teams, who have inspired us all. They have not only elevated our national spirit, but showcased the exceptional talent emerging from all corners of our country.

Let us also recognize our incredible Paralympians, who represented Canada with immense skill, bringing home 29 medals. Their hard work, determination and excellence have continuously inspired us and represented Canadian excellence on the global stage.

I send a big congratulations to all of our team Canada athletes on a historic Olympic season. They have inspired millions of Canadians across our country from coast to coast to coast.

● (1405)

[Translation]

Go, Canada, go.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, imagine living in a rural community like Merritt or Princeton, British Columbia. People work hard, pay their taxes, but see little return from Ottawa.

In 2021, these communities were devastated by massive floods. The Prime Minister told them that he had their backs: ministers visit, telling them to hang tight for their new disaster mitigation adaptation fund; the municipalities apply, jump through every hoop, spending hundreds of thousands in engineering studies, only to be denied. Adding insult to injury, communities that never experienced flooding or fires are receiving funds, while Merritt and Princeton are left behind.

*Statements by Members***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Every member here should know that the people in these communities are angry at these broken commitments. It has gotten so bad that Merritt has created an e-petition, calling on the government to honour its promises. I encourage all concerned citizens to support petition e-5135.

If being Canadian means anything, it means looking after one another. I would remind the Prime Minister that it is never too late to do the right thing for Merritt and for Princeton.

* * *

ORTHOTIC AND PROSTHETIC PROFESSIONALS

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the invaluable contributions of orthotic and prosthetic professionals to the health and well-being of Canadians. These dedicated certified orthotists and prosthetists, and registered orthotic and prosthetic technicians help individuals regain mobility and lead active lives.

Through their expertise, they enhance the quality of life for countless Canadians, including those in my riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler, and strengthen our communities and health care system.

This year, we will celebrate the first-ever National Orthotics and Prosthetics Day on September 19. This day will highlight and promote their essential services and the individuals who benefit from their care. By commemorating this day, we aim to build stronger partnerships and a more collaborative support network for orthotic and prosthetic professionals and their patients across Canada.

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ROLF HOUGEN

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this month, Yukon lost one of its most accomplished and best-loved citizens, Rolf Hougen.

If we were to walk around downtown Whitehorse, we would see Rolf's impact everywhere in the variety of businesses he built over the 80 years that he lived in Yukon. He also founded the territory's first cable TV company, as well as its first commercial radio station, CKRW.

Among many other philanthropic activities, Rolf established the Yukon Foundation in 1980, opening doors for numerous Yukoners to pursue their education and research. Rolf's generosity touched the arts too, donating space in the Hougen Centre to support local artists. He was also one of the founders of the Yukon Sourdough Rendezvous, evolving from the winter carnivals he started in the 1940s.

A passionate photographer and historian, Rolf captured the essence of his family, his businesses and our territory with great care. Rolf Hougen was the Yukon's nation builder, and his legacy will continue to inspire us.

As Yukoners reflect on his passing, let us hold on to Rolf's spirit of connection, his commitment to the community and his boundless kindness.

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up, time is up.

Due to the Liberal government's elimination of mandatory prison time for countless violent offences, criminals are given free rein to terrorize our communities. The results of the Liberal government's soft-on-crime policies are clear: Canadians do not even feel safe walking down their streets or taking transit.

A new study by the Macdonald-Laurier Institute shows that sexual assaults and robberies, such as muggings and carjackings, are up in practically every major city in Canada. Between 2016 and 2023, the sexual rate has almost doubled in York Region and sexual assaults are up by more than 30% in the neighbouring Peel Region.

The Conservatives will ensure that repeat violent offenders remain behind bars while awaiting trial, and we will bring back mandatory jail time for serious violent crimes that were repealed by the Liberal government. A Conservative government will bring home safe streets.

* * *

● (1410)

LOUIS MARCH

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the memory of Louis March.

I first had the opportunity to meet Louis March when he came to my office with a mother who had lost her son to gun violence. He was always there to support people in need, but also to empower the voices of people who had been impacted by gun violence. He was a truly committed advocate, someone who could be counted on to be at every event and to always support the needs of the communities that were trying to fight gun violence in our city, and he was effective.

I would like to take this moment to recognize all of the great work that was done by Louis March. May his memory be a blessing, and may we all stand and recommit to ending gun violence in our communities.

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CARBON TAX

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

Statements by Members

The Prime Minister wants to quadruple the carbon tax, but to appease his new unelected finance minister, Mark “carbon tax” Carney, he is implementing a second carbon tax that will cost Canadians another \$9 billion on top of the already \$25 billion that the carbon tax is costing.

Costs are also up due to carbon tax addiction and government corruption. Carbon tax Carney stands to benefit moments after his new appointment from the latest government announcement, a \$10 billion handout to his firm, Brookfield, that will further line his pockets with taxpayer money.

It does not stop there. Carbon tax Carney is part of Telesat, which just got over \$2 billion to build broadband access that the private sector could have done for half the cost.

Thankfully, time is up. With Liberal scandals passing each day, Canadians are beyond tired and frustrated with the corrupt Prime Minister. Canadians are ready to change the NDP-Liberal government with one that will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

* * *

CARBON TAX

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals tax is up, cost is up, crime is up and time is up, and that could not be more true than for the leader of the NDP.

His video a couple of weeks ago saying that he ripped up his coalition agreement and then saying that Canadians were fed up with the Prime Minister all proved to be nothing more than a stunt. Minutes ago, the NDP members said that they would vote to continue to have confidence in the Prime Minister next week, when the question is called on the floor of the House of Commons.

He refused 49 times to say how he would vote, and now we know why. The coalition between the Liberals and the NDP is alive and well. Canadians have been sold out by the NDP, and it should be simple. We should call a carbon tax election for Canadians to have their say, because they do not want to see the carbon tax quadrupled to 61¢ a litre.

The NDP have sold out Canadians. In the next election, Canadians are going to boot many of their MPs out of the House of Commons.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SOLIDES ORGANIZATION

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is so exciting to be back in the House and to be able to continue working for the wonderful people of Châteauguay—Lacolle, soon to be known as Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville.

It is especially exciting to be able to implement federal programs to make life more affordable for Canadians. Over the summer, I saw first-hand in my riding how our action plan is working and making life easier for hundreds of households. I had the opportuni-

ty to visit SOLIDES, the Société locale d'investissement et de développement social, which is the largest property owner in Châteauguay. This organization buys and renovates apartment buildings and rents them out at affordable prices. This model can and should be replicated across Canada. SOLIDES was recently allocated more than \$3 million from the affordable housing fund to help renovate and maintain its buildings.

I would like to congratulate the entire team at SOLIDES on their excellent work.

* * *

[*English*]

MOBILE YOUTH SERVICES TEAM

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight the amazing work of the Mobile Youth Services Team, or MYST, and in particular its crime reduction and exploitation diversion program.

It has been serving at-risk youth in our region for over 20 years. It is tackling online sexual and gang exploitation, and the intersecting crises of the toxic drug supply, mental health issues, poverty and homelessness. It has an extremely effective program with an incredible success rate, where it proactively engages with youth and their families to provide support and key referrals.

Currently, there is one MYST team that is handling over 250 active cases of youth in crisis. We know the frequency of youth being targeted by sexual predators and for gang recruitment has been increasing, and calls to the team have ballooned. It has applied to the Department of Justice, because despite the high demand it recently had to reduce the hours of its program to only two days a week. Without new funding, it faces the prospect of closing as early as March 2025.

MYST teams have an incredible impact, and this model could be replicated across the country. The loss of this program would be devastating, given the need in our community—

• (1415)

The Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. It is very important for all members to please try to respect the 60 seconds. The Chair does give some leeway on that, but not a significant leeway.

The hon. member fro Beauport—Limoulu has the floor.

[Translation]

QUÉBEC CAPITALES BASEBALL TEAM

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the saying goes, all good things come in threes. Quebec City's baseball team, the Capitales, took that to heart and won their third consecutive Frontier League championship. Fans were treated to quite a show.

On Saturday, in an exhilarating and spectacular game, the Capitales won the finals against the Washington Wild Things, thanks to magician Anthony Quirion, who hit a three-run homer.

This is the 10th title in the history of the franchise, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. This title is the result of the talent, consistency and hard work of all the players and the entire organization, including manager Patrick Scalabrini and president Michel Laplante.

Congratulations, and thank you for being the pride of our town for another year running. Until next year.

* * *

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is the “Liberal Bloc”? It is the most centralizing, costly and divisive Liberal government in history. It is the Liberal government that has no respect for Quebec, imposing programs, claiming that the Liberal occupant of the big federal seat knows best and can do better than the elected members of Quebec. It is a government that breaks ethics rules without facing the consequences, that lets authoritarian countries interfere in our elections, that gives Canadian citizenship to a terrorist.

What is the “Liberal Bloc”? It is the Bloc who voted to keep this minority government in place more than 200 times. It is the Bloc who authorized this Liberal government to spend \$500 billion, fuelling inflation and increasing the cost of everything. It is the Bloc that supports the Liberal government that wants to radically increase fuel taxes, ban hunting rifles and allow house arrest for violent criminals. It is the Bloc that is going to prop up the Liberal government next week against the interests of Quebec.

The Bloc Québécois has gotten absolutely nothing for Quebec in exchange for its unconditional support of the Liberal government. The Bloc Québécois is the worst negotiator that Quebec has even seen. That is the “Liberal Bloc”.

* * *

[English]

YOUNG POLONIA LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I had the honour of hosting the second Young Polonia Leadership Summit on Parliament Hill. We brought together 35 young leaders from across Canada to talk about issues important to Polish Canadians, including getting more young people engaged in politics.

Over one million Polish Canadians contribute to building vibrant and generous communities across Canada. Now we see a new gen-

Oral Questions

eration of Polonia taking the mantle to lead the Polish diaspora in this new century, young people who say “Yes we can”, and who have the courage and power to build a better Canada and a better world.

I want to thank the Canadian Polish Congress, the Polish Canadian Business and Professional Association of Windsor, and the Embassy of the Republic of Poland for working together to organize this summit and to empower Canada's young eagles.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Premier of the Quebec nation said today that the Liberal government's decision to double the number of temporary immigrants to 600,000 individuals poses a threat to social services for Quebecers.

Will the leader of the Bloc Québécois do what the Premier of the Quebec nation is asking, and reconsider supporting this Liberal government next week? Will he defend the interests of Quebecers and the Quebec nation?

• (1420)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like you, I was a page in the House of Commons a few years back, and I would like to congratulate and thank the new cohort of pages we are fortunate to have with us this year. We know how important their responsibilities are. Members of the House appreciate their service. I thank them for being with us in the coming months.

As for the Leader of the Opposition, what he is saying is laughable. He is saying that we should just keep cutting back on programs to help Quebecers and the Government of Quebec, including health care, child care and day care.

The Speaker: Before we continue, I would like to remind all members that it is important for questions to be about the administration of government and its accountability to the House of Commons if they want to get answers.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not just the Premier of the Quebec nation. The Bloc Québécois's political cousin, Parti Québécois leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, is also condemning this costly, centralizing government.

He said, quote, “Quebec was deliberately destabilized. This is an abuse of federal power.” According to the PQ, the governing party is hurting Quebec, and the Bloc Québécois is keeping that party in power.

Why did the leader of the Bloc Québécois turn his back on the Parti Québécois and all Quebecers to keep the most centralizing and costly prime minister in Canada's history in power?

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Again, I am very sorry, but that question is not for the government. Even so, I see the Minister of Canadian Heritage rising to answer.

Hon. Pascale St-Onge (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last time Mr. Legault got in bed with the Conservatives, Quebecers put him in his place. It will be the same thing this time.

I find it rather strange that Mr. Legault and Paul St-Pierre Plamondon are supporting a party that is bent on destroying our most important institution in Quebec, an institution that defends the French language, Quebec culture and Quebec's cultural creators, namely CBC/Radio-Canada. It is shameful.

Those of us on this side of the House will always fight for Quebecers, for the right to our language and for the right to our culture.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the Prime Minister has lost his Quebec lieutenant, who has now become a provincial candidate.

Fortunately for him, he found another Quebec lieutenant, and it is the leader of the Bloc Québécois.

The Bloc voted to increase inflationary bureaucratic spending by \$500 billion. It voted to hire an extra 100,000 public servants. It voted to keep a government that broke the immigration system in office.

Is it not true that the Conservatives are the real defenders of Quebec?

The Speaker: I give the floor to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

[English]

CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all knew that the NDP leader had sold out the people and signed on to a costly coalition with the carbon tax Prime Minister to tax people's food, punish their work, double their housing costs and unleash crime in their communities.

However, he claimed that he had torn up the carbon tax coalition so that Winnipeggers would not fire him in a by-election, but as soon as the votes were counted, he betrayed them too and taped back together the carbon tax coalition.

How can anyone ever believe what he says again?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The Chair is in a very uncomfortable situation here.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader was terrified he was going to lose a by-election in Winnipeg, an NDP stronghold, so he put out a Hollywood production where he claimed he had torn up the carbon tax coalition to which he had signed up, and that he was going to stop fighting for his pension

and start fighting for the people. However, once the votes were counted, he betrayed them again. He is a fake, a phony and a fraud.

How can anyone ever believe what the sellout NDP leader says in the future?

• (1425)

The Speaker: Order.

Colleagues, there are some long-standing traditions of the House that we should endeavour to respect. It is important that we ask questions in question period to make government accountable to the people of Canada. The questions by their very nature should be pointed, should be tough and should be specific, and the answers should also be clear.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: However, colleagues, for this to work, we also have to make sure that we work within the rules we have. There were some important questions that were asked but that were not related to the administration of the government, and therefore there were no responses to those. We have so many other tools available to us as members to make the comments we need to make outside question period.

While the microphone was off, although the Chair did not hear this, there might have been some strong words exchanged between members. I ask members to please remember that Canadians are looking at us. Let us conduct ourselves in a way really befitting of each of our constituencies and the country as a whole.

[Translation]

With that, we will move on to the next question.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

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SENIORS

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the citizens of LaSalle—Émard—Verdun for putting their trust in the Bloc Québécois.

The truth is the Bloc Québécois is in the best position it has been in over 15 years. If increasing the number of Bloc members was our priority, an election would have already been called. However, our priority is Quebecers. Quebecers are concerned about the living conditions of seniors, among other things. That is why we are asking the Liberals to stop financially discriminating against seniors aged 65 to 74.

Are they finally going to increase old age security by 10% for that age group?

• (1430)

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois for asking a real question here in the House.

It is important to make sure that questions refer to the work of government. The government is here to work for Canadians and to demonstrate what we do every day to serve Canadians.

Oral Questions

It would be nice if all members of the House could keep that in mind.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals need to understand something. It is very simple.

They have two choices, and both choices come at a cost. Either they increase old age security by 10% for seniors aged 65 to 74, or they will pay for it, politically speaking. The Liberals will have to make a choice, and so will the other parties. If they think that seniors' pensions are not important, then they better have the nerve to tell seniors to their faces. The Liberals are going to pay for it one way or another.

Will they increase old age security by 10%, yes or no?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I applaud the member for La Prairie for wanting to help seniors in Quebec because, clearly, he has not been very supportive of Quebec or Canadian seniors to date.

Some may be surprised to learn that he voted against lowering the retirement age to 65, that he voted against increasing the guaranteed income supplement for the poorest seniors in Quebec and that, when we brought in a plan for dental care, the member for La Prairie voted against it.

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[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Medical Association is deeply concerned about privatization. Thanks to years of cuts, Canadians are worried that there is a—

The Speaker: Colleagues, I am having some difficulty hearing due to some shouting coming from the latter third of the House. Can I ask all members, please, who do not have the floor to not speak.

I am going to invite the hon. member for Burnaby South to start from the top, please.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Medical Association is worried about privatization in our health care system. It is worried about the real impacts of a dangerous shortage of frontline health care workers, family medicine and family health care workers. It is worried about specialist shortages and nurse shortages.

The Conservatives want to make people pay to receive health care, and the Liberals are too weak to stop them. Why are the Liberals letting the Conservatives force people to pay out of pocket to receive health care?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I know some members would like me to make a more specific intervention. Unfortunately, from the chair, I cannot see who is making the intervention, but I will ask members to please not speak when they have not been recognized.

The hon. Minister of Health has the floor.

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, working together, we have been able to make incredible progress in

our health system. Bilateral agreements have been signed with every province and every territory, based on co-operation, of \$200 billion. With the NDP, when it was interested in working with us, we were able to do things like provide dental care, with 650,000 people already getting care. We were able to do things like pharmacare.

Unfortunately the NDP has made a choice. The New Democrats have decided to give in to a bully who is using a playbook that comes from a movie like *Mean Girls*, rather than standing up and fighting for our health care system and working collaboratively.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats built medicare; Liberals and Conservatives are tearing it down.

[Translation]

The Liberals promised to help seniors in Quebec with the age well at home initiative, but Quebecers are not receiving anything because the Liberals and the Legault government are too busy bickering.

Will the Prime Minister stop this nonsense and finally deliver on the promise to help Quebecers?

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, did the New Democrats choose to continue the work on pharmacare? No. Did they choose to continue the progress on dental? No. Did they choose to make progress on working with provinces and territories in a spirit of collaboration? No. Instead, the New Democrats yielded to a bully. They abdicated the field. They got afraid. They walked away.

We are not afraid. We are going to stand up, and we are going to fight for public health care in this country. We are going to get it done. We are going to deliver dental care. We are going to deliver diabetes medication. We are going to make sure that every woman has access to contraceptives, and nothing is going to stop us.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, prices are up, crime is up and time is up, and the NDP leader has sold out workers by devaluing their paycheque by supporting Liberal inflationary deficits.

He sold out seniors and families by hiking the carbon tax, driving up the cost of food and home heating, and he has sold out young Canadians, who have given up on the dream of home ownership thanks to the doubling of housing costs. What did he sell them out for? It was to protect his pension. Canadians now have to suffer longer just so he can get paid.

Why does the Prime Minister not just call a carbon tax election so Canadians can decide?

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not think we should be politicizing pensions, but if the member opposite or his leader wants to talk about the size of their pensions, they should talk about that. At a time when they will be getting millions of dollars in government pensions, they also look to cut the pensions of everyday Canadians. We are here to support seniors no matter where they worked, not just parliamentarians with their pensions.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian seniors are cutting back because of the government's cost of living crisis. They are cutting back on food and home heating because of the carbon tax and inflation that the government caused.

Let us go back to the NDP leader. He had a really dramatic show this summer in which he pretended to rip up the agreement. However, he would never commit to actually voting non-confidence and giving Canadians the carbon tax election they so desperately want. It was all just a show.

My question is simple. During all those meetings between the Prime Minister and the leader of the NDP, was the Prime Minister just giving him acting lessons?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to hear my friend from Regina—Qu'Appelle, who was around in those days. In fact, he was sitting right where you are sitting, Mr. Speaker, when Prime Minister Harper went to, yes, Davos. As a reminder for some members in the back, that is the World Economic Forum. He went there to do what? He went there to tell Canadian seniors that their retirement age was moving to 67 from 65.

How dare the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle stand in the House and talk to us about pensions?

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years under the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The Liberals and the NDP believe in quadrupling the carbon taxes to 61¢ a litre. This is at a time when two million Canadians a month are going to food banks, seniors are turning down their heat and people are living in RVs at truck stops. Canadians cannot afford this costly coalition.

When will Canadians have a carbon tax election so they can decide between the costly NDP-Liberal coalition and common-sense Conservatives?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if people actually used facts in the House. At the end of the day, a price on pollution is actually an affordability mechanism. To get rid of the carbon rebate would actually make people who live on modest incomes poorer. At the same time, it would imperil the future of our children, abandoning them to a future where we have runaway climate change. It is so ridiculous that, after 300 economists have said it and the Leader of the Opposition refuses to talk to any one of them, that Conservatives can get up and make up these fairy tales.

• (1440)

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not a fairy tale that people cannot afford to feed them-

selves in Canada. The NDP leader has voted 24 times for the carbon tax. The NDP members talk a big talk, but they cannot be trusted to do what is best for Canadian families. The NDP-Liberals tax people's food, punish their work, take their money, double their housing costs and unleash crime and drugs in their communities. Common-sense Conservatives will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime. Time is up.

When will we have a carbon tax election so Canadians can choose their future?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, setting aside the fact that both the Parliamentary Budget Officer and 300 economists have said that eight out of 10 Canadians get more money than they pay in carbon pricing, we have a report today from the independent organization, the Climate Institute, which shows that emissions were down again in Canada in 2023. The report also shows that, without our plan, emissions would be 41% higher. The Conservative Party of Canada has a non-plan. It would be the equivalent, in terms of pollution, of an added 60 million vehicles on our road. That is what we are talking about here.

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FINANCE

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberal government, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and now time is up. The Liberals have ballooned costs and driven up taxes to the point where people are struggling to feed, heat and house themselves. It is why Canadians deserve a carbon tax election, where they would be able to choose between our common-sense plan to axe the tax or the NDP-Liberal plan to quadruple the tax.

Why is the NDP continuing to sell Canadians out by supporting the Liberal government?

Hon. Jenna Sudds (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity that the Conservatives have given me to speak about what is up. Do members know what is up? The number of child care spaces available for families across this country is up. In addition, women's participation in the workforce is at an all-time high. Because of our investments in the early childhood educator workforce, we have also seen that wages have gone up for this workforce. One more thing is that the Canada child benefit was raised in the summer, going up.

