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# House of Commons Debates

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Thursday, September 25, 2025

Speaker: The Honourable Francis Scarpaleggia



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 25, 2025

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[Translation]

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Hon. Mona Fortier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) and consistent with the policy on the tabling of treaties in Parliament, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled “Agreement on the Establishment of the International Vaccine Institute”, done at New York on October 28, 1996, as amended as of November 16, 2022; “Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Poland for Co-operation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy”, done at Warsaw on January 28, 2025; and “Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of Japan on the Security of Information”, done at Tokyo on July 8, 2025.

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### COMMISSIONER FOR MODERN TREATY IMPLEMENTATION ACT

**Hon. Rebecca Alty (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-10, An Act respecting the Commissioner for Modern Treaty Implementation.

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

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[English]

### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following reports of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union with respect to its participation in the following events: the annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations, “Putting an end to conflicts: Prescriptions for a peaceful future”, at the United Nations, New York, New York, United States of America, from February 8 to 9, 2024; the 148th IPU assembly

and related meetings, Geneva, Switzerland, from March 23 to 27, 2024; the parliamentary forum at the UN high-level political forum on sustainable development, New York, New York, United States of America, on July 16, 2024; the 10th IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians, Yerevan, Armenia, from September 12 to 14, 2024; the 149th IPU assembly and related meetings in Geneva, Switzerland, from October 13 to 17, 2024; the expert consultation on “Parliamentary engagement in digital policy”, Geneva, Switzerland, on October 18, 2024; the second meeting of the preparatory committee of the sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, Geneva, Switzerland, on October 18, 2024; the annual parliamentary hearing at the United Nations on “Scaling up action for the Sustainable Development Goals: Finance, Institutions, and Politics”, New York, New York, United States of America, from February 13 to 14, 2025; the parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York, New York, United States of America, on March 11, 2025; the first Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians, Mexico City, Mexico, from March 14 to 16, 2025; and finally, the 150th IPU assembly and related meetings, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, from April 5 to 9, 2025. It is a very busy association.

\* \* \*

• (1005)

### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—FOOD TAXATION

**John Barlow (Foothills, CPC)** moved:

That, given that the Prime Minister said Canadians would judge him by the cost at the grocery store, and that,

- (i) food inflation is 70% above the Bank of Canada's target,
- (ii) food prices are up 40% since the Liberals took power,
- (iii) Daily Bread Food Bank expects 4 million visits to its food banks in 2025,

### *Business of Supply*

- (iv) food bank use in Canada is up by 142% since 2015, the House call on the Liberal Prime Minister to stop taxing food by eliminating:
- (a) the industrial carbon tax on fertilizer and farm equipment;
  - (b) the inflation tax (money-printing deficits);
  - (c) carbon tax two (the so-called clean fuel standard); and
  - (d) the food packaging tax (plastic ban and packaging requirements).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Middlesex—London.

It is important that we have an opportunity to rise today to speak about a very important issue that I know all of us are hearing about from our constituents: affordability and the affordability crisis, which is no more acute than with food. The Prime Minister proclaimed to Canadians, almost on his first day after the election, that Canadians should judge him by the price of food at the grocery store shelves. These were his words, his promise. Therefore, it is his failure.

They are the same old Liberals. In fact, his predecessor Justin Trudeau, in October 2023, also made a very similar proclamation. He said that he would stabilize food prices by Thanksgiving. In fact, the current finance minister said the exact same thing. He said, “I have secured initial commitments from the top five grocers to take concrete actions to stabilize food prices in Canada” and that we would see that by Thanksgiving.

None of those things happened. In fact, since that proclamation and the proclamation of the new Prime Minister, food prices are up more than 6%. In August, food inflation surpassed overall inflation by 84%. Since August, food prices are up 3.5%. It is the same old Liberals, the same old promises, the same old broken promises. It is another bait and switch by the Liberals.

Canadians have gotten exactly what they voted for. Canadians are now facing a crisis, a crisis that hits them where it hurts them the most: in their ability to feed their families. Families across Canada are being squeezed at the grocery store, in housing costs, in rent and when they try to heat and house themselves.

Just as they did in the previous Liberal government, all that the Liberals in the current Liberal government can do is give excuses, saying there is a global recession, that this is out of their control and that this is happening everywhere else around the world. That is simply not true. When the last Liberal prime minister made the same promise only a couple of years ago, at that time food inflation in Canada was rising 37% higher than it was in the United States. In fact, it is now worse. Under the new Prime Minister, food inflation in Canada is 50% higher than it is in the United States.