Oral Questions

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is cold comfort to the people struggling to fill their gas tanks, put food on the table and afford simple basic necessities. We know the NDP members will only pretend to stand up for Canadians if they can be assured that they have the backing of the Bloc to keep this tired and corrupt government in power. In fact, 24 times the NDP voted in favour of the carbon tax while Canadians struggled just to get by. Once again, this is why we need a carbon tax election: so that Canadians can choose between our plan and the NDP-Liberal plan.

Why are they so afraid to give Canadians a choice at the ballot box?

The Speaker: Some voices are more distinct than others. The hon. member knows whom I mean. I just remind all members to keep their voices down unless they are recognized.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Shefford.

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SENIORS

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that seniors are watching us. They have had it with evasive answers. It is time for decisions.

All year, I have been meeting with seniors throughout Quebec, and they are unanimous. The Liberals have to increase old age security for people aged 65 to 74, just like they did for people 75 and older. It is urgent. There is no justification for creating two classes of seniors.

Will the Liberals end this by raising old age security by 10% starting at age 65?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that it is painful. I know that they do not like to hear this, but actions and votes have consequences. The Bloc Qu b cois voted against the national dental care program that is currently under way in the member's riding. I recently had the pleasure of visiting Bromont in the Eastern Townships with my colleague. I met one of her constituents, who is one of the 14,000 people in that riding who are currently receiving dental care. She expressed her thanks.

My colleague voted against that.

• (1445)

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have a choice: Either they put an end to the two classes of seniors that they created or they go to the polls to keep those two classes of seniors.

The Bloc Qu b cois has made its choice. We choose the side of all seniors, the side of equity and justice. It is time for the Liberals to make a choice. They can choose to do away with age discrimination or they can choose to promote this unjustifiable discrimination.

What will it be?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the member is raising the spectre of an unnecessary election instead of taking concrete action, like vot-

ing to help Quebec seniors, which is something she has not done since she arrived here. She voted against increasing the guaranteed income supplement. She voted against the dental care plan that 14,000 people in her own riding have signed up for. Still, the member claims to speak on behalf of seniors.

The government that is getting things done for our seniors is a Liberal government.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Once again, loud voices are being heard. I know the member knows who I mean. I therefore ask members not to speak until they are recognized by the Chair.

The hon. member for Jonquiere.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquiere, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not only are the Liberals discriminating against seniors, but they are even going so far as to cut funding to the organizations that support them. For months, they have been depriving community organizations of funding from the age well at home initiative because they refuse to come to an agreement with Quebec. This is yet another cynical attempt to encroach upon Quebec's jurisdictions at the expense of seniors.

Quebec's intergovernmental affairs minister said, "That is disgusting". Those are his words, not mine.

When will the Liberals come to an agreement with Quebec and stop holding seniors hostage?

Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Labour and Seniors, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do in fact have a very important pilot project that is helping seniors live well in their own homes. We are receiving some excellent projects, including one from the Centre communautaire l'entraide plus de Chambly. We have another project called Ancrege. Thanks to a growing pool of volunteers, this project proposes to expand and add more assisted living services for vulnerable low-income seniors in mostly rural areas.

That is where the Government of Quebec is blocking things. What my colleague should do is talk to the Government of Quebec to get the money flowing.

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[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of this costly coalition, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up. The NDP-Liberal government's reckless policies have forced two million people to food banks. Its destructive carbon tax has made it almost impossible for farmers to make affordable food to put on the tables of Canadians.

Canadians want and deserve a carbon tax election. They can decide between the costly coalition and a common-sense Conservative government that will axe the tax, build the homes, fix the budget and stop the crime.

When will the lame-duck Prime Minister call a carbon tax election so that Canadians can have their say?

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I will remind members to be careful about making comments about specific members of Parliament.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Arif Virani (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us review the facts about the carbon price for a moment. The carbon price reduces pollution and puts money back into the pockets of Canadians. In fact, eight out of 10 families receive more money back than they pay with an increasing price on pollution. It is the single best market mechanism known to reduce carbon footprints. We used to have a lot of parties in this chamber supporting that price. Unfortunately, we have seen a flip by virtue of the leader of the NDP's position. What that does is it signals voter cynicism. However, it also signals to progressives, including those in my riding of Parkdale—High Park, that if we want a party that is going to fight against climate change, our only choice is the Liberal Party of Canada.

• (1450)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when a single mother is deciding whether to put milk in the fridge or gas in the car for their children, that answer is going to give them no comfort this winter. The NDP has sold out Canadians, and for what? It is time to know the truth.

Will the NDP stand with Canadians and make sure there is the carbon tax election that they want? Otherwise, is it true that the leader of the NDP cares more about his pension than what Canadians want?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up, but instead of fighting for Canadians, the NDP leader sold out workers by voting to increase the carbon tax to 61¢ a litre. In fact, he voted for the carbon tax 24 times. We know that the NDP leader is keeping the Prime Minister in power to secure his own pension.

Will the Prime Minister listen to Canadians and call a carbon tax election?

The Speaker: I am trying to provide members with as much leeway as possible, knowing that some questions come around and end up being relevant to the administration of government. This is an important time for us to seek accountability from the government. It is important, then, to ask questions that are germane to the administration of the government as opposed to questions that are better directed in a private conversation or in a public declaration, not at question period, because it is not relevant to the administration of government.

The hon. member from Vancouver Kingsway.

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THE ECONOMY

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals just appointed Mark Carney, a millionaire investment banker from Goldman Sachs, to dictate their economic agenda. The Conservatives have lobbyists from Loblaw's and Walmart sitting on

their front bench and setting policy. New Democrats are listening to working Canadians, who are experiencing real economic struggles on the ground. Canadians deserve a government that understands their needs and works for them.

Why do the Liberals and Conservatives keep putting the interests of elites ahead of hard-working Canadians?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote the member for Edmonton Strathcona. In June 2024, she said, “economists, journalists and members of Parliament have made it very clear that the carbon tax is not what is responsible for the cost of food increasing so much.”

I can also quote the member for Victoria, who said, “the PBO has put out a number of reports that confirm...that 80% of Canadians get more money back than they pay.” That was in March 2024. In September 2022, the member for Victoria also said that the carbon tax is a crucial part of any climate plan.

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HOUSING

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, indigenous peoples across the country face a horrific housing crisis brought on by constant government underfunding rooted in systemic discrimination. The Liberals are holding back 99.8% of the promised housing funding for indigenous communities. It is shameful. The Conservatives are no better. They voted over and over again against funding indigenous housing.

When will the Liberals end this discrimination and make sure indigenous people have the homes they need?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has been investing in historic ways to close the infrastructure gap for first nations communities across the country. I do not know where the member is getting her information from, but it is incorrect, quite frankly. We have spent all of our housing allotment every year. In fact, we have accelerated our expenditures in housing, and we are working with first nations on solutions that will be long-lasting and respectful of their culture and identity.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence, I hear from experts, members and academics alike about the importance of creating a respectful and professional work environment for the brave men and women of our armed forces. Over the past two years, Canadians have watched as Supreme Court justices Arbour and Fish have put forward recommendations to modernize Canada's military justice system.

Can the Minister of National Defence please update this House on the progress we are making on these very important recommendations?

• (1455)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share with the House that the military justice system modernization act is being debated in the House this week. Among a number of substantive amendments to the National Defence Act, this legislation would codify in law that CAF would no longer have jurisdiction over Criminal Code offences and sexual offences committed in Canada, and it would increase the independence of military justice actors.

This is the right thing to do for our people, for our military and for our country. Let us not engage in political gamesmanship with this important legislation. Let us get it to committee to allow it to do its important work, and let us get it done. People are counting on us.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is having another big day. The Liberal Prime Minister is so bad for Quebec that his Quebec lieutenant has decided to jump ship in order to better stand up for Quebec.

However, the position did not stay vacant for long. The leader of the Bloc Québécois was quick to put his name forward to become the new Quebec lieutenant. Negotiations did not take long. The position was open.

Can the Prime Minister tell us when he plans to swear in the Bloc Québécois leader as his new Quebec lieutenant?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives certainly cannot be counted on to defend Quebec's interests, and certainly not those of the Quebec government.

The Conservatives, including unfortunately my colleague from the Quebec region, want to cut everything, and this includes cuts to child care, housing, public transit and health transfers.

How is making cuts, cuts and more cuts, including cuts to supports for Quebeckers, good for Quebec?

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are going to cut taxes and cut cost increases for Quebeckers. That is where we are going to make cuts.

The “Liberal Bloc” has made no gains for Quebec. Now, it is going to blindly support a centralizing Liberal government that is taking money out of Quebeckers' pockets to feed a big federal machine that imposes programs in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction; a government that is creating immigration chaos, pushing Quebec to the breaking point; a government that is imposing an order that will wipe out forestry jobs. Even the Premier of Quebec is begging the Bloc Québécois to vote to defeat this terrible government.

Will the Liberal Prime Minister admit that his new Bloc ally is harming Quebec's interests?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, instead of undermining the interests of Quebeckers, my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable should be looking out for his constituents and correcting the lies told by his Conservative leader, who says that the Canadian dental care plan does not exist. In my colleague's riding, 11,000 seniors have registered for the Canadian dental care plan, yet he stands by while his leader claims that the Canadian dental care plan does not exist.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc Québécois showed his true colours yesterday when he promised to support the Liberal government with no benefits at all for Quebec. There is absolutely nothing for forestry workers or seniors. That is the “Liberal Bloc”.

When will the Prime Minister officially announce that the leader of the Bloc Québécois has become his Quebec lieutenant?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we cannot count on the Conservatives' lieutenant to defend the interests of Quebec either. A few weeks ago, he had a good idea. He said that the money for modern public transit should go to the people of Quebec City. A few hours later, his leader rebuked him and humiliated him. He said not to listen to his Quebec lieutenant, that the money going to the Quebec City region would be stolen and sent elsewhere. It is not the Conservative leader's money; it is the money of the people in the Quebec City region.

I invite my colleague to stand up for the people of the Quebec City region.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a representative of the Quebec City region and political lieutenant for Quebec, I am proud to support the citizens of Quebec City who want a third link, while the member for Québec, who is the new acting political lieutenant until the leader of the Bloc Québécois takes his place, is refusing to support a third link in Quebec City.

Today, the Government of Quebec clearly asked the Bloc Québécois to stop supporting this government because it knows that nothing can be done with the Liberal government and that it will not get anywhere with the Liberal government.

That is what we have been seeing for nine years.

Oral Questions

• (1500)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if he spends so much time in Quebec City, then my colleague, the Quebec lieutenant, should have heard what his Conservative leader said on Radio-Canada recently. He said that the Canadian dental care plan does not exist. He said that he cannot say why he is against it because he does not think that it exists, and yet 10,500 seniors in his riding have received their cards for the Canadian dental care plan.

How can the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles let his lying Conservative leader say things like that?

The Speaker: That statement is not in keeping with the Standing Orders of the House. I invite the hon. minister to rise and withdraw this unparliamentary accusation.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I said something I should not have.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal-sponsored surge in temporary immigration is creating serious problems when it comes to delivering public services. Look at what is happening right now with asylum seekers. Four provinces are refusing to help Quebec by shouldering their fair share of the responsibility. I am talking about the Conservative premiers of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Alberta. These Conservative premiers are forcing Quebecers to take in a disproportionate share of asylum seekers. Interestingly enough, we have never heard the Conservative leader tell his buddies to stop overburdening Quebecers.

Would the immigration minister say that this is because the Conservative leader agrees with his buddies?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the question and I would say that there is no smoke without fire.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the spring, the Liberals promised a plan to spread out asylum seekers among the provinces. It is now the fall, and there is no plan, but that is not stopping Conservatives from concocting ways to sabotage the non-plan before it even sees the light of day. Quebecers are trapped in the middle, and their public services are overwhelmed. Some asylum seekers in Quebec are unable to get their basic needs met because Quebec has exceeded its intake capacity.

When will the Liberals and the Conservatives understand that their irresponsibility is hurting Quebecers and asylum seekers?

Hon. Marc Miller (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is everyone's responsibility to adopt a humanitarian approach to asylum seekers. The provinces have to be on board. If some provinces attempt to gain political advantage at the expense of asylum seekers, that will get complicated.

These conversations will be ongoing. We will keep working with the provinces to make sure they are doing their fair share. The bur-

den is obviously greatest for Quebec and Ontario, but we are working to achieve a more even distribution.

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FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting yesterday in committee to be able to talk to forestry workers. They are very worried about their future. The Minister of Environment's order is putting at least 1,400 jobs in jeopardy, not to mention the closure of several businesses and the possible disappearance of some communities. If the Conservatives were in power, we would not be talking about an order.

That is why I do not understand why the Bloc Québécois is keeping the Liberals in power without negotiating the cancellation of the order. Why does the "Liberal Bloc" not understand that our regions need the forestry sector and our workers?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that, in 2013, the Harper government used the same emergency order to protect a species. It was not radical then, but suddenly it is radical now because we are the ones using it. It is hogwash.

I met the workers too. They came to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Experts, environmentalists, the first nations and workers are saying that we must protect the forest to protect jobs.

Only the Conservative Party does not understand that.

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the cost of living, inflation and interest rates, Quebecers already have a lot on their plate.

Now, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change wants to make life even harder for forestry workers by imposing his catastrophic order. Many of them are worried and wonder why he is choosing to go after them.

At the same time, the Bloc Québécois, which claims to defend Quebecers, is supporting the Liberals by giving them its vote of confidence without even demanding that the order be revoked.

Will the Prime Minister think about the people and promise not to impose his order?

• (1505)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we held consultations with hundreds of people over the summer: workers, people from the regions, experts, industry representatives, environmental groups and first nations.

The order is being developed, and there is a very simple way for us not to have to impose our order. The Quebec government must, as it has promised, present a plan for protecting caribou habitat. It is quite simple. Quebec has committed to doing this eight years ago. At some point, there needs to be action. The Conservatives, of course, will never act.

We are taking action to protect the environment, and to protect jobs as well.

*Oral Questions***FINANCE**

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only is the Bloc Québécois helping to keep the Liberals in power, but it is also holding up important work in committee to protect the Prime Minister.

Hiring carbon tax Carney is a conflict of interest, and the Bloc Québécois is okay with Mr. Carney advancing his interests without being accountable to Parliament. He should be required to come to committee to answer to Canadians.

Why does Mr. Carney not hold a job as a public servant, one that can be examined by the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, instead of hiding from Canadians?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the same thing with the Conservatives.

There are Canadians who want to contribute to this country, but they do not share the Conservatives' partisan vision. What do the Conservatives do? They attack them. That is not respectful. That is not appropriate in our democracy. It is possible to disagree without attacking Canadians.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives attempt to block energy jobs from Nova Scotians and stand against prosperity for Atlantic Canada, our Liberal government is working hard to reduce energy costs while ensuring good jobs for Nova Scotians today and into the future.

Can the Minister of Energy inform this House of our plan to protect Nova Scotians from an expensive power rate increase?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his ongoing excellent work in the province of Nova Scotia.

I was in Halifax earlier this week to announce the negotiation of a \$500-million loan guarantee with Nova Scotia Power. That will take the projected rate of increase in electricity rates in Nova Scotia from what was going to be 19% next year to the rate of inflation. It is an important step forward.

The federal government is working to ensure affordability with respect to energy on a go-forward basis. We need to work to ensure affordability, reliability and a non-emitting grid in every province and territory in this country.

* * *

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up.

Let us play some Jeopardy. I will have conflicts of interest for \$1,000. The answer is, this person is advising the Prime Minis-

ter while also negotiating a \$10 billion contract with his own company. He is also not subject to conflict of interest rules. The correct response would be, who is carbon tax Carney?

Why is it that these Liberals want to pad the pockets of insiders and play Canadians for fools while enriching their own best friends?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess the member opposite will only get half a gold star from his leader today, because all he did was announce the slogans, but he forgot to attack the other political parties.

When it comes to eminent Canadians who do not share the vision of the Conservatives, they attack them. There is a diversity of views in the country and whether we agree with people or not, it does not mean we should denigrate their character.

The Conservatives should be ashamed of how they treat their fellow Canadians.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, did she actually just say that we should be ashamed of how we treat our fellow Canadians? The reality is that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: This is very important. The best way to keep personal attacks out of this is to, frankly, not take the floor when members are not recognized by the Speaker. That way, we would not have unfortunate comments that I am certain that outside of this place, when members are downstairs in a room somewhere or talking to each other as real people, they would regret.

The hon. member from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, from the top, please.

● (1510)

Mr. Frank Caputo: Mr. Speaker, that answer speaks about shame. Those Liberals should be ashamed for the way they are squandering Canadians' money, while people are lined up at the food bank day after day.

That answer tells us another day at the office, another Liberal scandal, no big deal. This is a Liberal government that is long on entitlements and short on ethics.

Carbon tax Carney started advising the Prime Minister shortly after one of his best friends got a \$2 billion government contract. Why is the government lining the pockets of its friends, while Canadians line up at food banks?

Hon. Karina Gould (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if that member wants to talk about entitlements, he should talk to the leader of his party who has a calculated \$2 million pension and who lives in government housing, while at the same time looking to cut the pensions of Canadians, raise the age of retirement from 65 to 67, and cut the Canada child benefit and other benefits that help Canadians.

Oral Questions

If that member wants to talk to entitlements, he should look in the mirror first.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after nine years of the NDP-Liberals, taxes are up, costs are up, crime is up and time is up, but this fake feminist Prime Minister is still up to his old tricks.

Like so many women before, he shoved aside his female finance minister for his rich, conflict of interest, carbon tax crony, I mean Carney, to take over. Carbon tax Carney will slap the carbon tax right back on home heating oil and let Canadians freeze in the dark this winter. He can afford those taxes, but they cannot.

Why is the finance minister letting herself be humiliated like this?

Hon. Kamal Khara (Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will not take any lessons from the party opposite when it comes to fighting for equality in the country.

The Conservatives were against \$10-a-day child care. These are the cuts that they want to make. They want to ensure and they support back door legislation that actually would ban abortions and take away women's right to choose, or there is the fact that their leader uses misogynistic hashtags in videos to attract men who hate women.

We will not take any lessons from the Conservatives when it comes to ensuring that we support women in the country.

* * *

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this summer, I, like many Canadians, watched in horror as wildfires ravaged the municipality of Jasper and Jasper National Park. Jasperites are strong and resilient, and despite the devastation, we will rebuild stronger than before.

I was able to visit the wildfire command centre in Jasper with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Employment and the mayor of Jasper.

Could the Minister of Employment update Canadians on how our government is supporting residents and businesses in Jasper?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity as a kid to go to Jasper with my grandparents and parents. This July, I visited Jasper and witnessed the devastation first-hand. I want to thank, from the bottom of my heart, all the first responders who made sure that the destruction was not even worse.

We have a historic opportunity to help Jasperites recover and rebuild faster. We have an act to amend the Canada National Parks Act, which will put the powers the mayor needs in his hands. I urge every single party in the House to vote this motion in.

• (1515)

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, communities across the country are in crisis. They do not have the resources they need to support people who are struggling with trauma, mental health and substance use disorders, but the Liberals keep delaying support.

Today, the Nuu-chah-nulth nations declared a state of emergency. They are pleading for federal help. This comes after every single substance use and addictions program application that they applied for was denied.

What more will it take for the Liberals to finally provide the mental health resources that these nations desperately need?

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that across the country the illegal toxic drug supply is taking the lives of loved ones every single day. That is why, in budget 2024, this government pledged to work directly with communities through the emergency treatment fund, \$150 million, over the next three years, to work directly with communities like the ones the member discussed. We know we need to be there to save lives, and that is exactly what we will be doing.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on October 23 and February 8, I asked questions about the problems people were having with their Canada greener homes application.

In my riding alone, more than 20 people are still waiting for the federal payment, despite the fact that every step has been taken, the money has been spent and the work has been done. In Quebec, it takes two to six months at most for files to be processed while in Canada, with any luck, it takes more than 18 months.

Can the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment confirm that changes will be made to address this unacceptable situation for once and for all?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada greener homes program is very important for improving building efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Many people have already received money from the federal government. However, if there are problems in my colleague's riding, I will be happy to discuss it with him to try to find a solution.

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people across Canada watch question period to learn about government business and hear about important issues of public interest. What we saw today was a torrent of insults hurled at the leader of the Bloc Québécois, the leader of the NDP and other members. That is simply not allowed under our rules.

[English]

Standing Order 18 says very clearly that disrespectful and offensive language is not permitted. The member for Carleton had questions that were simply an expression of spewing personal insults and had nothing to do with public administration—

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to make sure that the hon. member gets to what the point of order is.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Mr. Burnaby.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you review the tapes from question period today and that, after reviewing those tapes, you oblige the member for Carleton to rise in his place to withdraw and apologize for those offensive and disrespectful comments.

The Deputy Speaker: We will take that under advisement.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1520)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

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

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 3:19 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Call in the members.

• (1530)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 856)

YEAS

Members

Aboulttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Alghabra
Ali	Allison
Anand	Anandasangaree
Angus	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey

Bains	Baker
Baldinelli	Barlow
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bergeron
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Blois	Boissonnault
Boulerice	Bradford
Bragdon	Brassard
Brière	Brock
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Caputo
Carr	Carrie
Casey	Chabot
Chagger	Chahal
Chambers	Champagne
Champoux	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Dalton
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Ferreri
Findlay	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gainey	Gallant
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gould
Gourde	Gray
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hallan
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Hoback
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Jeneroux
Jivani	Johns
Joly	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Kelly
Khalid	Khanna
Khera	Kitchen
Kmieciak	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie

Routine Proceedings

Business of the House

Kusmierczyk
 Lake
 Lambropoulos
 Lantsman
 Larouche
 Lauzon
 LeBlanc
 Lehoux
 Leslie
 Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
 Lloyd
 Long
 Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
 MacDonald (Malpeque)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Majumdar
 Martel
 Mathysen
 May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McLeod
 Melillo
 Mendicino
 Michaud
 Moore
 Morrice
 Morrissey
 Muys
 Nater
 Normandin
 Oliphant
 Patzer
 Pauzé
 Perron
 Poilievre
 Qualtrough
 Redekopp
 Rempel Garner
 Roberts
 Rogers
 Rood
 Ruff
 Sajjan
 Samson
 Savard-Tremblay
 Scheer
 Schmale
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Shields
 Sidhu (Brampton East)
 Simard
 Singh
 Sorbara
 Sousa
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake)
 Strahl
 Suds
 Taylor Roy
 Therrien
 Tochor
 Trudeau
 Turnbull
 Valdez
 van Koeverden
 Vandal
 Vecchio
 Vien
 Vignola
 Virani

Kwan
 Lalonde
 Lamoureux
 Lapointe
 Lattanzio
 Lawrence
 Leboutillier
 Lemire
 Lewis (Essex)
 Lightbound
 Lobb
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacGregor
 Maguire
 Maloney
 Masse
 May (Cambridge)
 Mazier
 McDonald (Avalon)
 McKay
 McLean
 McPherson
 Mendès
 Miao
 Miller
 Morantz
 Morrison
 Murray
 Naqvi
 Noormohamed
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Paul-Hus
 Perkins
 Petitpas Taylor
 Powlowski
 Rayes
 Reid
 Richards
 Robillard
 Romanado
 Rota
 Sahota
 Saks
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Schiefke
 Seeback
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Shipley
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sinclair-Desgagné
 Small
 Soroka
 Steinley
 Stewart (Toronto—St. Paul's)
 St-Onge
 Stubbs
 Tassi
 Thériault
 Thompson
 Tolmie
 Trudel
 Uppal
 Van Bynen
 Van Popta
 Vandenbeld
 Vidal
 Viersen
 Villemure
 Vis

Vuong
 Warkentin
 Webber
 Wilkinson
 Williamson
 Zahid
 Zimmer
 Wagantall
 Waugh
 Weiler
 Williams
 Yip
 Zarrillo
 Zuberi— 322

NAYS

Nil

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Members

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Ng— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 12 minutes.

As mentioned in the Speaker's statement of Monday, September 16, the volume for earpieces will now be reset. Members using their earpiece at this time will have to readjust the volume. I thank members for paying particular attention to the sound level.

It is now time for the Thursday question. I recognize the hon. House leader for the official opposition.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (House leader of the official opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is that time of the week when CPAC ratings skyrocket: the Thursday question.

This being the first Thursday back, I would like to welcome my counterpart, who was the House leader for a while. I see he is going to be answering today. He now has a different portfolio, but I know one of the things he misses most about his previous role is the Thursday question, so I am glad to see him have an opportunity to answer it again today.

We already know a little bit about what might come next week, but I would like to know whether the government could inform the House officially what will be the business of the House for the rest of this week and for next week as well.

Hon. Mark Holland (Minister of Health, Lib.): Yes, Madam Speaker, by popular demand, I am back. I really missed these exchanges. Some of our great moments are on Thursdays, not just for CPAC viewers, but also for you and me personally, I know. Therefore it is wonderful to exchange and wonderful to be back. I want to wish members a good return. I hope everybody had a productive and happy time with their families and their constituents in their ridings.

[*Translation*]

This afternoon, we will resume second reading debate of Bill C-66, the military justice system modernization act.

Tomorrow, we will begin the report stage debate of Bill C-33, the strengthening the port system and railway safety in Canada act.

On Monday, we will begin second reading debate of Bill C-63, the online harms act.

[English]

Madam Speaker, you will be very happy to know that next Wednesday we will also be resuming second reading debate of Bill C-71, which would amend the Citizenship Act.

I would also like to take the opportunity to inform the House that both next Tuesday and next Thursday shall be allotted days.

Furthermore, on Monday, the Minister of Finance will table a ways and means motion on capital gains taxation that incorporates the feedback received during consultations over the summer. The vote will take place on Wednesday of next week during Government Orders.

* * *

• (1535)

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT TO PRODUCE DOCUMENTS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to respond to the interventions on my question of privilege concerning the government's failure to obey the House order adopted on June 10. From the outset I want to thank the Bloc Québécois House leader and the hon. member for Windsor West for their interventions in support of my question of privilege.

As for the Bloc Québécois House leader's comment about my one-week proposed time frame possibly being too short, I would invite him to consider the fact that the documents have already been assembled. Computers and filing cabinets have been searched. If we were asking for documents to be searched for to begin with, like we did when the House adopted a 30-day deadline in its June 10 order, then he would have a fair point.

However, in any event, it has been over three months now. Instead we are saying that the government should simply grab the original set of documents, the ones to which the government applied its big sharpie for redactions, and hand the clean versions over. That should not take very long, so one week, I believe, is quite generous.

The government House Leader, on the other hand, made a substantial response with which I fundamentally disagree. Certain points require, I believe, a rebuttal to assist you, Madam Speaker, in coming to your decision. As I understand her intervention, the Liberal House leader's argument was fourfold. She believes that the House order exceeded its authority in adopting the order—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Could we check the noise in the courtyard, please? It is quite disruptive.

The hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has the floor.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, the Liberal House leader's argument was fourfold. She believes that the House order exceeded its authority in adopting the order, that redactions were authorized because the order did not explicitly require unredacted documents, that any use made by the Royal Canadian Mounted Po-

Privilege

lice of the documents produced could amount to a breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that the only permissible remedy here would be to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Permit me to address her arguments in turn.

First, it would not surprise you, Madam Speaker, to know that I actually believe that the House order of June 10 was entirely within the authority and jurisdiction of the House and that clear jurisprudence will support my position. In her submissions, the government House leader cited page 190 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, which states, "The only limitations, which could only be self-imposed, would be that any inquiry should relate to a subject within the legislative competence of Parliament".

While I will also revisit this citation from Maingot later, let me first add for good measure a quotation from page 1 of the Prime Minister's former caucus colleague Derek Lee's book *The Power of Parliamentary Houses to Send for Persons, Papers and Records*: "Based on principles firmly established in constitutional and parliamentary law (and apart from the following limitations pertaining to Her Majesty, other Houses of parliament and foreign jurisdictions), a House of parliament has the full authority to summon and compel the production of any document."

It is also worth recalling that the order originated from a Conservative opposition motion, and Standing Order 81(13) provides that, "Opposition motions...may relate to any matter within the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada".

I would respectfully submit that the motion debated on June 6 and adopted on June 10 was squarely within the jurisdiction of Parliament. It concerned Sustainable Development Technology Canada, an organization incorporated by Parliament through the Canada Foundation for Sustainable Development Technology Act. Many of its directors and the chair of its board are appointed by the federal cabinet, which is most certainly accountable to Parliament. Quite importantly, SDTC's operations are run with monies that have been appropriated by Parliament. The motion was precipitated by the bombshell report of the Auditor General of Canada, an officer of Parliament, which outlined a massive scandal.

Conservatives were troubled that, given the conduct uncovered by the Auditor General and brave whistle-blowers, crimes may well have been committed. The criminal law is, of course, a well-established area of federal jurisdiction. The documents were to be transmitted to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Canada's police force, also established by an act of Parliament—

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the Speaker actually asked for additional comments a while back. Everyone else has responded. The member has already addressed this particular issue. I am not too sure why he would be standing up again.

Privilege

• (1540)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member is answering the leader of the government's points. I think it is his privilege to do so.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, it is quite a normal practice for parties to listen attentively to arguments raised by other parties and to respond to them and provide information to the Speaker to consider that would rebut one of those points. This is a very normal course of action. I raised my original point of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We agree that the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle has the right to raise the question again.

Hon. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, we are not talking about ordering the production of documents by the administration of a hospital or curriculum decisions of a school. Both areas are squarely within the provincial jurisdiction, so the Liberal House leader's concerns about jurisdiction simply do not carry water.

Second, on her view that the House may not exercise its power to send for papers that would be, in turn, provided to another body, I would draw the House's attention to the fact that this issue has been judicially considered.

In its 1989 decision, *Canada (Auditor General) v. Canada (Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources)*, the Supreme Court of Canada considered the matter of a previous auditor general being stonewalled by a previous Trudeau government. The court reconciled subsection 13(1) of the Auditor General Act, which entitles her to free access to government information, with paragraph 7(1)(b), which requires the Auditor General to report to the House, “on whether, in carrying on the work of [her] office, [she] received all the information and explanations [she] required.”

Chief Justice Dickson held, on behalf of a unanimous bench, at page 98, “The section refers to a duty to report of the Auditor General, but can, in my view, simultaneously be characterized as a reporting remedy.”

He went on to state:

There must be some purpose for conveying such information to the House of Commons and one must assume that Parliament intended the House of Commons to exercise its judgment as to whether to seek the information its servant had not been able to secure....

While it is irregular to cite court decisions as precedent for procedural debates here, it is worth reflecting on the fact that this country's highest court has clearly contemplated the concept of the House exercising its right to send for papers in aid of a third party holding the government to account. However, it is not just a hypothetical exercise. There is, in fact, at least one practical example which I know the Speaker would be familiar with.

On July 22, 2020, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, on which the Speaker then sat, voted to compel the production of documents related to Margaret and Sacha Trudeau's speaking contracts and to provide a copy to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. Parliament was, of course, cynically prorogued one day before those documents were to be turned over.

In the new session of Parliament, when the ethics committee debated readopting the production order, the Speaker told the committee, on October 9, 2020, at page 10 of the evidence:

When that decision was made at the time, I told my colleagues around this table that if they wanted to do that, we could do that, but that we would have to take all the necessary steps to ensure that this information would go directly to the Ethics Commissioner, through the clerk.

However, if the Speaker's views on compelling the production of documents to be passed through the hands of the clerks have changed, then I would invite the Chair to consider this aspect of the motion to be an exercise of the House's privilege to publish papers. That privilege traces its origins to the United Kingdom's Parliamentary Papers Act 1840, the preamble to which begins:

Whereas it is essential to the due and effectual Exercise and Discharge of the Functions and Duties of Parliament, and to the Promotion of wise Legislation, that no Obstructions or Impediments should exist to the Publication of such of the Reports, Papers, Votes, or Proceedings of either House of Parliament as such House of Parliament may deem fit or necessary to be published:

While we normally think of a publication as referring to making something known far and wide to the public, that is not the only such meaning. Page 1250 of the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, second edition, defines the verb to publish as, among other things, to “communicate...to a third party.”

Third, another one of the privileges of the House is the right to regulate its internal affairs, sometimes also known as having exclusive cognizance of its proceedings. Paragraph 11.16 of *Erskine May*, 25th edition, explains:

Both Houses retain the right to be sole judge of the lawfulness of their own proceedings, and to settle—or depart from—their own codes of procedure. This is equally the case where the House in question is dealing with a matter which is finally decided by its sole authority, such as an order or resolution, or where (like a bill) it is the joint concern of both Houses.

This principle has been favourably cited by your predecessors at, for example, page 1940 of the *Debates* for March 1, 1966; page 2039 of the *Debates* for April 27, 2010; page 10004 of the *Debates* for September 17, 2012; and page 18550 of the *Debates* for June 18, 2013.

The procedure and house affairs committee, for its part, wrote in a report, which the House concurred in on December 2, 2013, “Parliament is the sole judge of the appropriateness of the exercise of any of its privileges.”

On parliamentary privilege, the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, notes at page 81, “This area of parliamentary law is therefore extremely fluid and most valuable for the Commons to be able to meet novel situations.”

• (1545)

It is, I would submit, no barrier for the House to consider exercising a novel approach to a document production order, nor does disobedience to that order fall outside the ambit of contempt. Indeed, it may be worth recalling that many of the House's powers were not neatly distilled, but evolved over centuries of struggle and fight, which built up the body of precedence.

Fourth, I would argue that the time for challenging the order's admissibility was back in June, when the House considered the Conservative opposition day motion. Bosc and Gagnon note, at page 565 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition:

Before reading a motion to the House, it is the Speaker's duty to ensure that it is procedurally in order. This is done by verifying that the notice requirement, if any, has been met, that the wording of the motion corresponds to that of the notice, and that the motion contains no objectionable or irregular wording. Any part of a motion found out of order will render the whole motion out of order. If the Chair finds the form of the motion to be irregular, he or she has the authority to modify it in order to ensure that it conforms to the usage of the House....

If the motion is found to be in order, and has been moved and seconded, the Speaker proposes it to the House.

When the House considered the Conservative opposition motion on June 6, this is exactly what happened. Indeed, the Liberals put forward no challenge at all to the motion's admissibility. The opposition motion was placed on notice 48 hours ahead of debate, as required by the Standing Orders, debated for a full sitting day, and then a vote was deferred to the fourth calendar day following the debate. The motion was placed on the Notice Paper on a Tuesday afternoon. It was voted on the following Monday afternoon. At no point in between did anyone object to the motion's admissibility. Only now are we hearing someone make any argument to that effect. This reminds me of a situation with which I have some personal familiarity.

On March 27, 2014, the House adopted an order requiring Tom Mulcair, the then leader of the New Democratic Party, to appear before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which he did on May 15 of that year. The following day, the NDP House leader rose on a point of order to argue that the motion and resulting order were inadmissible. The Chair ruled on June 12, 2014, at page 6719 of the Debates:

I would have been inclined to rule the motion out of order had this matter been raised within a reasonable delay. To be clear, the Chair did not readily deem the motion to be procedurally admissible, as the [NDP] House leader suggested. Instead, in the absence of any objection at the time that the motion was moved, the matter went forward and the motion was adopted.

To argue inadmissibility more than 14 weeks after the House adopted the order, as the Liberal House leader now attempts, simply cannot be allowed. Of course, I would argue that the ruling that the motion was admissible would be the same today as it would have been on June 6.

Fifth, as to whether redactions were authorized, I would recall the law clerk and parliamentary counsel's own words, on page 2 of his July 17 report to you on compliance with the order: "I also note that the order did not contemplate that redactions be made to documents or that information be withheld."

The Maingot passage which the government House Leader cited reads, crucially, "The only limitations, which could only be self-imposed". No limitation in the House's June 10 order to allow for redactions was self-imposed. As I mentioned in my original arguments, it is always for the House itself to determine the scope of its document production orders and to judge the government's reasons for refusing to provide information. It does that through the course of debate, amendment and voting. Regardless, should you disagree with me on this point about redactions, it still does not excuse those

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government institutions which have failed to provide all the required documents by the deadline imposed in the House's order.

Sixth, with respect to the government House leader's concern about the charter rights of anyone who might have defrauded the government or otherwise participated in government corruption, I would recall for you her own acknowledgement that the Chair does not decide questions of law. In any event, it is also important to recall that the law of parliamentary privilege is a body of constitutional law on equal footing with the Charter. As for a policy-based argument about charter concerns, that is one which I would submit would be more properly made in the course of debate on the June 6 opposition motion or, should you find a prima facie contempt, on the subsequent privilege motion the House would debate.

These views certainly were not advanced during the June 6 debate. During that debate, Liberals were much more focused on speaking about a machinery of government announcement about the Liberals coming up with a new way to deliver its green slush fund. My counterpart suggested that perhaps a procedure and House affairs committee study might be appropriate. To that, allow me to quote from paragraphs 84 and 86 of the 2019 report of the U.K. House of Commons procedure committee on document production, which I cited in my original arguments.

● (1550)

It states:

Ministers are responsible for putting before the House their arguments against the disclosure of information which they believe requires protection. If they then cannot persuade the House to endorse those arguments by the process of decision and vote—or do not attempt to do so—they must determine how far they should comply with the resulting resolution or order of the House. It is not for the House to put in place procedures and practices which shield Ministers from the exercise of this responsibility....

The House alone determines the scope of its power to call for papers. In its consideration of each motion it is able to discern whether an inappropriate or irresponsible use of the power is sought, and whether it is being asked to require the production of information from Ministers on a scale disproportionate to the matter under debate. We expect that in each such case the House will continue to exercise its judgment in favour of a responsible use of the power.

Seventh, as for the Liberal House leader's concerns about it appearing as if the House is directing law enforcement, I would recall the comments of the Bloc Québécois House leader, who said it is up to the RCMP to decide what to do with the documents. The House order solely required the law clerk and parliamentary counsel to transmit the documents. It has not obliged the RCMP to open the envelope or insert the USB key into a computer.

In any event, I would take note of paragraph 11.29 of Erskine May, 25th edition, which states:

In cases of breach of privilege which are also offences at law, where the punishment which the Commons has power to inflict would not be adequate to the offence, or where for any other cause the House has thought a proceeding at law necessary, either as a substitute for, or in addition to, its own proceedings, the Attorney General has been directed to prosecute the offender.

Privilege

Lee expands upon this issue at pages 211 to 213 of his book for those who are interested in reading more.

Students of the U.K. Parliament will recall that its House of Commons used to have, until recently, an annual practice of adopting, on the opening day of each session, a sessional order directed to the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police to keep streets leading to the Palace of Westminster free and open. I am not suggesting that we direct the police or prosecution here, but it is a point that is important in understanding the authority of the House of Commons.

Finally, as for the Liberal House leader's argument that the only appropriate motion would be to refer the matter to the procedure and House affairs committee, I disagree. When her deputy tried to advance the same argument in respect of the proposed motion to address the question of privilege concerning the ArriveCAN contractor Kristian Firth's refusal to answer committee questions, the Speaker ruled, on March 22, 2024, at page 21946 of the Debates, the following, "I am of the view that it is procedurally in order. As with the case cited from June 2021, the motion provides for...a specific remedy to the offence."

My motion would do just that, provide a remedy to reorder the production of the documents. Bosc and Gagnon describe, at pages 986 and 987, the options available to a committee that is meeting resistance to its document production order: to accept the refusal, to seek a compromise or to insist on its position by upholding its original order. My proposed motion, effectively, is that third option. I would submit that, for this purpose, there is no distinction between the House or one of its committees.

In any event, Bosc and Gagnon discuss, at pages 138 and 987, the scenario where a committee report to the House on a case of disobedience to a document production order, which I note would be a contempt, may be addressed by the House adopting its own order for the production of documents. Indeed, the 2021 case mentioned saw the House order the president of the Public Health Agency of Canada attend the bar of the House for, among other things, the purpose of turning over the documents which had not been provided. That was, in turn, modelled on precedent cases, which Bosc and Gagnon describe at pages 131 and 132.

In conclusion, the arguments of the government House leader simply do not add up. The government failed to respect the validly expressed and lawful will of the House of Commons. That is a contempt of Parliament. If the Speaker agrees, Conservatives will give the Liberal Prime Minister one more chance to respect Parliament and turn over the green slush fund documents within one week.

Simply put, all the arguments that the government House leader made would more properly be not for the Chair's consideration but for members' consideration during debate on the privilege motion itself. The Chair is not supposed to accept new restrictions on the power of the House's authority to send for papers. That is something that only the House can do itself.

The Speaker's role in this case is to simply judge, almost as though it were a simple mathematical formula. A production order was tabled, debated and voted on. It passed. That checks that box. Was the production order respected? No. There is only one conclusion. If the production order is not respected, the Speaker must put

that issue to the House, and then the House can decide what the most appropriate remedy is.

• (1555)

FOREIGN INTERFERENCE AND ALLEGED REPUTATIONAL HARM TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, very briefly, I want to contribute to the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Vancouver East concerning the special report of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians.

The hon. member is right to be worried about foreign interference, and especially about the Liberal government's abject failure to do anything about it. Indeed, several Conservatives, such as the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills and the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, as well as our former colleague Kenny Chiu, have also been targeted by the Beijing Communist regime's tactics.

This committee's special report made a lot of sensational revelations about the extent of foreign interference in the federal political scene, many of which the hon. member cited in her intervention. In fact, all Canadians were shocked by the special report.

There is one more revelation from the special report, which speaks to the very heart of why we should be worried about the Liberal Prime Minister's inexcusable failures to defend Canadian democracy from outside interference. The special report revealed in paragraph 126:

In December 2019, the Clerk of the Privy Council sought the Prime Minister's authorization to implement the Committee's recommendations by having CSIS brief parliamentarians in the early weeks of the 43rd Parliament. The Prime Minister's Office never replied formally to the recommendation. In December 2020, the NSIA returned to the Prime Minister to seek authorization for CSIS to brief parliamentarians.... The package for the Prime Minister included draft instruction letters to the Ministers of Public Safety and Defence to coordinate the briefings....

The Conservatives have recently come to learn that this project was not advice that was closely held to the Prime Minister and his most immediate advisers. The Privy Council Office has released, under the Access to Information Act, an unredacted version of the government House leader's 2019 transition briefing book, which also discusses the parliamentary briefing proposal.

In November 2019, the Prime Minister's recently resigned Quebec lieutenant was informed, at page 27 of his briefing book:

Pending a decision by the Prime Minister, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and PCO have prepared an unclassified, introductory briefing on foreign interference risks faced by parliamentarians. The briefing could be delivered to MPs and senators in sessions offered by the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Government House Leader) and the Government Representative in the Senate in the early weeks of the 43rd Parliament.

Now we know that the public service was pushing at all corners of the Liberal government to make sure parliamentarians were alert to the threats around us, but those briefings were never held nor were they ever offered.

NSICOP tells us that when he was asked why he never took action, “The prime minister responded that he thought that the Parliamentary Protective Service already briefs new parliamentarians about foreign interference.” If that is to be believed, that answer is dripping in ignorance, and it is ignorance in which the Prime Minister would prefer to keep Canadians about the threats posed by foreign interference in Canada’s Parliament.

Under subsection 21(5) of the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians Act, the Prime Minister directed the committee to provide him with a revised report, revised to redact the names of the individuals involved. It is, frankly, unacceptable that any parliamentarian would wittingly aid a hostile foreign power to undermine our democratic process and elections, which every member of Parliament is sworn to protect.

Canadians deserve to know if federal parliamentarians have knowingly engaged in activities on behalf of foreign governments that have undermined Canada’s national interests. NSICOP’s findings cannot be ignored, and we cannot trust the Prime Minister on this critical issue.

That is why the Conservatives have been calling since June for the parliamentarians who have betrayed Canada’s interests to be named. If Canadians are to continue to have faith in their federal democratic institutions, they need to know who has broken their oath and betrayed their trust. This is what Canadians deserve. Anything less risks fuelling public suspicion about a cover-up of information known to the Liberal government about members of Parliament working for foreign states against the interests of Canada.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I thank the hon. member for the comments.

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• (1600)

[English]

MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-66, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on one level, this is a relatively simple bill that would transfer the issues of sexual offences from the military’s jurisdiction to civilian jurisdiction so that military personnel are treated in the same fashion that civilians are. This flows from a rather lengthy response.

No bill nor change in culture happens quickly, whether it is in the military or otherwise, but in the “House Standing Committee on National Defence (NDDN), MND Update to Parliament on Arbour Recommendations”, from December 13, 2022, on the last page of the 50- or 60-page document, is recommendation number five,

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which is that the Government of Canada proceed with this bill. It goes into some detail, which is not necessary, but I am happy to table it. It also outlines the implications of the efforts the government has made to complete this recommendation, including consultations with territories and provinces, and ministers, such as the national defence minister, public safety minister and justice minister, meeting with all the provinces and territories.

I will not detail all of the work that has gone into responding to this recommendation. It may well appear that it is a simple thing to take the jurisdiction from the military courts and put it into the civilian courts, but it is a lot of work, and I want to commend the ministers who have worked diligently on bringing us to this point today.

I understand that this bill will gain a lot of support in the House, and so it should. It is in some respects symbolic of what has been a slow and painful culture change in the military. It is a very symbolic bill, in that it is a particular marker of response by the military.

Canada’s military today is not our fathers’ military and it is certainly not our grandfathers’ military. It is a far more sophisticated organization, and it calls upon a range of talents and abilities that probably could not have been dreamed of even 10 or 20 years ago. Therefore, Canada’s military needs to be a welcoming and inviting organization for all of Canada’s citizens to participate in.

I will point members to the first recommendation of the defence committee, from June 2022: “That the Government of Canada take decisive steps to transform the institutional culture within the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure an inclusive, safe and respectful workplace for all Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence personnel.” That is the core reason this bill is in front of the House. It is because we need to change.

The threat environment, even in the last two years, has dramatically changed. We can think of Ukraine. We can think of the South China Sea. We can think of Palestine. This morning we had a threat briefing from three very able individuals, and I must admit that all of my colleagues on the committee came up to me afterwards and said that it was really excellent.

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• (1605)

Because the threat environment has changed and we need a whole-of-society response to this change in culture, this bill needs to be passed, as it is essentially treating these kinds of offences in the same manner that offences would be treated in a civilian court. There should be no difference. There are difficulties with the military justice system. If there is an incident of some kind with two uniformed personnel, somebody is saluting somebody, and after the incident takes place, people still have to carry on their regular business of the day. It is extremely awkward and difficult. While we properly focus on the victim, we also need to keep in mind that there is justice on both sides.

In the Canadian military, we need a wide diversity of skills. I want everyone to think for a moment of a young woman or man contemplating a career in the Canadian military. In the past, and I hope no longer, there was a perception that over the course of a career, there was a high percent chance that a sexual incident would happen. Think of a young woman or man being invited into an organization where there is a significant chance that something will happen and, if something happens, there is a significant chance that the resolution will be unsatisfactory. They are not going into the same justice system as they would if the exact incident happened on the street, for want of a better term. That is going to affect their career, and the discharge arrangements for their career will not be as satisfactory as they otherwise could be. We should ask ourselves how that works for a military that is trying to recruit people. If we think of it from the standpoint of a young woman or man, that aspect of a career in the Canadian military is not attractive, but we need their skills.

In some respects, this bill would deal with one of the more egregious aspects of recruitment and retention. The Canadian military is significantly undermanned, somewhere in the order of 16,000 people. When I asked General Allen how many people were applying, she said 70,000 people. I then asked how many we are processing and she said about 4,000 or 5,000 a year. That is not a great outcome.

We need to up our game. The threat environment has changed dramatically. This bill would be a symbolic and real response to the need for culture change. We need skills available to the Canadian military, and I am rather hoping that with the co-operation of our friends and colleagues, we will move on this legislation so that we can demonstrate that we are serious about making this cultural change and reflecting it.

• (1610)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was on the status of women committee when it studied sexual assault in the military, and the heartbreaking stories of the trauma that had been experienced demanded urgent action. However, here we are two and a bit more years later with nothing much done by the Liberal government. It is bringing forward a bill that may not even make it through the Senate by the time the next election happens.

In the bill, I am specifically concerned about the increase in ministerial powers to get involved in individual cases. We saw in the past the same members and ministers of defence obstructing in the

General Vance case and in several other cases. Could the member comment on what protections will be in place to ensure that ministers do not intervene in a way that is detrimental to survivors?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, a proper reading of the bill deals with the concern raised by the member. There is a concerted effort to simply treat this kind of incident in the same fashion as a civilian incident, period; end of sentence. I encourage the hon. member to read the response of the defence department in the final paragraph. The ministers and the governments have made efforts to make what appears to us to be a simple change, but it actually turns out to be fairly complicated and with some resistance on the part of civilian courts and the various governments they represent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed the speech by my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood. He is a wise man.

When he says that the example has to come from the top, I would remind him that former chief of the defence staff Vance was appointed in 2015 by the Conservatives and then protected by the Liberals. He was never charged during his entire tenure, but matters of sexual misconduct in his file shadowed him the entire time.

My question is this. The first report in 2015, the Deschamps report, covered essentially the same sexual misconduct information. In 2022, Ms. Arbour was asked to prepare a report. Her report said exactly the same thing. Ms. Arbour also said that she failed to understand why another report on this matter was even necessary when one had already been released.

Can my colleague explain why we are dealing with this issue today, after such a long time, and in such an important file?

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, we would all wish to move more rapidly; that is a given. Even Madam Justice Arbour, who is very familiar with how legislation gets created and implemented, recognized this was going to take time. I am rather pleased that during the interim, the government has, in many instances, responded quite significantly to the other recommendations that Madam Justice Arbour put forward and that have been in various stages of implementation. It is legitimate on the part of the hon. member to continue to call the government to account for the recommendations she has made.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP has been fighting for meaningful legislation to be brought forward since government first announced the transferring of cases, but the government's delay in bringing this legislation forward has had the tragic consequence of survivors being robbed of justice by concurrent jurisdictions causing cases to be stayed. We want this legislation to reach committee quickly, we are hearing that around here, so we can strengthen the bill and ensure more cases are not stayed. We also know this bill needs to pass to protect future cases from potentially being stayed by undue delays in the transfer of evidence. Many survivors have expressed their frustration that this bill was created by Ottawa lawyers without their input.

How can the government protect survivors when the minister is not actually consulting them?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I am as interested in getting this bill to committee as the hon. member is. I chair that committee. Insofar as I have any authority in that committee, it will move as quickly as we can move it. I am looking forward to the co-operation of my colleagues.

• (1615)

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is good to be back after the summer break and have my first speech in the House and represent the good people of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan. I would like to start off by saying that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

I am happy to have been given the opportunity today to speak to Bill C-66, a bill to introduce changes to national defence aimed at modernizing the military justice system, and responding to the recommendations made by two former justices of the Supreme Court of Canada. This is the government's long-overdue legislation to try and finally apply recommendations made in numerous reports regarding sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces.

We must continue to address sexual misconduct, discrimination, racism and other forms of harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces because all military members deserve a safe and respectful workplace. The previous Conservative government accepted all recommendations from the Deschamps report to eliminate all forms of sexual harassment from the Canadian Armed Forces. This important report was ignored by the government, and it is disappointing that the Liberal government has failed to act on this important report. Liberals cannot be trusted to stop sexual assault within the Canadian Armed Forces because of their soft-on-crime policies. After nine long years of the Liberal government and two more reports from former Supreme Court justices, victims of military sexual misconduct are still no closer to having their cases dealt with properly.

I support Bill C-66, but let me make this perfectly clear: it needs to be carefully studied at committee to ensure concerns from all stakeholders are taken into consideration and amended appropriately. There are also outstanding concerns about the ability of the civilian judicial system to handle these particular cases, given that the court system and courtrooms are already backlogged due to the Liberals' soft-on-crime policies and repeat offenders getting out of jail on bail and committing more crimes. It is a continual cycle that the Liberal government has created. Its present catch-and-release system is failing the people of Canada and, if implemented in the military, will fail both the military and the people of Canada.

The Liberals have had many reports that they could have already acted on, but instead we are in the last year of a parliamentary session, and only now are they taking any legislative action. The reports that I am speaking of include the 2015 Deschamps report, which I mentioned earlier; the 2018 Auditor General report on inappropriate sexual behaviour in the Canadian Armed Forces; the 2021 Justice Fish report; the 2021 DND Canadian Armed Forces ombudsman report on sexual misconduct; and the 2021 "Eliminating Sexual Misconduct Within the Canadian Armed Forces" report

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from the status of women committee. There would also have been a report by the Standing Committee on National Defence, but the Liberals instead chose to filibuster and keep the committee in the same meeting for three months, then prorogue Parliament for the Prime Minister's impromptu election in 2021. Instead of taking action, they asked for another report by another former justice and got the 2022 Arbour report.

• (1620)

I will add here that according to Statistics Canada data reported since 2015, disappointingly, total sexual assaults in Canada were up 74.83% and increased an additional 71% last year. These are horrific to hear. These are stats that we do not want to hear but we cannot ignore.

We did our own study in veterans affairs committee on women veterans, and spent a lot of time speaking with survivors of military sexual trauma. This study took the better part of a year. We heard several difficult stories, dating back to when women were first admitted into the Canadian Armed Forces. For me, personally, these were horrific to hear and have left a lasting impression on me that we need to act correctly and do better.

One of the issues we heard about was the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to investigate these claims. Jennifer Smith said in her testimony:

I've spoken about it in Federal Court. I've given this information to many, many high-ranking officials. I've even provided the names of some of my attackers as well as pictures. Again, I've never been offered the opportunity [to file a complaint]. I still don't know what avenue I have to go forward with this. I've been told to write it down on a claim form. I feel that this goes beyond that. This is criminal activity. I know who did it. I know some of the people who did it. I'm just wondering why no one has come to me or reached out to me. I've given the information. I haven't been asked if I want to go forward with that or been presented with some options. That has not happened.

Clearly, there is a need to have civilian courts investigate these cases outside the chain of command of military. Our committee made that recommendation. However, this same recommendation has been made several times before, going back to the Deschamps report of 2015, nearly a decade ago.

Just now, a year away from the next scheduled federal election, the government is finally going forward with legislation on this. It is instances like this that make it so difficult to take the Liberal government seriously, to reconcile horror stories I hear first-hand of pain and suffering and not acting.

On top of that, the Liberal government has spent the last decade pushing our courts to the breaking point. The Liberals' soft-on-crime bills, Bill C-75 and Bill C-5, have led to a skyrocketing crime rate in Canada. Statistics Canada lists total sexual assaults as increasing by 75% since 2015.

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The Prime Minister has continuously shown that he does not take the safety and security of Canadians seriously. His Liberal government is watering down serious offences. These offences include date rape, drugs and human trafficking, which is on the rise. They once again prioritize the rights of criminals over the rights of victims. At a time when our courts are overworked and understaffed, this legislation aims to add more cases to their dockets. This is one of the serious issues that needs to be examined in committee.

I want to share that I have seen the military justice system work while I served. Whether it was summary trial, court martial, or dismissal of military personnel, I have seen it work. However, there has to be another level of oversight.

The next Conservative government would rebuild the Canadian Armed Forces by cutting down the bureaucracy and the consultants. We would make sure that the money is going to the Canadian Armed Forces. We would restore the honour and integrity of our military heroes that Canadians can be proud of. Finally, we would reverse the left-wing Liberal woke culture and return the war-fighting capabilities of the brave women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague is talking about a previous government that allegedly did all sorts of great things for military justice reform. His party did nothing. It did nothing at all during the nine years it was in power, and yet my colleague comes here to criticize.

We all agreed that this bill is important. A number of measures have been taken in recent years. Twenty of Ms. Arbour's 48 recommendations have been implemented. We are going to keep working until 2025 to implement them all.

However, today, we are here to talk about Bill C-66, because recommendation 5 provides for a change to the National Defence Act.

Will my colleague agree to send this bill to committee so it can be studied and moved forward?

[*English*]

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, as I pointed out, under the Conservative government we did initiate reports, and they were delayed by the Liberal government. As I also stated, we believe not everybody has been heard on this, and because of the way this report is written, we want the bill to go to committee so we can make some adjustments and have input.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's speech, which was very sensible. There is still important work to do. We must continue to do it in order to protect people and especially our soldiers. Sending this bill to committee is a first step. We also need to leave enough time so that the bill can get to the Senate and then be given royal assent. That is part of our responsibility.

My colleague does not have confidence in this government, and we cannot blame him. That being said, does he have confidence in all of the opposition parties?

[*English*]

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, my answer is no. I have no confidence in the other parties in the House. I have full confidence in the Conservative Party, and I am grateful to represent the Conservative Party in my riding.

I want to see this report go to committee so we can have input and so some of the reports we have dealt with in the past can reflect this.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am on the veterans affairs committee with the member. I was one of the lead people who put forward the study on women veterans. A focused study on women veterans had never been done in Parliament before.

One of the things we heard from those women was that because they were serving federally and moving from one province to another, sometimes where the incident happened was not where they were moved to, so cases got dropped. We need to figure this out in the civilian world so that does not happen.

I am wondering if the member is going to work seriously in this committee. I hope to see the committee move rapidly, because it is a big issue that needs to be addressed immediately. I hope the Conservatives will be dealing with real issues that matter to women veterans and, of course, not playing the games the Conservatives like to play.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her work on the veterans affairs committee.

As the member has heard during committee, when I served with the Canadian Armed Forces, we always wanted to protect everybody in our platoon. We always protected them, and it did not matter what race or sex a person was. Obviously, I want to make sure that everybody is protected.

Conservatives would like the bill to be expedited as quickly as possible, but we also have to take the time to make sure that there is input and that people are truly protected and looked after. It does not matter what province or country a person is in when serving.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise to speak in the House.

[*English*]

On behalf of the wonderful people of Calgary Midnapore, whom I continue to be so proud to represent, I am here today speaking to Bill C-66.

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I will start by saying that as a Conservative and as a woman here in the House of Commons, I believe and Conservatives believe we need to continue to address sexual misconduct, discrimination, racism and other forms of harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces, because all military members deserve a safe and respectful workplace. I believe this as the shadow minister for the Treasury Board as well. I will also say, with a lot of pride, that Conservatives are proud of and support all of our men and women in uniform who serve Canada. Let us give a round of applause in the House of Commons right now for all the men and women who serve Canada.

The principle of this bill is to be respected and appreciated. However, we need to really consider two major factors when we consider Bill C-66. Number one is the results we have seen from the Liberal government so far. Is its money where its mouth is? Second is what is really important in our military and what is really going on with our armed forces at this time.

The Liberal government has had several reports it could have acted on, but instead, here we are in the last year of a parliamentary session for the current government and only now is it taking action. These reports include the 2015 Deschamps report; the 2018 Auditor General report on inappropriate sexual behaviour in the Canadian Armed Forces; the 2021 Justice Fish report; the 2021 DND-CAF ombudsman report on sexual misconduct; and the 2021 “Eliminating Sexual Misconduct Within the Canadian Armed Forces” report from the status of women committee, which my colleague the member for Sarnia—Lambton alluded to in her question to the previous Liberal speaker. There also would have been a report by the Standing Committee on National Defence, but the government instead chose to filibuster and keep the committee in the same meeting for three months and then prorogue Parliament for the Prime Minister’s impromptu election. Instead of taking action, the Liberals asked for another report by another former justice and got the 2022 Arbour report.

Meanwhile, according to Statistics Canada, since 2015, total sexual assaults at all three levels were up 74.83% and increased 71% last year alone.

My point is that the current government has had the opportunity through several reports to take action and it has deferred taking action. Most insulting, which my colleague referred to, is how the government handled the sexual misconduct cases in 2021. For over six months, the Prime Minister and the then defence minister, now Minister of Emergency Preparedness, continually covered up information on sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. We are not surprised on this side of the House to see that these concerns, pleas and issues of great importance would only be spoken to, be given platitudes, with no real action taken.

The Liberals then went to great lengths to block investigations and hide the truth from Canadians. Again, this is not only with regard to harm within the Canadian Armed Forces. As a result of soft-on-crime bills, like Bill C-75 and Bill C-5, Statistics Canada data since 2015 states that total sexual violations against children are up 118.85%, forcible confinement and kidnapping is up 10.63%, indecent harassing communications are up 86.41%, incidents of non-consensual distribution of intimate images are up 801.17% and trafficking in persons is up 83.68%. This is what we are seeing as a result of the inaction of the current government.

• (1635)

The Liberals put forward bills like Bill C-66, but they have done nothing. All of their previous platitudes and grandstanding were fake efforts to make real change, not only within Canadian society but within the Canadian Armed Forces. The annual number of reported incidents of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces was 256 in 2018-19; it went up to 356 in 2019-20, to 431 in 2020-21, to 444 in 2021-22, and was 443 in 2022-23.

The Liberals talk a lot about things they want to do, reports they are doing and announcements they make, but the results speak for themselves. Nothing has changed. Nothing has improved in the Canadian Armed Forces. Our first point is that we are not seeing the results for the Liberals’ efforts, because frankly, the Liberals are not doing anything.

The second is that we need to admit to the serious status of our Canadian Armed Forces, and after nine years of the Liberal government, our military is in a state of disrepair. The government has failed our Canadian Armed Forces and the men and women who serve. Our troops are hurting at home and abroad. They have been sent overseas and forced to pay for their own meals and buy their own equipment. Military families are turning to charity because they cannot afford the basic necessities.

In 2017, the Prime Minister promised to invest more in our forces, but has instead let \$10 billion lapse and is now cutting the defence budget by another billion dollars. This cut affects operational spending. This means the situation facing our troops is not getting better. It is getting worse after nine years of Liberal neglect. The Liberals have overspent in every department except our military. They have shown that they do not care about our troops or the Canadian Forces.

This is being noticed internationally. It is being noticed at NATO. It is being noticed by what is historically our greatest neighbour and ally to the south, the United States of America. It is the reason Canada was excluded from AUKUS, the Australia-U.K.-U.S. arrangement, as well as the quadrilateral security dialogue between Australia, India, Japan and the U.S. There are even discussions to exclude Canada from the G7, if members can believe it, as a result of our lack of commitment. We do not put our money where our mouth is.

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Then again, this is not a surprise coming from a Prime Minister who told our heroes they are asking for more than we can give. We are not taken seriously abroad as a result of the constant lack of judgment, whether the Prime Minister is praising the Cuban regime or siding with Hamas over Israel and refusing to support the U.S. in moving its embassy to Israel. It is just a constant lack of making the decision to stand with our allies.

As I said on funding, the Prime Minister and the defence minister are cutting \$1 billion per year over the next three years and allowed \$10 billion to lapse in the defence budget over the last several years. In fact, according to the most recent public accounts, \$1.2 billion lapsed in defence spending in 2021 alone.

In conclusion, the Liberals can say that they care, that they are doing these nice things. They have had the opportunity to do much. They have constantly kicked the ball down the field and not done anything. The results speak for themselves. The numbers show that crime and acts of violence have not improved in society with their legislation, nor within the Canadian Armed Forces. Most humiliating is the standing we have lost with our allies around the world, as kicking us out of the G7 is being considered. The numbers and the spending show it.

A Conservative government would commit the spending, stand with our allies and show our men and women in uniform that it supports them. I look forward to doing that along with the member for Carleton.

• (1640)

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would just like to inquire. There were a couple of important votes here in the House just recently, in the last six or seven months, where we were voting on money for the Canadian Armed Forces. We were voting on money, for example, to support its Operation Unifier, the work it was doing in support of Ukraine. We voted on money for its raise.

The member opposite, who just proclaimed her support for the Canadian Armed Forces, actually voted against those supports. Over the past eight years, we have more than doubled the defence budget, and every single time those votes came up, the member opposite, while she has been a member of the House, voted against them. I just wonder how she reconciles her statement of support with her actions. I would remind her that deeds speak.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, the numbers speak for themselves: \$1.2 billion in defence spending alone. The minister is trying to stand up to defend helping Russia export oil and natural resources, relative to Ukraine, to help stand against our allies. The turbine is what I am talking about.

The government is making efforts not to help our ally Israel, not sending equipment that would actually help our allies. It does not matter, because it has reduced spending, which shows disrepute to our allies. As well, the actions consistently go against what they are saying. He can say whatever—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments. The hon. member for Nunavut has the floor.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I thank the member for her passion. This is an important piece of legislation that requires such seriousness, especially thinking about the survivors. We have heard that survivors say that the bill was not thought through well enough, especially for survivors. I wonder whether the member could tell us whether the Conservatives would agree at committee to extend the study so we could make sure that more survivors' voices will be heard at committee.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I believe the NDP member when she says that the survivors feel that the bill was not thought through well enough, because nothing that has been done by the government has been thought through well enough, or it has been thought through well enough with the bad intention of covering up, which is what we saw in the status of women committee.

I stand with the NDP member in her concern for the survivors, and I hope the government will take them seriously and start to take actions that show not only that their intentions are better but also that they are making true efforts to stand behind what they are saying.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I am wondering something about this bill, since neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives took action in the Vance case. What is the Conservatives' vision for this bill and the improvements that need to be made?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. Right now, the Canadian Armed Forces are in bad shape, but I think that our leader and our party will make them a priority. We will give our armed forces the funding necessary to do their job. Respecting our friends around the world will create a better armed forces from which all Canadians will benefit.

• (1645)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Kelowna—Lake Country, carbon pricing; the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, foreign affairs; and the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, indigenous affairs.

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business and to the Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has made it clear that he is committed to ensuring that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are workplaces where all members, military and civilian, feel supported, respected and included. While much has been accomplished toward this goal, there is still more to do.

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Bill C-66 is another critical step toward lasting institutional reform, as well as toward strengthening trust and confidence in the military justice system. It is the next step in the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces' efforts to implement recommendations from the independent external comprehensive review and the third independent review of the National Defence Act.

Apart from the recommendations addressed in Bill C-66, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces have also made progress on recommendations from the minister's advisory panel on systemic racism and discrimination report and the national apology advisory committee report.

Overall, these four reviews have helped define how DND and CAF are undertaking changes to the military justice system and culture change. That is why today I would like to provide the House with an overview of these independent external reviews and the progress the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces have made to implement their recommendations to date.

I will begin with the independent external comprehensive review, also known as the IECR. This review was launched in April 2021 and led by former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour to examine harassment and sexual misconduct in National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as policies, procedures, programs, practices and culture, including the military justice system.

I apologize; I should have mentioned at the outset that I need to split my time with the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

The final report was made public on May 30, 2022, and the minister at the time welcomed all 48 recommendations. When the final report was received, there were 17 recommendations for which implementation could actually be undertaken immediately. These included, but were not limited to, the implementation of recommendation 48, appointing an external monitor to oversee the implementation efforts of the IECR's recommendations.

The minister at the time appointed Madame Jocelyne Therrien as the external monitor, who provides monthly progress reports to the minister on the implementation of the IECR's recommendation. She also provides biannual progress reports that are made available publicly.

The minister also announced the implementation of recommendations 7 and 9, changes to the military grievance and harassment process, in August 2023. With the implementation of these recommendations, any CAF member who has experienced sexual harassment can now choose to direct their complaint directly to the Canadian Human Rights Commission without first exhausting the internal grievance and harassment process.

More recently, in June 2024, the minister announced that in response to recommendations 1 and 2, the CAF had issued interim policy guidance to abolish the definition of sexual misconduct for its policies and to include sexual assault as the stand-alone definition, referring to the Criminal Code as the applicable law.

In response to these recommendations, the term "sexual misconduct" has been replaced with three new terms: "conduct deficient

of a sexual nature", "harassment of a sexual nature" and "crimes of a sexual nature". Sexual assault is also included as a distinct definition in relevant policies. These changes will provide better coherence and clarity, reduce confusion and better capture the range of inappropriate conduct.

The minister also announced the repeal of the duty to report regulations in response to recommendation 11. Madame Arbour found that these regulations, while well intended, took away the agency and control of survivors in the reporting process, potentially leading to the revictimization of those they were meant to protect.

• (1650)

The repeal of the duty to report came into effect on June 30, 2024. As we see with Bill C-66, the department is seeking to remove the CAF's investigative and prosecutorial jurisdiction over the Criminal Code sexual offences committed in Canada, which would address a part of recommendation 5 of the IECR. Since December 2021, all new Criminal Code sexual offence charges are now being laid at the civilian justice system and no new sexual offence charges are being adjudicated in the military justice system. Bill C-66 would also address recommendations from the third independent review of the National Defence Act.

In November 2020, the hon. Justice Fish was appointed to conduct an independent review of specified provisions of the National Defence Act and their operation. In June 2021, the minister tabled the report before Parliament. Justice Fish provided the minister with 107 wide-ranging recommendations that support the ongoing modernization of the military justice system, military policing, military police oversight and the grievance process. This is the most comprehensive independent review and far-reaching examination of the military justice system since the reviews led by former chief justice of Canada Brian Dickson in the late 1990s.

Bill C-66 would address eight recommendations from the review. The amendments would seek to, among other things, modify the process for the appointment of the Canadian Forces provost marshal, the director of military prosecutions and the director of defence counsel services. They would also expand the class of persons who are eligible to be appointed as a military judge to include non-commissioned members, and change the title of the Canadian Forces provost marshal to the provost marshal general, to align with the titles of other senior designations in the CAF. The amendments would seek to strengthen trust in the military justice authorities operating independently from the chain of command and to bolster the trust and confidence of Canadians in the military justice system.

Government Orders

DND and CAF are also building on previous external and internal reports and recommendations focused on racism and discrimination. The minister's advisory panel on systemic racism and discrimination was created to identify ways of eliminating racism, prejudice, discrimination and gender bias within the military. Through the report, DND and the CAF have established the director of anti-racism implementation, formerly the anti-racism secretariat, under chief professional conduct and culture to inform and focus our institutional efforts to address racism and discrimination. We are also collaborating with other government departments in the development of Canada's anti-racism strategy and expanding the availability of anti-racism resources.

There are many intersections between this report and the national apology advisory committee report, which included eight recommendations for the Government of Canada. These included an apology for the treatment of the No. 2 Construction Battalion, the largest all-Black military unit in Canada's history. The government made this historic apology in July 2022.

The Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces maintain an unwavering commitment to implementing the recommendations of former Supreme Court justices Arbour and Fish, as well as the recommendations from the minister's advisory panel on systemic racism and discrimination and the national apology advisory committee. The legislative changes proposed in Bill C-66 would play a critical role in helping us implement some of the recommendations from former justices Arbour and Fish and help rebuild trust in the military justice system.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I see that this bill proposes transferring matters involving military tribunals to common law court judges. I agree in principle. I think it is an excellent idea, and it will solve a lot of problems.

However, it will also add to the workload of the common law courts. Take the Superior Court, for example, which is already overwhelmed. Then there are the vacancies that I have repeatedly asked the Minister of Justice to fill through appointments, and more positions need to be created. There is a need for judges, just across the bridge from here in Gatineau. Just last week, people were telling me how badly new positions need to be created, to bring in new judges. Meanwhile, they are increasing the workload of the judiciary.

I was wondering if my colleague could give us some good news on this issue. Is his colleague, the Minister of Justice, able to confirm that positions will be created soon, that candidates will be appointed to the judiciary in the days or weeks to come, so that we can undertake this new, but important task?

[*English*]

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, I agree that we absolutely need to make sure that we are working very closely with the provinces on this issue. We want to make sure that this transition is smooth. I will say this has been the case for some time now. No cases of sexual misconduct are being adjudicated within the military justice system. All of those cases are being tried in the civil courts.

I will say that ensuring that we are working with the provinces on this is critical. We have heard a number of comments this evening criticizing our government with respect to delays that are provincial in focus. We have to encourage the provinces to make sure they are investing effectively, so there are no backlogs within their court systems.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and, if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any standing order, special order or usual practice of the House,

(a) on the day the House begins the debate on the second reading motion of Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act, one member of each recognized party and a member of the Green Party be allowed to speak for no more than 10 minutes, followed by five minutes for questions and comments, and, at the conclusion of the time provided for debate or when no member wishes to speak, whichever is earlier, the bill be deemed read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed; and

(b) it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development to undertake a study of the factors that led to the recent fires in Jasper National Park, provided that the committee:

(i) invite the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and the President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada,

(ii) hold no fewer than three meetings to be held before October 11, 2024.

[*Translation*]

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

It is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion.

[*English*]

All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

*Government Orders***MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM MODERNIZATION ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-66, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his history of what has gone on. We heard testimony earlier today about how, when survivors of sexual assault had their cases transferred from the military justice system to the civil justice system, many of the cases were thrown out because they took too long. Why did the government not recognize that, because it had not appointed enough justices, rapists were already going free? Why did it not take earlier action to put more judges in place so the survivors could have sought justice?

• (1700)

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business and to the Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am not going to speak to specific cases, because I do not have all that information in front of me. However, I will say once again that we have to work closely with the provinces. We have to encourage the provinces to make sure they are investing effectively.

This recommendation to move recommendation 5 from the Arbour report was a pillar recommendation. This was not a soft recommendation. This absolutely needs to be done, and we have moved in that direction. We know that this is what the stakeholders were asking us to do. We know that there are going to be challenges as we move forward with respect to resourcing and making sure that the provinces are properly equipped to manage. However, again, this is a provincial-level issue and a provincial-level question.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his intervention in the House. I also sit with him on the veterans affairs committee, and he was part of the significant study we did on women veterans. What was horrible about that study was watching woman after woman come in and talk about things that had happened to them and, by the way, whether they were also a victim and now a survivor of sexual interference.

One thing that is very clear to me in any marginalized group is that there is nothing about us without us. That is a common thing we hear all the time. I want the bill passed very quickly because I want to protect these women. I want to have their voices heard. However, of course, my concern is that, if they are not a key part of the consultation process, then that would not be reflected.

Could this member talk about whether this is going to happen and whether the minister will be held to account to make sure it does?

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, I will try to keep it brief, but there is a lot in the question that deserves an answer. I too want to see the bill go to committee. I was the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of National Defence when the meat and potatoes of the study from Arbour came through, and the work we have done on this has been critical.

I agree wholeheartedly with the member opposite, and I think we will work together. I will point out that this is the first piece of legislation in 18 months that I hope and believe we will see full party support for.

Ms. Lisa Hepfner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to explain why I heartily support Bill C-66, the military justice system modernization act. The legislation now before us aims to advance culture change within the Canadian Armed Forces, the CAF, and the Department of National Defence, or DND. In particular, the legislation aims to foster a culture free from sexual misconduct, sexual abuse and misogyny, all of which are forms of gender-based violence.

Bill C-66 envisions a safe work environment for all CAF and DND employees, with supports for victims and survivors of sexual misconduct, including ready access to mechanisms of justice that are currently available to all other Canadians. The vision of Bill C-66 is aligned with “It’s Time: Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence” and the “National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence”, which guide the Government of Canada in preventing and addressing gender-based violence.

Through my work as parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth, I have travelled the country and heard from survivors about the work that still needs to be done to ensure women veterans are heard and are represented and visible in this strategy. The whole of government must address the issue of gender-based violence, not only through the national action plan to end gender-based violence but through all departments. This is why Bill C-66 is so important. All federal departments must be part of the strategy.

In recent years, Canadians have come to understand the gravity of sexual misconduct and the effect it has on victims, survivors and their families, and on our wider society. The #MeToo movement inspired thousands of victims and survivors to tell their stories, often for the first time, and we started to see some real change.

Women were not allowed to serve in combat roles in the Canadian military until a Human Rights Tribunal decision in 1989. That was the year Heather R. Erxleben became the first woman to join an infantry unit. I have learned that at the time there was little thought or effort to accommodate the needs of women who joined the armed forces, like properly fitted uniforms and safety equipment, and an appropriate military culture.

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Recently, as part of my role on the Standing Committee for Veterans Affairs, I participated in a study that led to the report “Invisible No More. The Experiences of Canadian Women Veterans”. I am going to share some of the things we heard at that committee, but I want to start with a warning, because these are stories of sexual violence. They are difficult to hear, and I imagine some of the people watching will want a moment to turn away. They might be triggered by what I am about to share.

One witness told us:

I was drugged, kidnapped and gang-raped while attending mandatory training. The last thing I remember is dozing off in class after our lunch break in the cafeteria, and waking in complete fear in an unknown location, with motel staff waking me. I was completely naked, with no identification, covered in blood and bruises, and I couldn't walk. While the military government covered up a crime, the criminals climbed the ranks.

Another witness said:

I have seen it over and over again. I have seen, on basic training, warrant officers sleeping with cadets and using it as a tool to get sex—convincing a cadet that, if they do this, they'll pass basic training....

Sexual abuse was used as a way of almost controlling...women. I spent a year, at one time, in my career as a commander hiding from senior officers. I mean that literally.

Another veteran said:

How do I tell you what it's like to be in the middle of the ocean, with no land in sight for days, or in the Gulf of Oman, or off the coast of Panama, or even 12 nautical miles off the coast of Vancouver Island, and be told that if there was an “accident”, no one would hear my screams, or sailing with people who would grab my body, manipulate me, brainwash me and use me as a sex toy?

The final quote I will share is this:

From the beginning and throughout my career of 26 years, I was subjected to misconduct by men. In the beginning, it was to make me give up, but later on it was to appropriate my body—from verbal harassment to touching to forced kissing by superiors. It was also the invasion of my private life as a way to force me to accept the unacceptable. However, I consider myself lucky: I am not one of those who was raped.

Canadians are now more aware than ever that acts of sexual misconduct have occurred far too often and been tolerated far too readily, and that the impacts are deep, powerful and persistent. Bill C-66 is a step toward ensuring the goal that all CAF members are respected and safe while they serve. Canadians have also heard about policies and practices, formal and informal, that help create a culture of secrecy and tolerance and make perpetrators feel like they can get away with their actions without any consequences.

● (1705)

By eliminating some of these policies and practices, Bill C-66 would put an end to this sense of impunity and help CAF and DND establish and maintain more trauma-informed, progressive, respectful and positive organizational cultures.

The effective elements of Bill C-66 are rooted in studies led by two of Canada's former Supreme Court justices. The Hon. Morris Fish completed the third independent review of the National Defence Act three years ago, and the Hon. Louise Arbour published the independent external comprehensive review of DND and CAF two years ago. Both of these landmark documents come with recommendations for improving organizational culture, particularly when it comes to sexual misconduct.

One of the most effective recommendations can only be adopted through legislative change, and it is recommendation 5 from the hon. Louise Arbour. It calls for a complete overhaul of the way that sexual offences listed in the Criminal Code and involving CAF personnel are investigated and prosecuted. For sexual offences committed in Canada, Bill C-66 would assign exclusive jurisdiction to civilian authorities. This change would put a much-needed distance between the chain of command and the team of investigators and prosecutors. For victims and survivors, the current lack of distance makes it very difficult for them to pursue and achieve justice.

Bill C-66 would also implement several recommendations made by former Supreme Court justice Fish, making it easier to hold offenders to account. Furthermore, Bill C-66 proposes a series of amendments to other legislation to ensure that the military justice system remains constitutional and aligns with the Criminal Code and the civilian criminal justice system. Bill C-66 is just one important element of the government's larger strategy to advance culture change within the CAF and DND.

A few months ago, the third report of the external monitor documented recent progress made toward implementing Justice Arbour's 48 recommendations, including the following: transforming the complaint system, including grievances; making improvements to enrolment and recruitment processes; creating the Canadian military college review board; doing a comprehensive review of basic training in the CAF and creating a framework to enhance education related to conduct and culture; making a 10-year plan to identify promising candidates among women and other equity-deserving groups; and creating a stronger promotion process for senior leaders to better assess character, talent and competence. Each of these accomplishments is important. The external monitor's report notes that the CAF's commitment to change seems genuine.

As my hon. colleagues recognize, systemic change often lags behind social change, and this description certainly seems apt when it comes to sexual misconduct within CAF and DND. The justice report suggests that, for a long time, DND and CAF have failed to properly investigate allegations, prosecute legitimate offences or hold perpetrators accountable. Abhorrent behaviour has been tolerated for far too long, and the confidence and trust that Canadians once had in the CAF and DND has diminished as a result.

Canadians are no longer willing to look the other way. They expect organizations to prevent and address sexual misconduct and misogyny and for elected representatives to do their part. The legislation before us would help foster culture change and ensure a more trauma-informed and safer work environment for our CAF and DND members. It would ensure accountability and support victims and survivors by providing them with the mechanisms they need to pursue justice and hold offenders to account.

I encourage all of my hon. colleagues to join me and support Bill C-66.

• (1710)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, yes, the Arbour report did clearly recommend this legislative change, but so did the Deschamps report years earlier.

This was a legislative change that was recommended almost 10 years ago and accepted by the previous government, but it sat on the current government's desk without movement for years. Here we are now, nine years into the Liberal government, in the twilight of this Parliament, trying to implement a change that should have been at least initiated close to 10 years ago.

Does the member know why the government, for which she is a spokesperson, waited so long for this legislative change?

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Madam Speaker, I appreciate how the member opposite noted that the previous federal government did not do anything on this. In my speech, I outlined several improvements that have already been made to help improve the culture at CAF and DND.

This is not the first step we have taken. This is not the only thing we have done. It has taken some time. We heard from Louise Arbour that it was going to take time to implement some of these recommendations, but we are working on it. We are moving. We are action-focused.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very much in favour of giving sexual misconduct victims in the military the possibility of being heard in our civilian justice system. However, I hear that some victims are asking to have the option of choosing between the civilian justice system and the military justice system. I am a bit surprised, to be honest.

What does my colleague think of the possibility of letting the victims choose?

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate my colleague from the Bloc Québécois, who works with me at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

Yes, I think that it is very important for victims to have choices. I also find this situation to be surprising. I am not sure, I am not a legal expert, but I think that we should have a system for everyone and that everyone should use it.

[*English*]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the more I learn about this bill, the more I see how important survivors of violence in the military are.

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I am sure that it is already very traumatizing to have to serve in the military, especially in today's society, globally, with all the violence that we are seeing. In particular, with survivors of abuse within the system itself, it makes me quite concerned that there are still a lot of questions that need to be answered. For example, we have been told that law enforcement in different provinces might not be equipped to deal with investigations or those kinds of things.

I wonder if the member agrees that once this gets to committee, expanding the committee to study this bill specifically with a focus on survivors will be so important that that extension is going to be necessary.

• (1715)

Ms. Lisa Hefner: Madam Speaker, that is a very smart question. Absolutely, the focus should be getting this study to committee as soon as possible so that it can become legislation as soon as possible.

I am a little concerned about any delays that may happen. I do not want to see any overextension. I want to see a committee look at this study, make any improvements that are possible and necessary, and get it passed in this House of Commons as soon as possible.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to speak in the House.

I am going to split my time with the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

I support Bill C-66. I support the principle of the bill. This is a legislative change that is needed to implement a recommendation that was made to the previous government in March 2015, which was only a few months before the House rose in 2015. The present government was elected in the election that followed. This government came into office with the Deschamps report freshly in hand, and did absolutely nothing to make this legislative change happen until this year. Last March, six months ago, the Liberals tabled the bill before us, and here we are this week, finally attempting to make the legislative change needed to implement this important recommendation.

The approach on this legislative change for moving the investigation and prosecution of sexual misconduct from military justice to civilian justice is exactly the same approach as everything else that this government does when it comes to the Canadian Armed Forces. Just like everything else, we see delay in the implementation.

We have, right now, ships resting out at sea. We also have fighter jets that have still not been delivered, which is another thing that, nine years ago, the Liberals could have made a decision on. We would have the fighter jets by now, but after years and years of delay, we do not have them.

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We are lucky to have one submarine in the water for maybe a few dozen days of the year. The submarines we have were cast-offs from the British navy from decades ago. This government has been in power for nine years and has done nothing to procure new submarines. Yes, the government has the word “submarines” in its defence policy update, but that is not the same as actually taking concrete actions to procure and build submarines, and have submarines delivered. We also had testimony at the defence committee about the incredibly small number of tanks that are available, even for training, never mind deployment.

On offshore patrol aircraft, the government recently, finally, signed a contract to replace the 40-year-old aircraft that are very close to the end of their operational lives. Also, we do not possess air defence systems. The previous minister of defence did announce, and accepted extraordinary credit for promising, an air defence system to be sent to Ukraine almost two years ago now. It was actually announced to a television audience that it was en route to Ukraine. However, we subsequently learned that not only was it not en route to Ukraine, but there was not even a contract signed to procure it. In fact, it has not even been produced. This is, again, the culture of delay and neglect of this government.

We hear at defence committee that information technology lacking. As well, base housing is in deplorable condition with houses falling apart and a 7,000-unit backlog for people wanting to access base housing. The barracks are in horrific, unsanitary conditions. Health care is also lacking for military families.

New transport and refuelling aircraft are beginning to be procured without a hangar to place them or even a commitment for where they will be based. Howitzers and artillery pieces are entirely lacking, as well as shells. This government let a production line mothball in the threat environment that was emerging, and now Canada and its allies desperately need artillery shells. We do not have the production. The Liberals have, for a year and a half, been dithering without firm contracts to industry or being able to send a firm enough signal to industry for industry to make the investments necessary to get our production lines up and running for artillery shells, and 2,500 a month is nothing. It is less than the Ukrainian army would fire before lunchtime on a given day, if they had the equipment ready.

● (1720)

That is the nature of contemporary threats that we have. Artillery matters. If the present conflicts in the world have taught us anything, it is that these equipment pieces and their ammunition supplies are critical.

With respect to training, 10,000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces do not have adequate training to be deployed. These men and women want to be trained. They want to be up to deployable levels. They want to do missions. Ten thousand members are under-trained and there are 16,000 vacancies. Even the defence committee chair, earlier in this debate, talked about the inability of the Canadian Armed Forces to adequately take in people. Thousands of people are applying to join the forces, and it does not have the capacity to take people in. There are 16,000 vacant positions in the Canadian Armed Forces.

This bill is addressing the well-known and well-documented problem with sexual misconduct in the military, which is a factor in recruitment and retention and certainly a factor in morale. I travelled this past summer to Latvia with the defence committee, where I met some of our troops who are deployed on a critically important mission. These people are the best. I met a 19-year-old private who has more responsibility than I can imagine any young person being given. This very young man was responsible for training and for helping allied soldiers improve and get up to the best of their ability to execute their roles in Latvia. He is a 19-year-old man from northern British Columbia. I met a young lieutenant. She was a platoon commander there. Again, she was a very young woman with extraordinary responsibility for the defence of allied territory. These people are the best and they deserve protection. They deserve access to justice when sexual misconduct happens.

We have talked a lot about culture and culture change in the military. Part of the culture change that needs to happen is overcoming the culture of secrecy, the culture of cover-up. That culture has permeated to the very top levels. We saw the former minister of defence covering up the sexual misconduct of the former chief of the defence staff. We have seen this type of behaviour at the highest levels. We have heard testimony at the defence committee from victims of sexual assault who say that they cannot access justice; not just because of the issue around the lack of access to civilian systems, which this bill would ultimately change, but the inability to get information that they need to file a complaint. The reflexive secrecy around even members of the Canadian Armed Forces accessing their own information is a big part of the problem, and this bill would not fix that, so there is a long way to go in ensuring justice for members of the Canadian Armed Force who are victims of sexual misconduct.

As has been pointed out in this debate as well, it is not like civilian access to justice for sexual assault victims is assured, and far from it. We have seen under the current government an erosion of effective law enforcement and justice for victims. We see crime levels that we have not seen in decades. We have seen an acceleration of crime. We have seen a lack of urgency in appointing judges so that assault victims can access justice and this bill would not change that. Yes, this bill is important. Yes, it should go to committee. However, it should not skip any of the legislative steps.

● (1725)

We need a robust committee study on this. We need to make sure we get it right, that all the victims are heard from and the details of this bill are correct.

Government Orders

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite, in his speech, acknowledging the importance of the bill and his indication that he intends to support it. We wholeheartedly agree. We think this bill is important. Let us get it to committee. Let us get on with the work that needs to be done.

I heard a long litigation of all his previous grievances with respect to the government, but he indicated his personal support for members of the military. How would he reconcile that with the fact that, when a vote came before the House to provide money to give members of the Canadian Armed Forces a pay raise, he voted against it? Deeds speak, and your words are betrayed by your actions. How would you reconcile that?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the hon. minister that he needs to address questions and comments through the Chair and not directly to the member.

The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I voted against confidence in the government. When the estimates were presented, Conservatives voted every chance we had to bring down the government.

The estimates he speaks of, which we voted against, contained a cut to the military budget. I will not take any lessons from him on who supports the military. The government has failed the military every step of the way and continues to do so, notwithstanding this bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague rambled a bit at times, but he kept coming back to the subject at hand, which is Bill C-66. That is better than nothing.

I would like to draw his attention to one aspect. I understand that the Conservatives are prepared to support the bill so that it can at least go to committee. That is more or less our position as well. We will take a closer look and see how we can work together to improve it.

In the current version of the act, subsection 18.5(4) states that, “[t]he Provost Marshal shall ensure that instructions and guidelines...are available to the public.” Apparently, that is no longer included in this bill.

Does my colleague agree that this opens the door to potential abuses?

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, the member brought up a good point. This is why we have legislative processes. This is why the bill needs a thorough study at committee.

While the passage of this bill is urgent, given the length of time the government has caused delay in creating this legislative change, it still cannot be rushed. It has to be done right so we make sure the bill best serves victims and the members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is an important bill, and we have seen for far

too long the reality of women serving our country who are being put in positions that are incredibly unjust, in a system that really continues to press silence upon them. I hear what the member is saying about his concerns, about how long it has taken. I share those concerns. It would have been nice to see a lot of things happen a lot faster.

In this process, when this bill gets to committee, will it be a priority of the Conservatives to get this done as quickly as possible, knowing that it has to be done well, so we can see people in the service fully protected in a new and important way?

• (1730)

Mr. Pat Kelly: Madam Speaker, I am actually no longer a member of the defence committee, but my colleagues who remain there always prioritize important work to ensure the best for our troops, and they will take that approach. They will ensure this bill is examined correctly, and identify if there are any issues and if amendments are required.

We had an intervention a moment ago about some of the details of this bill. I fully expect my Conservative colleagues on that committee will do their jobs, do the jobs they were elected to do, and ensure this bill is done right and returned as expeditiously as it can be, while not neglecting their duty to examine the legislation.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my previous role, I had the great privilege of sitting on the national defence committee, and I dealt with a great many issues related to our Canadian Armed Forces, from housing to procurement, access to medical care and supports, recruitment retention and closing the commitment capability gap. I was honoured to get a near first-hand account of many of the issues the DND and the CAF were facing every single day.

While these are all incredibly important issues, they desperately need the immediate and full attention of the government. There was one in particular that stuck with me, an issue that my colleague on the status of women committee has seen and studied far too often: violence against women.

In this session alone, the committee has studied violence against indigenous women in the context of resource development and inter-partner violence, and we are currently in the middle of a study on coercive behaviour. In fact, in the last Parliament, I studied the very issue that led to today's legislation, which is sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Having sat on these two committees at length, so far the intersection of national defence and violence against women is an issue that I, along with my colleagues, am acutely aware of and uniquely positioned to speak to. Sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces is particularly close to my heart, as I have the honour of representing the brave woman who first brought the issue into the public sphere 26 long years ago by appearing on the front cover of Maclean's magazine.

Government Orders

Dawn McIlmoyle appeared with the words “Rape in the military” emblazoned on the front page beside her photo. I honestly believe that the discourse we are having at several committees at the highest level in the Canadian political process would not be happening today if it were not for individuals such as Dawn, as well as the litany of other survivors who have courageously chosen to come forward with their stories.

To each and every single one of them, I am so sorry that their government has failed them time and time again, but now we thank them for bravely sharing their experiences with us. We as legislators need to hear it. We as legislators need to act on it. There is so much we need to do.

While Bill C-66 is a start that I look forward to perhaps studying in that committee, if they will have me, it is a very limited start, and there is a Herculean amount of legislative and cultural changes in the CAF, particularly in leadership, that need to happen to properly address this crisis. On this last point, I want to make something very clear. It will take years to change this culture.

I have had the pleasure of speaking with General Eyre on many occasions, as well as many other members of the CAF, from flag officers to privates, and I have received nothing but the utmost assurances that they are taking the issue very seriously. I have never doubted any of them for a second, but all of us sitting in this room are not fools. They are not going to allow a CAF member who could be a liability to the matter to speak to someone sitting on the national defence committee. This is why the entire public relations branch exists.

I trust the new chief of the defence staff, General Carignan, will take this matter extremely seriously. It is up to us to ensure that she and her team, as well as the Department of National Defence, have the tools at their disposal to get the job done.

I would like to highlight exactly what I mean when I say Bill C-66 is limited in scope. I think the best way to do this is to read into the record the testimony that someone far more knowledgeable on this matter than I had to say on April 17 of this year at the national defence committee.

On that day, Patrick White, a witness who came forward to committee, shared his own sexual harassment story within the CAF as it related to access to information, a key point of contention in properly addressing misconduct in the armed forces. He spoke of the grievance process, the very method through which this entire process starts. It is massively flawed. One of his many salient points is as follows:

The grievance system, as it stands, requires individuals like me and others to spend our limited part-time, our free time, to fight a system that is paid and employed full-time to fight back. That's the challenge I have. I am not an expert on military regulation, military law, etc., but they have access to all of those resources. They also have access to legal advice on those issues. Members don't. What annoys me more than anything is when senior members who have never been affected in the way some of us have flippantly say, “If you don't like it, grieve it,” knowing full well that they've never had to go through those processes, or maybe they did in a minor way and had success.

● (1735)

Unfortunately, Bill C-66 would not amend the grievance section of the National Defence Act in any way, shape or form. It addresses a very specific element of a crisis that is caked in generations of in-

stitutional rot, flippant indifference and outright arrogance in the Canadian Armed Forces, National Defence and Parliament. In that same committee meeting was Gary Walbourne, a former national defence ombudsman. He actually had to go to war with the government, so to speak, to get the information he needed to do his job. He said this:

We're talking about people who have been put in positions of authority. There are guidelines on what they're supposed to do. They're well written.... However, it is funny that the farther you get up the ladder, the thinner the air gets—I'm sure that's what happens—and the blood rushes to their heads or their egos.

We have a system in place.... It's circumvented by people in the system.

How do we change the culture? I'll go back to this again: We have to start rewarding proper behaviour and punishing bad behaviour. Why do we promote people when they do the wrong thing? Others come forward and offer themselves up, saying, “Listen, guys, this is what's going wrong. Can we get a little help here?” These people are turned on.

You absolutely have a fundamental flaw here, but it's not with your policies. Your policies need updating, sure they do, and you need to adjust a few, add a few things to them and bring in a few more nuances and codicils there, but what we have to get at is the behaviour of the people currently sitting in the seats.

Mr. Walbourne is extremely clear: We do not have a policy problem; we have a people problem. We cannot fix our policy problem if we do not fix the people problem. Any framework set up by any legislation will just fall victim to the same institutional cancer. Every single policy framework in DND and CAF related to justice for victims and survivors has fallen victim to it since women first entered our armed forces, and, quite frankly, this cancer festered for decades beforehand.

Again, to quote committee witness Patrick White:

If I could leave the committee with one final point to think about, it's that if you really want to get to culture change and solve these issues, you need to look at every single aspect of the system and understand how it feeds back in. That includes the honours and recognition system, the promotion system, the grievance system and the military police system—all of it—but with a central view of what the effect would be on these sorts of things that we get to.

Private Members' Business

Correcting the colossal problem starts with us. It comes through our willingness to, first, actually address the change and, second, strengthen, entrench and enforce legislation and policy that holds public officials accountable, including people in the Canadian Armed Forces, public servants and us, as legislators. While Bill C-66 does address some very specific issues in the CAF, there is still no single 35-page bill that will solve a crisis that was 50 years in the making. Bill C-66 needs to be the first of a suite of legislation brought forward in this place to fix this crisis in the CAF, and it needs to continue past the Liberal government, whenever that may be, into the next, whatever it may be. It also needs continued support from all parties involved. Without that willingness to move forward, men, women and marginalized Canadians will continue to be victimized, not only in our armed forces but also in our public service and society at large.

I would like to end by addressing the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, both current and former.

To those who are victims, to those who are survivors, we have failed them. We know we have, but change is coming because of what they have told us. The vast majority of armed forces members recognize there is a problem, but they feel helpless because of a broken system that punishes speaking out or drawing attention to inappropriate behaviour. To them, I say to stay strong. I am not here to admonish them.

Finally, to those who are a part of this problem, they are complicated. This goes for everyone from the new recruit right up to the flag officer, those who think they are entitled to another person's agency because "that is just how it goes here" and those who continuously look away because they believe the individual is a really good guy. If what I have said today upsets them, good. I want them to be upset. I want them to lie awake every night and worry that the system that has enabled and protected their behaviour for generations will collapse and expose them for what they are. They have no place in the Canadian Armed Forces, and they never have.

• (1740)

Hon. Bill Blair: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, given that all members in the House have spoken in favour of the legislation before us, would there be unanimous consent to allow Bill C-66 to be sent to committee?

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

Some hon. members: No.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR A GUARANTEED LIVABLE BASIC INCOME ACT

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-223, an act to develop a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure for me to rise in this House on behalf of those I represent in Winnipeg South Centre.

I want to thank my colleague across the way, the member for Winnipeg Centre, who is also a neighbour of mine. Our constituencies border each another. I know that the member for Winnipeg Centre comes to work every day with a genuine desire to advocate for those she serves. In many instances, those she serves are among the most impoverished in our city and our country.

During my years as an educator, as a teacher and principal in particular, I learned a lot about the various things that are required for kids and their families to live a successful and healthy life. In particular, I recall a program in the Seven Oaks School Division, of which I was an employee for a number of years, located in the northwest part of the city of Winnipeg, that sought to give families and their kids a leg-up. At that time, we took some grant money that had been given to us through a partnership with the province and provided cash to those in need. Usually it was single mothers with kids at home living in some precarious situations by virtue of poverty, intergenerational trauma and other obstacles that daily life presents. We gave them cash on a monthly basis, and they invested it in the basic necessities of life, which included food, books, transportation and other things that would make life easier, healthier and more comfortable for them and their children.

On that note, I want to say that I am extremely proud of the investments that the federal government is making in a national school food program. I understand that there are some significant conversations happening on that and progress is under way with my home province of Manitoba. A collaboration between our two levels of government is going to leverage existing funding to help make sure that kids in need in the province get the type of nutritious and healthy food they need to succeed. Going back to the program in my former school division, what we saw was that people were happier and healthier, and they had the boost and leg-up that they needed.

In my home province of Manitoba, in the 1970s there was an experiment. It was in the city of Dauphin, in northern Manitoba. It was undertaken, constructed and implemented by a woman named Dr. Evelyn Forget, who I am very proud to say is a constituent of mine. I remember that during my by-election just last year, when I knocked on her door and we started talking about basic minimum income, she said that I ought to be thinking about it and gave me some ideas. I asked her if she knew that there was a project in Dauphin in the 1970s and she said, "Yes. I wrote it." It was fascinating for me to have the opportunity to talk to a constituent with such a high degree of expertise and first-hand knowledge of this important issue.

Private Members' Business

Since then, I have had some very interesting conversations with Dr. Forget and other members of my constituency, who have articulated their desire to see me support the piece of legislation put forward by my colleague from Winnipeg Centre. Interestingly, when I read about the program in Dauphin in the 1970s and looked at similar programs implemented as recently as a few months ago in the province of Ontario, I could see some very interesting stories emerging that painted a picture of the ways in which a form of basic minimum income could be of benefit to Canadians.

• (1745)

If the bill is able to pass through this stage of debate to then lend itself to further discussion at committee, it is worthy of our support. It would be of merit for us to have a longer conversation about this legislation. In our parliamentary system, the committee stage, where we hear from witnesses and experts who give us guidance on whether it makes sense for us to move forward, is an appropriate place for this legislation to further explore the merits or disadvantages of a basic minimum income.

When the time comes to vote on the legislation, I will be lending my support to it. I do have questions and concerns, particularly as they pertain to cost, fairness and distribution. However, as I noted a moment ago, I trust that a thorough review at the committee stage of the proposed policies that are listed in this legislation will help us answer questions and let members decide at that point whether on its merits, the legislation deserves to go to the next stage.

I am going to keep my remarks more brief today than perhaps I would otherwise. I will conclude by again thanking my colleague and neighbour in Winnipeg for putting forward this legislation and enabling us to have an important discussion in this place about how we can support one another. I look forward to following the remarks to come from other colleagues as we decide whether to allow the legislation to advance to the next stage.

• (1750)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a great privilege to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the residents of Calgary Shepard. Over the past two years, constituents have written to me on multiple occasions, both for and against a universal basic income, and specifically on the legislation before us as well as what I will call its partner legislation, which is in the Senate.

It is very confusing when the bills have almost the same number, and sometimes people get them confused. It is very difficult to understand when we are sent a bill number in the subject line but it is not explained whether it is S or C and I am left trying to figure out which legislation it is. I am always looking to respond, but sometimes I get it wrong, and then there is a conversation back and forth.

I have taken the time to read the legislation over, and I want to give the member who sponsored it the benefit of going through each section on the merits of the content. I will be voting against the bill, so I want to explain section by section why that is.

Clause 3 is on the national framework. This is the part that a lot of constituents have told me they have concerns about. There are those people who support it as well, but on the balance, my con-

stituents want me to vote against it. It would create a national framework for the implementation of a guaranteed livable basic income program throughout Canada for any person over the age of 17, and then it goes on to include temporary workers, permanent residents and refugee claimants.

It does not say “successful claimants”. It does not have the classification of protected persons. It does not refer to international students. It uses the wording “temporary workers”, which, when one reads it over, could mean a series of different things.

The bill also does not have a royal recommendation. It does not seek to spend any money. Therefore when I was responding to constituents, I noted for them that the bill does not have a budget, an amount, assigned to it, which is one of the reasons I would vote against it right away, because it would create a framework legislation. I generally do not support framework legislation. I have on a few occasions when I thought it would not be an imposition of huge new costs.

Subclause 3(2) has a consultation provision. Generally I like these types of consultation requirements with provincial, territorial and indigenous governments. I think they are more than reasonable. I come from the province of Alberta, where there is a requirement for the provincial government to consult, especially, for example, with Métis Settlements General Councils, or MSGCs. So far, I think Alberta is the only provincial government where it is a requirement; legislation affecting MSGCs cannot be changed without their consent. I think it is one of the first, if I am not wrong, among provincial governments, and I think it is a good idea generally.

Now I will move on to the content, which is subclause 3(3). It says that the framework must include four different types of provisions in it. For example, “guaranteed livable basic income program does not result in a decrease in services or benefits meant to meet an individual’s exceptional needs related to health or disability.” Of course this would not be universal, which in my view would be equal treatment for all, exactly the same.

I have read economics magazines and journals on the subject, which I will refer to in a moment, and they specifically state that a UBI or a negative income tax, which famously is kind of where the idea comes from, has to be completely equal to every single person regardless of their starting point.

There is also information in paragraph 3(3)(c) that would ensure that “participation in education, training or the labour market is not required in order to qualify for a guaranteed livable basic income”, and I have questions about temporary workers being made eligible for something like this. As I said, international students are not mentioned, but international students, as of September 1 of this year, can continue to work 24 hours per week in our labour market. However, as non-participation would allow them to participate in this benefit, they are specifically excluded in subclause 3(1). I do not know whether that was intentional or not.

Private Members' Business

Paragraph 3(3)(b) would “create national standards for health and social supports that complement a guaranteed basic income program and guide the implementation of such a program in every province”. I have two major concerns with this. One is that it would be an encroachment into provincial jurisdiction. My province gets to set what programs it wants. It does not have to in any way submit to the federal government when it is purely within its own provincial jurisdiction.

Second, setting national standards would encroach on provincial health care and social supports. My province has an age for PDD programs, as do many others, and it would be an encroachment to set a national standard, even if we consult with them. Consultation does not always lead to agreements, and our Constitution is very clear that there are areas of exclusive jurisdiction.

• (1755)

I know that is a comment often made by Quebec members of Parliament from different political parties, but it is one I think a lot of us Albertans make as well, that we have exclusive jurisdiction in many areas and we want the federal government to stay out of them.

Paragraph 3(a) talks about what would constitute a livable basic income in “each region of Canada” without spelling out what “region” would mean. In the Constitution, Canada is separated into four regions, if we use the Senate rules: western Canada, Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada. Hopefully that is not what “region” means in this sense, because I think our state has evolved quite significantly and the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia combined now have a bigger population than the province of Quebec.

If I go on, there is a framework that is required to be tabled. There is more information on when it must be tabled and when the report must be provided to the House.

I have a Yiddish proverb, as I always do. I did forget to give one when I started speaking on Bill C-71, and I will always admonish myself for doing so. It says: He who is aware of his folly is wise.

In this instance, let us look at what is going on so we do not do something rash with our finances. We are facing a \$40-billion deficit, and I wonder how we will pay for this. Jim Seeley, in my riding, wrote this great email asking a lot of questions about cost, percentages, who would be eligible, how would CPP and old age security work, just questions he was wondering about. I had to tell him I was not quite sure.

I did go and look, though, at the government's projections for future years. When does it expect to have a surplus? From a surplus, presumably, we would then look at whether we could do a universal basic income or a negative income tax. There is a \$20-billion deficit in the last financial year that is forecast. The Government of Canada expects to accumulate a deficit of \$157 billion by fiscal year 2028-29, and that is without any new spending announcements. That means no new public infrastructure dollars added, on top of what has already been announced, and no new procurement. There would be nothing new, nothing extra above and beyond that, and the government would still run a \$20-billion deficit, so I wonder how all this would be paid for.

Finally, as I mentioned, a negative income tax has been talked about for at least the last 50 to 60 years. It was first proposed in a journal by the Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman. He is often tagged as an economist of the right, which I do not think is entirely fair to him. Now, UBI and NIT, whichever acronym we want to use, work in slightly different ways but their goal is sort of the same. He recognized that a lot of public advocates on the left were generally very enthusiastic about the ideas he explained, especially the mechanisms his concept would work on and its end goal.

Public advocates on the right were much less enthusiastic and heavily criticized him when he wrote the journal. He recollected this quite often. There is a great YouTube video I often send to constituents, for them to hear from him, the expert, on the logic of how it would work. One of the things he said about UBI, or NIT, is that there would be no other welfare programs competing at the same time. There would be fewer civil servants, who he called nannies, who would look over the spending of citizens, of how they were living their lives and what they were doing.

To go back to my Yiddish proverb, I really hope we would be careful with the public's finances. We see it reflected in the polls, but I heard it while I was door-knocking in my riding of Calgary Shepard. My constituents are worried about the public finances. They are worried about a \$40-billion deficit and about \$150 billion more in debt being accumulated on the credit card of the nation. That is why I will be voting against this piece of legislation.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to give my first speech since returning from the summer break.

Before I talk about Bill C-223, I would like to take this opportunity to say hello to the people of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. Throughout the summer, I travelled thousands of kilometres to meet with people in my riding, visiting organizations and companies and attending galas and festivals. I met with seniors' groups to discuss the two classes of seniors created by the government through the pension regime. I had nothing but rewarding encounters. I would like to sincerely thank everyone who came out to see me or meet with me. Thanks to them, I am returning to Ottawa energized, with all kinds of plans and challenges to overcome. I am back in Ottawa with all their demands, concerns and problems on my mind.

Private Members' Business

Let us come back to Bill C-223. As we have heard, Bill C-223 would require the Minister of Finance to develop a national framework to provide all persons over the age of 17 in Canada with access to a guaranteed livable basic income. It also provides for reporting requirements with respect to the framework. Let us start by understanding what is meant by guaranteed livable basic income. According to the Library of Parliament's legislative summary of Bill S-233, a guaranteed basic income is "a cash transfer from government to individuals or families to provide an income floor below which no individual or family can fall."

Over the summer, my constituents shared many wonderful stories with me, but I also heard much sadder stories. These are very tough times. Everything costs more, and many people just cannot make ends meet. Some have had to choose between paying for prescriptions, paying for insurance and paying for decent food. For example, one mom of a three-month-old infant decided to feed her child canned ravioli because it is cheaper. Seniors are eating cat food so they can save enough money to pay for their medication. I met workers who can no longer afford a place to live, so they are sleeping on the couch at a family member's or friend's place or living in their car.

This bill may be well-intentioned, but, unfortunately, it is another centralizing bill that encroaches on Quebec's jurisdiction and that of the other Canadian provinces and the territories. Furthermore, it does not take into account the distinct nature of Quebec and the other Canadian provinces and territories. As we all know, the provinces and territories are responsible for administering their own social programs. Passing a bill like Bill C-223 would mean stripping Quebec and the other provinces and territories of their jurisdiction and handing it over to a government that everyone knows cannot get the job done. If Quebec wants to, it can implement this kind of measure on its own, as can the other Canadian provinces and territories.

Adopting and implementing such a colossal federal measure, in parallel with the Quebec government's management of its own many programs, would be a nightmare. Honestly, the Canadian government no longer has the means to introduce a measure like this in the current economic context, when inflation continues unabated, when historic deficits are swelling the public debt, and when the Liberals have no plan to balance the budget.

The Liberal government cannot even live up to its transfer agreements on health, housing and many other areas. How can we trust a government that takes Quebec taxpayers' money only to engage in blackmail or impose conditions just to get a fraction of it back? We know the government's contempt for meeting its responsibilities. We know how hard it is to obtain adequate payments; too often, federal transfers are insufficient or non-existent. During this Parliament, we have seen how difficult it has been for this centralizing government to fix the fiscal imbalance. It takes far too much money to spend on its own, usually electoral purposes, but rarely for the benefit of Quebecers.

Passing Bill C-223 would destroy Quebec's social safety net and wipe out the range of social services provided to Quebecers. Quebec's tax system would suffer too serious a blow. The entire administration of the Quebec nation would have to be reset. Bill C-223 operates on the premise that a measure like the basic guaranteed

universal income would improve the gap between the rich and the poor, although the experts are extremely divided on the issue.

• (1805)

I will give an example. In 2018, British Columbia, which was considering a similar measure, commissioned a report from a group of academic experts. The report concluded that a basic guaranteed income was not the best way to lift the poorest out of poverty.

Instead, the panel recommended specific government assistance paired with existing social programs. According to their estimate, updating existing programs and creating specific assistance would have cost British Columbia taxpayers between \$3.5 billion and \$5 billion. In contrast, introducing a guaranteed minimum income for everyone would have cost nearly \$52 billion.

In no way does this bill or the people defending this concept take into account the enormous cost this would generate for the provinces. They would be forced to completely rethink how they manage their social programs.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer estimated the cost of such a nationwide measure at close to \$98 billion over just six months. What happened in British Columbia only served to reinforce the position of the Bloc Québécois and the Government of Quebec that assistance for citizens should be targeted. In 2017, a panel of experts commissioned by the Quebec government found that "Overall, Quebecers benefit from an income support system that provides significant assistance during the main stages of life during which citizens risk finding themselves in a vulnerable situation". That same report also stated that "When viewed as a whole, Quebec's existing income support system partially meets the definition of guaranteed livable income".

In short, introducing a guaranteed livable income would have a major impact and would require either a significant tax hike or the end to many existing programs. It would create serious instability and bureaucratic structures and technological tools would not even be able to keep pace. In the future, it will be up to Quebecers to decide whether they want a program like this one or whether they want to maintain the existing programs. It is certainly not up to Ottawa to tell us how to manage our social programs. What is more, there is no guarantee that this approach, however good it may look on paper, will be effective or meet its objectives.

This is also a matter of fairness. Quebec has chosen to create social programs for health care, education, affordable day care, parental leave, car insurance, preventive withdrawal and so on. What is more, we see that Quebec's social programs are working because Quebec has one of the lowest rates of wealth inequality in the country, along with Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

Private Members' Business

If the government ever has the money to fund a program like this, which encroaches on provincial jurisdiction, I suggest that it take that money to help people 65 to 74 who were excluded from the OAS increase. It could also use that money to honour its transfer commitments to the provinces and territories. It could build more housing and infrastructure. It could pay its share of the costs incurred for asylum seekers in Quebec. I am sure that the government could find ways to use this money in areas under its own jurisdiction without encroaching on provincial and territorial jurisdictions, as it so likes to do. The fact is that this government has never interfered in the jurisdictions of Quebec, the other provinces and the territories as much as it has in budget 2024. Never before has Ottawa gone so far in its push to centralize powers.

I understand the good intentions surrounding the introduction of this bill. However, again, the provinces and territories are responsible for introducing a framework for a guaranteed livable basic income, not the federal government. For these reasons, we will not support Bill C-223.

• (1810)

[*English*]

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, the wealth in this country is disproportionately held by rich CEOs and their companies. That hoarding of wealth is hurting women, indigenous people, persons with disabilities and all people without the power or access to fight corporate greed. Canadians live in one of the richest countries in the world, yet many Canadians are grappling with the weight of poverty and financial insecurity at the expense of corporate greed. Canadians deserve a government that gives them the relief they need, not more handouts for rich CEOs and tax breaks for corporations.

The inequality in society is stark. The cost of food has increased by over 20%, and we know that one in five Canadians is skipping meals. As we navigate this shifting landscape, people across Canada, especially those suffering the most due to systemic inequalities, are feeling the effects even more. It does not have to be this way. Poverty is one of the most avoidable, violent human rights violations in this country. Poverty is a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and Canada can end poverty with this important bill, a bill that would provide a framework for a guaranteed livable basic income.

The bill was brought by my colleague, the NDP member for Winnipeg Centre. The NDP respects the charter rights of Canadians. Conservatives have already said that they do not respect the Charter and are open to bypassing it at will by using the notwithstanding clause. They are not supportive of this bill to end poverty.

Basic necessities, such as food, housing and health care, are not just becoming more expensive, but are less accessible. This crisis is hitting marginalized people the hardest. Women, and disproportionately racialized women, are affected by rising costs and stagnant wages. They are the backbone of our communities and our economy, yet they are struggling to make ends meet. This is wrong.

Under the Liberals' watch, we have seen basic necessities grow increasingly out of reach. We know the grocery sector is making record profits, and in 2023, it raked in \$6 billion. This is unconscionable when families are struggling to feed their children, and

workers across this country have to choose between rent and food. Seniors are skipping meals to afford their medications. Women who already face systemic barriers in the workplace are now forced to take on multiple jobs just to keep their bills paid.

While the government made lofty promises, the reality on the ground is telling a very different story. The rising cost of living is not just an economic statistic, but a daily struggle for countless Canadians. Meanwhile, Conservatives want to cut spending on public services that support the most in need. They want to cut essential services such as child care, and I hear a beautiful child tonight in the chamber, which would disproportionately force women out of the workforce to care for their families. As well, they want to cut health care and pharmacare, which would only exasperate cost-of-living challenges. Conservatives, without a doubt, will put more Canadians into poverty.

At a time when we are seeing record amounts of homelessness, with wages continuing to stagnate because of government after government's choice to choose corporations over Canadians, we need to give back hope. We need Canadians to know that, with a new government, things can get better, and not with cuts to important supports people rely on. This is not just a matter of politics, but a matter of basic human dignity. Canadians deserve better. Our communities deserve better.

That is why we, in the NDP, are fighting for solutions that truly provide relief for Canadians. A guaranteed livable basic income would transform the lives of all Canadians. This is a transformative policy that would ensure every Canadian has the financial support necessary to live with dignity and security. Imagine a Canada where no one has to worry about where their next meal will come from or whether they can afford to keep a roof over their head. A guaranteed livable basic income would be a crucial step toward alleviating the economic struggles faced by so many, including indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, women and all marginalized communities.

We heard at committee that children across this country are going to school hungry, and there is a wide array of intersectional issues that a guaranteed livable basic income would address for them. It would also empower individuals to pursue additional education without fear of massive debt. Workers could seek additional training without risking their livelihoods, and people could seek better work opportunities without the constant fear of financial losses.

Private Members' Business

● (1815)

People who cannot work in this ableist society would have dignity too. The positive impact of a GLBI on people with disabilities cannot be understated. For many individuals living with disabilities, the current system is fraught with challenges: barriers to employment, limited access to services and a safety net that the Conservatives and the Liberals continue to wear away. Current estimates show that 1.5 million Canadians living with disabilities live below the poverty line, and close to a million of them are working-age people.

A guaranteed livable basic income would provide the support needed for people living with disabilities. It would also help Canada meet its commitment under section 8 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as constitutional commitments to ensure the provision of essential public services of reasonable quality to all Canadians, something the government is not doing right now.

The promise of a GLBI is not just theoretical. It is a realistic solution that has been successfully implemented in various forums around the world. Trials here in Canada have shown that when people are given a financial safety net, they thrive. The NDP understands that a guaranteed livable basic income is not just a policy; it is a commitment to building a more equitable society. The NDP would like to see this bill go to committee as soon as possible so we can hear from all communities that support a guaranteed livable basic income.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to stand in the House today for the first time after a summer break and speak to a policy proposal from the New Democratic Party on something I have always been very interested in looking at. I am always enthusiastic about any policy proposed in the House that aims to reduce or eliminate poverty in Canada. This project to bring forward a universal basic income is one that I am keenly interested in.

Immediately, it caused me to look back on efforts over the last decade or so to implement something similar in the province of Ontario very close to my home; I grew up at the Chatauqua co-op in Oakville. The Liberal Wynne government in Ontario in 2017 brought forward a pilot project that would provide a basic income to 4,000 people across Ontario. That project followed recommendations made by Hugh Segal in consultation with various groups. It was a good start. Basic income would reduce poverty more effectively, and it could encourage work and reduce stigmatization, but more than that, it could also reduce a lot of the bureaucracy involved in the navigation of these various programs.

Instead of using an old example, I will use a recent one. Just a couple of weeks ago, I had a gentleman in my office in Milton to discuss all of the confusion related to interim unemployment, related to his tenuous employment. He was navigating both the Ontario disability support program, Ontario Works, and employment insurance at the same time. With other benefits from the government, like the Canada child benefit and many others, there is a constellation of support programs that aim to reduce poverty in Canada. It is

a lot of administration, there are a lot of programs, and when we cater all of these programs to various groups and various people, it is good because they can be very targeted. At the same time, sometimes it requires a master's in public policy to figure out how to maximize those benefits that we all pay for.

I think about employment insurance often. People are often very reluctant to go on employment insurance in Ontario. I have a friend who just got laid off and said they do not want to go on EI. I asked why. That is the insurance that they have been paying into with every single paycheck since they were 16 or 17 years old. They deserve that money. The reason we pay into that program is to make sure we have stability.

That stability could also be provided by a universal basic income, as proposed by this bill. Unfortunately, 10 months after the Liberal administration of this project in, I believe, Thunder Bay and Hamilton, Ontario, and a couple of other smaller municipalities, Doug Ford and his Progressive Conservative government, after saying they would allow the completion of the program so they could fully study it, cancelled it. They cancelled it very abruptly and left the 4,000 participants in this pilot project in the lurch and, quite frankly, devastated. For better or for worse, the Premier of Ontario has demonstrated the ability to change his mind quite often. Sometimes that has been good, such as when he decided not to pave the Greenbelt. At other times, like this, he went back on his word and cancelled a program he said was worth completing. It was worth completing, and this is worth studying.

All the anti-poverty groups I have ever met with and continue to read about are in favour of a universal basic income. It is sort of sad to hear Conservatives talk about poverty elimination as a left-wing concept. I do not think poverty elimination is a left-wing concept. I think it is for everybody in the House. We should all be concerned with how legislation encourages poverty, creates poverty and sustains poverty in Canada. There is absolutely no reason for a wealthy country like Canada to have anybody in deep poverty.

I strongly believe that a universal basic income is worth studying so we can look into all of the various ways to ensure we are doing the most for Canadians, whether they are employed, between employment, unable to find employment or, frankly, taking risks. Conservatives like to talk about how it is important, out there in the real world, despite their leader never having really ventured there, to be able to take risks financially. If we want to innovate, if we want to do art, if we want to practise something new, that might take some time. I love the idea that the universal basic income, or a guaranteed livable income, would provide people with the ability to take those risks, innovate, try something new, create art, maybe even try out for a new team or something like that, showing my stripes as an athlete. I applaud the member from the New Democratic Party for their work on this, and I am looking forward to hearing more throughout the debate.

Private Members' Business

• (1820)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, as always, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the good people of Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola to speak about a topic on which I know there are a range of views. In a democracy, we can disagree, but I would say that everyone who has spoken tonight believes in helping Canadians, particularly those living in poverty.

I spoke earlier today about how part of being Canadian is trying to help one another. I think many of the sentiments are good; it is just about how best to achieve that. While I certainly take issue with some elements that have been presented here tonight, I want to acknowledge that the member, who has submitted an idea for debate that she feels very strongly about, deserves credit for having brought this issue to the forefront.

Bill C-223 is an act to develop a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income, and first of all, it is important to say what this piece of legislation would do. It would not actually enact a guaranteed livable basic income. It is more of a framework to have further discussions so that at some point some sort of report can be done by the minister after discussing such a framework and doing subsequent work on it.

There is lots to discuss. Milton Friedman, a famous American economist and, some would argue, one of the greatest economists of all time, talked about a reverse income tax that would pay people. There is the same type of thing in the bill, so this is not just found in left-wing politics. Some people have mentioned former Senator Segal, who had a long career. This is an area that has advocates on both the left of the political spectrum and the right.

More than anything else today, I will say two things. First of all, I am speaking personally. I follow what political philosopher Karl Popper used to discuss, the use of something called “reverse utilitarianism”. Some may recall that utilitarianism is usually public policy meant to do the most good for the most people, to increase the general happiness for the most people. Reverse utilitarianism is reducing the suffering of those who suffer the most.

Anytime we have a question about universal programs, we have to ask who would be receiving said programs. Universal programs are not cheap. That means that every single person, regardless of their condition, would have the ability, by their choosing, to opt into this framework to receive money from the federal government. However, we do not talk about persons with disabilities, those who have the toughest situations. By giving money to those who are able, we take away resources that could go toward helping those who have the most severe issues so they can live a fulfilling life within society. That is something we would do best to keep in mind.

When the B.C. NDP government established a panel that did a report in 2020, one of its key concerns was that giving out money does not necessarily mean those who need it the most get the exact support they need. The cost of this has been brought up. University of British Columbia economist Kevin Milligan has argued that a universal basic income, whatever name we use, would be enormously expensive. That is something the panel said in its report. It also talked about the need to have some of these discussions.

If we were post-World War II parliamentarians discussing Germany and other countries putting in a welfare state and whether we should consider doing likewise, perhaps after having a discussion as a young country with a tremendous amount of economic growth, our young population would be able to support such a policy. We then would have a legitimate choice between apples and oranges: the apples of the welfare state or the oranges of a universal basic income. However, we are not in that position. Our economic growth is not flowing.

• (1825)

We have something called secular stagnation and the indebtedness of not just G7 and G20 countries, but of aging populations as well. We already see many provinces where businesses are complaining about a lack of workers. We have seen unemployment tick up. At a time where we are saying we need to have more people to build homes, why would we be inducing healthy individuals to take a benefit from the government and just take them out of the work force completely?

I understand the sentiment behind the thinking of the member, but I do not think this is the right policy environment for this type of policy to go forward. Again, with our aging demographics, we want to encourage more people to work. Why is that? After talking to people, it seems that most Canadians think that our old age security system is a pillar that is important to support. It is, again, a transfer from existing taxpayers today, those who are paying taxes, who send their taxes to Ottawa in good faith, and then those transfers go out to what is becoming a larger and larger population of seniors. Suddenly switching the gears to where we are actually pushing people to consider not working, to me, makes it very difficult to support this kind of transition.

Bear in mind that we also need to have a discussion as it is ultimately provinces as well that have a big role to play. Under our Constitution, the provinces are usually responsible for the social welfare of their populations. I do not think it will work for us to suddenly have a new federal program come down, especially with the way it would interact with each individual province and their systems of transfers, systems of grants and systems of programs and services.

If we look to Bill C-22, which was passed in the chamber, it talks about creating a Canada disability benefit. I hope that we can all acknowledge the truth, which is that we have no idea how much someone would get from that particular program. We now know that the government would not give more than \$2,000 a year, or \$200 a month.

Private Members' Business

The problem is that we have so many different programs at the federal and provincial levels, and they are already so costly. I just do not think that this is a good use of time and energy, although I appreciate its sentiment. I believe that we need to be thinking about how we can help out our fellow Canadians. This is a country where we look after our own. However, I have my worries about the economic arguments: our aging demographics, the lack of clarity of what provincial programs are doing and the fact that provinces such as B.C. have looked at this and have actually said that they are not proceeding with their own system, similar to what the member spoke of.

Lastly, there is reverse utilitarianism at play. We should not be considering more universal benefits, in my opinion, without first asking ourselves what this would do to those who are suffering the most. I do believe that targeted programs, such as our guaranteed income supplement, should be looked at. We should always be trying to ask ourselves how we can help those who are in the most extreme need, who do not have an income to be able to look after themselves, or those people who, unfortunately, due to some circumstance, have a disability that does not allow them to engage in Canadian society like the rest of us.

I will be voting against this. I do appreciate there are a number of people who have spoken very strongly about this. However, if it comes down to it, I only have two choices, either to support this or not. I reluctantly will just say that I am not going to be in support of a whole comprehensive change to our support programs for the reasons that I have given.

• (1830)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud to speak to the important piece of legislation before us. I want to start by thanking the member for Winnipeg Centre for doing a tremendous amount of work on the issue of a real universal basic income for people.

The legislation is very simple in that it says it is about creating a wide framework to look at a lot of the issues that the Conservatives have expressed some concerns about: How do we do this, what is the best way to do it and would it be the most effective?

When we look at the state of our society right now, we see an increase in poverty, and we see it in the numbers. We know that everyday people working hard are making a pretty stagnant income; the level of their income is staying where it has been for a very long time. At the same time, the wealthiest people in this country and in many other countries are seeing a huge increase. Our system is essentially becoming unfair. That is why we need to start looking at innovative programs like universal basic income. It says that we need a bar of dignity in our country that nobody should fall below.

I am not unlike every other Canadian who lives in their community. More and more people are struggling. More and more people are living on the streets. I always say that it is easy to judge people who are living on the streets. I know who I am, but if I were put out on the streets with nothing, I have no idea who I would become. That is what is happening in this country. People are becoming disposable, but there are no disposable people, and it is wrong that we are at that point. Something like a guaranteed livable income would make sure people have the resources they need.

I do not know whether members in this place are being as thoughtful on this as they might be. Today a veteran spoke to us at committee, and one of the things he talked about is how the system in Veterans Affairs under the Conservative and Liberal governments has become increasingly more frustrating. If a veteran comes home with trauma and illness and is suffering in some way, their partner has to fight for the money because it is a separate part of the bucket of money that goes to veterans.

I do not know how many people have talked about the fact that they do not have enough time to work as much as they would like to because they are caring for their loved one. When we keep making little buckets of money and people have to find out whether they are available and whether they are allowed to receive it, the system fails for so many people. They are falling through the cracks, and by the time they have fallen through the cracks, the need is so high that addressing that need becomes overwhelming.

This work has been done in different places. I can think of one place in Ontario where the Liberal government did it not too long ago. Mental health outcomes got better and people got to work. For people just trying to survive, who have absolutely nothing, it is really hard to dress nicely enough to go for an interview. It is really hard to find the time, if there is nobody to watch their kids, to get out there to do those things.

When people have a stable income, it does not make them not work. I am tired of listening to the Conservatives say that. It is not true. People thrive in opportunity, but it is hard to thrive when people do not know how they are going to survive the next day.

I think of people in my riding. I am going to be talking about this again and again. Right now, seniors have a guaranteed livable income in our system, which is the guaranteed income supplement. The CPP was raised for the poorest seniors in Canada. The government did not think about it for a minute, so what happened the next year? Their GIS got cut substantially, and now seniors are trying to make it through the month. They lost money because nobody plans. That is why we need a holistic program that serves everyone.

• (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has the floor for her right of reply.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to start out by thanking many people, specifically, Basic Income Canada, Manitoba, UBI Works and, of course, the Hon. Senator Kim Pate, whom I partnered with on the bill; she presented it on the Senate side. It is time for a guaranteed livable basic income to bring together people across Canada who are falling through the cracks.

I want to urge my colleagues to take this opportunity to make a final effort to get this passed to committee. I have heard today that it is just a framework. There are limits with PMBs. There is no budgetary allotment in it. We are not allowed to do that within the parameters of a PMB, but we are allowed to put in a framework. All together, we can get the framework to committee for further study.

I know that many people, all MPs across this Parliament, heard from their constituents over the summer that people everywhere are struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living. The people we represent need real solutions. We have income guarantees in this country: EI and GIS are income guarantees, but they are not livable.

I am not proposing anything new. All I am proposing is to make current income guarantees livable and expand them for people who are falling through the cracks. Somebody said it is not for international students. My bill very clearly states that it is for anybody over the age of 17 residing in Canada.

We know that, in recent years, policy-makers largely abandoned efforts to invest in our people and our communities, focusing instead on investing in huge corporations through subsidies and tax breaks. To those who say that, if we have a basic income, people will stop working, I say that is false. Research, time and time again, has proved that to be false. There is no evidence that a basic income discourages work. In fact, it does the exact opposite.

For example, the Canada child tax benefit is a kind of basic income in this country for families. Mothers do not work less; they actually work more. The Canada child benefit grows the economy. If we want to talk about benefits to the economy, there is two dollars for every dollar invested, and it keeps 250,000 families out of poverty and contributes 450,000 jobs to the economy. Basic income is good for the economy. The myth of the poor person trying to game the welfare system is nothing more than poor-bashing. What is far more common is the ultrawealthy gaming the system to evade paying taxes.

To those who say that, if we have a basic income, inflation will get worse, that is false. Inflation worsens when the government borrows money or increases the money supply, but this is not necessary to introduce a GLBI. Every cent needed to support a basic income is already being spent in this economy on corporate subsidies and inefficiencies in the social safety net.

To those who say a basic income is too expensive, let us start talking about the high cost of poverty, such as the fact that it costs \$225,000 a year to house one woman in a federal penitentiary. Let us talk about the high cost to our health care system; poverty keeps people sick and causes a strain to our health care system. That costs a lot of money. Governments dump billions of dollars into criminalizing poverty rather than addressing its root causes.

I am asking all members of Parliament today to study this more. I am asking for members to lend their votes to get this to committee. Instead of basing decisions on false understandings of a GLBI, let us really study it. Let us at least support the bill to get it through second reading, so we can study it and make policy decisions based on facts, not assumptions.

Adjournment Proceedings

I thank everybody who is supporting the bill. It means a lot to hundreds of thousands of people, including the many seniors who support the bill and, of course, those in the disability community, who are critically left out of the social safety net.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 6:42 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

[*English*]

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

If a member participating in person wishes that the motion be carried or carried on division, or if a member of a recognized party participating in person wishes to request a recorded division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

Ms. Leah Gazan: Madam Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 25, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

CARBON PRICING

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country.

After nine years of the NDP-Liberals, housing, gas and groceries cost more, and hard-working Canadians increasingly cannot pay their bills, yet the NDP-Liberal government wants the carbon tax to continue to rise to add 61¢ per litre, driving up the cost of almost everything. When we tax those who farm, who transport, who warehouse and who retail, we tax the one who buys. Families will already be paying \$700 more for food this year than in 2023.

Adjournment Proceedings

The carbon tax has already been such a costly disaster for Canadian small businesses and for family pocketbooks that there are fewer politicians in Canada now defending it. In their latest desperate publicity stunt, both the leader of the NDP here and the NDP premier of British Columbia have tried to make Canadians believe that now, on the eve of, or with the possibility of, an election, they were opposed to the carbon taxes, which they have strongly supported their entire political careers. Who can believe their baloney? The NDP voted to defend the carbon tax 24 separate times in the House, even though 70% of Canadians wanted to cancel the increase earlier this year.

The Fraser Institute reported that a carbon tax that continues to increase to 61¢ per litre would cost the average Canadian worker \$6,700 by 2030. It is estimated that it will also reduce Canada's GDP by 6.2% by 2030, resulting in 164,000 fewer jobs. The federal carbon tax will also have a negative economic impact on Canada's real gross domestic product, the GDP, of \$25 billion by 2030, according to the government's own figures, numbers the government tried to hide even from the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That is just carbon tax one.

Recently, Conservatives forced the government to turn over documents on its second carbon tax, which show carbon tax two will cost the Canadian economy an additional \$9 billion by 2030.

The carbon taxes are not an environmental plan, but a tax plan. Forcing carbon taxes on Canadians has not stopped a single natural disaster. Meanwhile, the NDP-Liberal government killed green energy projects, such as Sustainable Marine Canada's tidal energy project and continued to import dirty oil from foreign dictators with poor environmental standards. Canada fell to 62nd out of 67 countries on the climate change performance index.

Canadians are not going to be fooled. The phantom finance minister, carbon tax Mark Carney, may now be writing government policy from the boardroom of the Liberal Party of Canada, but it was just one year ago that he wrote that the Prime Minister was wrong even to exempt home heating fuels from the carbon tax.

Canadians face a clear choice between a continuing cost-of-living crisis with the costly coalition or a Conservative government that would axe the tax.

• (1845)

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have been here before and we have talked about this before, with the member opposite and with many other members.

The last I checked, Kelowna—Lake Country, a beautiful place, is in British Columbia. There is no federal price on pollution in British Columbia. In fact, it was a Liberal government in British Columbia that brought forward Canada's first carbon pricing system. It has been in effect for over a decade and it has been drastically reducing the emissions of British Columbia since then.

For the first time since the 1990s, Canada has our emissions under check. Just recently, yesterday in fact, the Canadian Climate Institute said that, once again, in 2023, Canada's emissions had fallen. In addition to that, they said that one of the chief reasons for that

was because of carbon pricing. Whether it is on the industrial side or the consumer price, carbon pricing works.

I do not have a Nobel Prize, and last time I checked, there were no Nobel Prize winners in this House of Commons, but one person has, in fact, won a Nobel Prize for carbon pricing. He has said that Canada's carbon pricing system gets it right.

The Conservatives have been using these lines about what is up. Instead of talking about what is up right now, I would like to talk about what is down. Currently, inflation is down to the target range of 2%. Canadians are still having a difficult time financially, no mistake about that. However, when inflation comes down, that means prices are on their way down as well. With that 2% inflation rate, which is right in line with the Bank of Canada's goals, we also have seen that interest rates are down.

With inflation coming down, one of the chief causes of that is lower gas prices. Gas prices have hit lows that we have not seen since around the pandemic when they fell because people were not driving as much.

If, as the Conservatives say, carbon pricing is causing inflation, the price on pollution in Canada has gone up every year for the last four years and over the last four years, our inflation has steadily come down. Either the Conservatives cannot do math, or they think Canadians are so stupid that they cannot do math, or both. I actually would not put it past them that they might just be willing to treat Canadians with no respect and will keep using these tired tag lines instead of putting forth some actual policies that would grow our economy and reduce our emissions.

Gratefully, we are doing just that. We are following the lead of British Columbia. My colleague from Manitoba loves to heckle me, he does it all the time and it does not impact me whatsoever. Again, they are not very good arguments that he puts forward.

We have made it very clear, Canadians get more money back through the price on pollution, the Canada carbon rebate, than they pay. That is true and has been clearly stated by the PBO, by 300 economists across this country, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That means that low- and medium-income households benefit the most.

Adjournment Proceedings

I know I am talking to a Conservative right now, and they do not typically care too much about low- and medium-income households, usually just focusing on corporations, millionaires and which oil and gas CEO is asking them to do one thing or another. However, we did just finish a debate on a guaranteed livable income, and things like this, the Canada carbon rebate, the Canada child benefit and the GIS mean more money in Canadians' pockets and that actually helps Canadians. What does not help Canadians is tired three-word slogans from the Conservative Party of Canada.

● (1850)

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Madam Speaker, for the member to insinuate that I do not care about residents in my community who are low- or middle-income is pretty awful and pretty shameful.

This Liberal member has made the Liberal Party position very clear about the carbon tax, well, unless it is carving out exceptions due to fear of losing elections, like it did in Atlantic Canada.

Conservatives and most Canadians, including those in my community, do not want to keep paying the carbon taxes. The facts are clear that Canadians are forced to eat less, they are skipping meals and they are buying less healthy food. There is lots of information on this. There are more lineups at food banks, in the millions, just to make ends meet. Just recently, Food Banks B.C. reported that it had served 100,000 food bank users in a single month for the first time.

Canadians cannot afford to endure 12 more months of this cost of living crisis. They should be given the choice to axe the tax and have a carbon tax election.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Madam Speaker, it is a shame that the Conservatives keep using the words of the food banks completely out of context.

When the food banks propose these things, they also make recommendations. None of the recommendations is to use any of the tired three-word slogans or eliminate a program which is actually supporting low- and medium-income housing. The Conservatives also like to completely ignore the fact that climate change impacts poorer folks more drastically.

I want to say again, Kelowna—Lake Country is in British Columbia, which does not have a federal carbon price. If the member wants it eliminated, then she needs to talk to the Premier of British Columbia. They are working on lots and lots of different environmental protection projects out there, and I would encourage them to do that.

As I said, inflation is down, interest rates are down, gas prices are down and so are emissions. That is thanks to our sound economic policies, not thanks to tired three-word slogans.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Madam Speaker, on April 15 I asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs if the government could tear itself away from its NDP partner's traditional anti-Israeli ideology and take a strong stand against the Islamic regime in Iran's missile attacks against Israel and support that country's right to exist and to defend itself.

Now that the Liberals no longer enjoy the unconditional love of the NDP to remain in power, is the government finally able to formulate a balanced foreign policy that supports efforts to attain peace in the region? Is the government also able to fully condemn the actions of the Islamic regime in Iran, a rogue nation that supports terrorists and does nothing to restore the peace process? Canadians are concerned about the government's inability to combat anti-Semitism in Canada, enforce our hate laws and remove from Canada organizations like Samidoun that are linked with a listed terrorist organization.

Moreover, the government recently indicated that the Liberals are prepared to abrogate Canada's defence agreement with the U.S. by blocking the sale of Canadian arms to the U.S. that may be destined for Israel. This divergence from the existing arms agreement would not only lead to our American allies thinking Canada is no longer a reliable partner and is failing to live up to the agreement's terms; it would likely lead them to a re-evaluation of our integrated defence industries.

The government cannot have it both ways. Either it supports Israel's right to defend itself, or it does not. For eight months, the government has not issued any permits for sending weapons or weapon components to Israel to defend itself. Moreover, if Canada does block arms sales to the U.S., Canada would be in violation of the 1956 Defence Production Sharing Agreement, which is a key military trade deal between our two countries.

Most Canadians support Israel in its war against Hamas. Let us remember that Israel did not start this war. We will soon be observing the first anniversary of the horrific October 7 attack against Israel by Hamas, when over 1,200 Israelis were killed and hundreds were taken hostage; 101 remain in captivity. Let us also not forget the Islamic regime in Iran's massive missile attack on Israel or that Hezbollah has fired over 8,000 rockets at Israel since October 8.

Canadians fail to see the logic of the Liberal government. In the face of unprecedented anti-Semitic riots across Canada, with supporters of Hamas and the PFLP roaming around and spewing their hate propaganda with immunity, and with attacks launched against Israel by Hamas, the Islamic regime in Iran and its proxies, the Liberal government announces an arms embargo on Israel. What a brilliant policy initiative.

Tehran does not want peace. When it launched its missile attack against Israel, it was not to defend Hamas or to avenge the deaths of Palestinians. It was to destabilize the region and disrupt the Abraham Accords, yet no one saw the Liberal government demanding that Tehran stop supplying arms to Hamas. Canada did not come up with any arms embargo for Tehran. Instead, Canada decided to weaken Israel and its ability to defend itself. Why?

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• (1855)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will start by restating, and will continually state, that Canada unequivocally condemns the attack by Iran against Israel. This attack only serves to destabilize the region and further escalate violence, which is disproportionately killing innocent people: women, children, the elderly and the disabled. This violence achieves nothing. It is completely unacceptable and it must come to an end.

Our government has been clear. Hamas is a terrorist organization. Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. The IRGC is a terrorist organization. The violence must stop.

Canada has been calling for an immediate, sustainable ceasefire for months. It cannot be one-sided. Hamas must release all hostages and lay down its arms, and humanitarian aid must urgently be increased and sustained. The pathways that assure it must be maintained as well. Rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian relief must continually be provided to civilians as long as this conflict continues. Israel must listen to the international community. The protection of civilians is paramount and a requirement under international law.

Canada will continue to push proactively to take every measure possible to ensure there is no further escalation and that we bring peace and stability back to the region. That is everyone's goal.

The minister has been in contact for many months with her counterparts in the region on this very thing, and our overriding goal is to see an end to the suffering of those caught in the middle of this conflict. Since civilians continue to bear the brunt of the unfolding tragedy, Canada's commitment to providing life-saving humanitarian aid remains unwavering.

We urge all involved parties once again to refrain from perpetuating the current destructive cycle of retaliatory violence, to lower tensions and to engage constructively toward de-escalation. No country or nation stands to gain from a further escalation in the Middle East.

Mr. Kevin Vuong: Madam Speaker, with respect to the issue I have raised, I will re-ask my April 15 question of the Liberal government, realizing that it is no longer controlled by its NDP masters.

Will the government finally focus on the actions of the Islamic regime in Iran and its proxy Hamas and acquaint itself with our long-standing policy in support of Israel's right to exist and defend itself? Moreover, can the government assure Canadians that the Liberals have truly abandoned their 2015 election promise to normalize relations with the Islamic regime in Iran, before the next election rolls around? Given the government's recent policy initiatives, Canadians would not know it.

• (1900)

Mr. Adam van Koeverden: Madam Speaker, I would reiterate that Canada is committed to lasting peace in the Middle East, which includes the creation of a Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel. That two-state solution needs to be a priority for anybody who is committed to lasting and sustained

peace in the region. Unfortunately, I did not hear the term “two-state solution” in my colleague's speech today.

All Israelis and Palestinians have the right to live in peace and security. Canada will continue to call for a sustainable ceasefire. All hostages must be released, and Hamas must lay down its arms. We are committed to working collaboratively toward an irreversible path to achieving a two-state solution where Israelis, Palestinians and other people in the region can live securely and within internationally recognized borders. The only realistic option to achieve a just and enduring peace is just that, and Canada will continue to be there and will work with our partners and allies. Once again, the violence must stop.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am coming here tonight in reference to a question I asked on April 10, when I was calling on the government to honour its commitments to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action on indigenous languages.

I would be remiss if I did not talk about a legend, Oh Ha Kuum, which references a lady of high standing. Really, it means a queen in Nuu-chah-nulth language. Last month, the Nuu-chah-nulth people lost Tuu paat mit, whose English name was Julia Lucas, and she was pre-deceased by her partner in life, Simon Lucas, who was, like her, a great leader of their people and for all indigenous people, not just Nuu-chah-nulth people, but people across British Columbia and Canada. Tuu paat mit honoured me with the name Yaac'aaqsts, which means “one who walks amongst us” and has provided me with advice and guidance over the years. I want to thank her family and her for the name. She will be greatly missed by all those who loved her and by the many in whose lives she made a difference.

Tuu paat mit was one of only a few fluent speakers of the Hesquiaht dialect of the Nuu-chah-nulth language. She began teaching in the elementary school at Hot Springs Cove 40 years ago, with very few resources and much less time. She taught the Hesquiaht language to the children with just a half hour a day allocated to cultural education. With three other fluently speaking elders, she worked in the final years of her life to mentor young apprentices to pass on the language to the next generation. Her life's work will inspire others to carry on because future generations depend on it. Tuu paat mit knew there was nothing more important to the health and social well-being of indigenous people, their families, their communities, their economies and their spirits than the survival of their language.

In follow-up to that, across British Columbia, first nations people are facing the loss of language holders such as Tuu paat mit, and there is an urgent need to invest in language revitalization before it is too late. In British Columbia, nearly two-thirds of fluent speakers are older than 65, and seven languages have only five or fewer speakers left. First nations have fought to keep their languages alive, and between 2018 and 2022, there was a 20% increase in the number of people learning their language in B.C.

While the number of language learners is growing, the number of remaining fluent speakers is falling. As I outlined when I talked about *Tuu paat mit*, there is grave concern that the progress made in recent years will be lost without urgent government support for indigenous language programming. However, instead of investing in language revitalization at this critical time, the federal government is cutting funding. The Liberals' new funding formula has actually led to a 60% reduction in funding for first nations language programs in British Columbia. That funding formula does not consider British Columbia in the unique context of being home to more than half of indigenous languages in Canada, and across the province, in 204 first nations, there are 36 unique languages and more than 95 dialects.

The First Peoples' Cultural Council, a first nations-led Crown corporation working to revitalize first nations languages in British Columbia, has written to the government about the funding cliff it is facing. This year's budget provided significantly less funding than in previous years, and the drop in revenue has opened the door to the loss of hundreds of jobs, service cuts and cancelled community programs. These cuts put the preservation and revitalization of first nations languages and cultural heritage at risk.

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and to the Minister of Sport and Physical Activity, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the House of Commons on this important issue with my friend and colleague from British Columbia.

• (1905)

[Translation]

Our government has repeatedly committed to supporting indigenous peoples in their efforts to reclaim, revitalize, maintain and strengthen indigenous languages. We recognize the important work that has been accomplished by indigenous communities across the country since the passage of the Indigenous Languages Act, and we remain committed to working with them to continue implementing the act.

[English]

Guided by the principle of “nothing about us without us”, every aspect of the implementation of this act is carried out jointly with first nations, Inuit and Métis partners, recognizing that indigenous peoples are best positioned to lead the revitalization of their languages.

[Translation]

For example, our government has implemented new funding models for indigenous languages that prioritize indigenous peoples' autonomy and control over financial decisions based on their priorities. We have also introduced long-term funding agreements to support multi-year strategies. This approach respects first nations' governance structures and decision-making processes.

[English]

I recognize the unique circumstances of indigenous languages across Canada, particularly in British Columbia. Those include first nations in British Columbia. Therefore in December, the Minister

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of Canadian Heritage met with the First Peoples' Cultural Council in B.C. to discuss indigenous language issues.

The First Peoples Cultural Council is a long-standing partner, and its efforts serve as a model for managing Canadian Heritage's indigenous languages funding, providing support to first nations communities and organizations in developing resources and innovative approaches to advancing indigenous language preservation and revitalization. This is one of the reasons the department signed a memorandum of understanding in June 2022 with the Province of B.C. and the First Peoples Cultural Council, which establishes a framework for ongoing collaboration and commits to the parties to advance predictable and sustainable funding for the revitalization of first nations languages, cultural heritage and the arts. Under the memorandum of understanding, a five-year agreement for \$103.9 million, starting in 2023-24, was signed with the First Peoples Cultural Council.

[Translation]

Our government recognizes that reclaiming, revitalizing, strengthening and maintaining indigenous languages requires a long-term commitment on our part. We will continue this important work in collaboration with our indigenous partners.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I am actually calling for the government to right this wrong at the earliest opportunity and commit to including adequate long-term funding for first nations language programs in British Columbia in the fall economic statement. An essential part of reconciliation is addressing the enormous harms first nations have experienced throughout their 200-year history of colonization, including the devastating loss of language and culture. The government needs to listen to what first nations need and fulfill its legal obligations with respect to language revitalization.

In the Indigenous Languages Act, the government declared it was “committed to providing adequate, sustainable and long-term funding for the reclamation, revitalization, maintenance and strengthening of Indigenous languages”. However, the current funding is not enough to maintain existing programming let alone meet the growing demand.

Will the government take its obligations seriously and commit to ensuring fair, adequate and long-term funding for indigenous language programming to benefit generations to come?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden: Madam Speaker, I will reiterate that the memorandum of understanding I referenced was signed just in June 2022. In collaboration with the First Peoples Cultural Council, the government signed an unprecedented five-year funding agreement for almost \$104 million, which started last calendar year, and which was signed with the First Peoples Cultural Council.

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This year also marks the fifth anniversary of the royal assent of the Indigenous Languages Act. The current government has been steadfast in our commitment to work with indigenous peoples to ensure that the act's full implementation is done as quickly as possible, which is why this much work has been undertaken. However, we realize that there is more work to do, and we remain dedicated to working with indigenous peoples to support their efforts to reclaim, revitalize, strengthen and maintain indigenous languages.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:09 p.m.)

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