The Prime Minister cannot blame retaliatory tariffs for the higher costs of produce and food in Canada, because he is elbows down. He quietly removed the retaliatory tariffs during the election and then removed additional ones earlier in the summer. This international businessman who is going to get deals done with elbows up and who is going to fight for Canadians has quickly and quietly been elbows down, and in the meantime, Canadians are the ones paying the price.

When we talk about these numbers, there are very real consequences that real Canadians are feeling. We talk about food infla-

tion and higher costs, but what this comes down to is that 61% of Canadians are feeling food insecure. That means more than half of Canadian families do not know where their next meal is coming from. They do not know if they will be able to feed their families the next day or at the next meal. As a result of that, they are making very difficult choices, not only at the grocery store shelf but when they are doing their household budgets. Households do budgets, something the Liberal government has never quite gotten around to doing. It has been more than 18 months, and still there has been no budget.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Coming soon.

**John Barlow:** Mr. Speaker, the budget is coming soon. He says it like he is proud of it.

The Liberals will have perhaps a \$100-billion deficit, as much as three times higher than that of the last Liberal government, when the then finance minister made a big scene and quit because she could not handle these types of deficits. Ironically, she is quitting again. Maybe the deficit is that much worse, and once again she cannot stand beside it.

Among households with an income of under \$50,000, 73% are worried they will not be able to afford groceries if this trend of higher food prices continues.

● (1010)

Food prices are higher. Between March and June, beef went up 33%, canned soup went up 26%, canned tuna went up 19%, potatoes went up 16%, oranges went up 12% and whole chickens went up 11%. These are very real consequences of bad Liberal policies and broken promises. When taxes continue to be added on for those who produce the food, those who truck the food and those who process, manufacture and sell the food, what is going to happen? Canadians are the ones who will pay those higher prices, and that is exactly what is happening. Food prices are up nearly 40% since the Liberal government was elected 10 years ago. That is the record the Prime Minister has to abide by.

The new food price index report will come out in a month or two, and we will see exactly what is going on, but already, “Canada’s Food Price Report 2025” predicted that we will see food prices increase this year by 5%. We are right on track for that type of increase. As a result of that, Canadians spent \$800 more on groceries this year than they did the previous year. Those numbers could go up again next year. Again, there are very real consequences to mismanagement and fiscal ineptitude.

According to Food Banks Canada, in a new report that came out earlier this summer, more than a quarter of Canadians are now experiencing food insecurity. It gave the Liberal government an F grade. For those making \$75,000 or under, 57% of their income is now being spent on essentials, such as groceries, utilities and transportation. According to the food bank report, 25% of households are struggling to afford food, which is up from 18% in 2023. The poverty rate rose for the third consecutive year, and the official poverty rate was 10%, increasing 38% since 2023. About 40% of Canadians are feeling worse off this year than they did the year before.

Neil Hetherington, the CEO of one of Canada's largest food banks, said the Toronto-based Daily Bread Food Bank will see four million visitors in 2025. That is double the visitors the food bank served two years ago. We should let that sink in. As a result of the affordability crisis caused by Liberal fiscal mismanagement, four million Canadians are using food banks, and that is only in the Daily Bread Food Bank in the Toronto area. That does not include food banks across this country. B.C. food banks reported that they will be seeing more than 225,000 monthly visits, up 15% since 2023. About one-third of B.C. food bank users are children, which accounts for more than 70,000 visits.

Today, Canadians simply cannot afford food, and they are now resorting to breaking the law. As we saw yesterday in a CTV News report, a Waterloo region farmer has now raised the alarm about the incredible increase of thefts from his apple orchard. He said that 500 pounds of apples from his orchard have been stolen. He himself has caught 250 pounds of stolen goods on a number of occasions, with families coming to the orchard just trying to feed themselves.

I am sure today we will hear a number of excuses from the Liberals about why this is not their fault, despite policies that they have implemented, such as a tariff on fertilizer that is having an impact on Canadian farmers, an industrial carbon tax, and taxes on manufacturing and food production. All of these things are having an impact. In fact, net income for farmers fell by \$3.3 billion in 2024, the largest net decrease in income for Canadian farmers since 2018.

Yesterday, the Minister of Jobs and Families said the past predicts the future, and that is exactly what we are seeing. The Prime Minister promised Canadians he would be judged by prices at the grocery store. Judgment has been rendered. Those were his words, his promise and his failure to Canadians.

• (1015)

**Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the colleague from the other side talked a lot about fiscal mismanagement. I wonder if he could inform the House, if he knows, what Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio is.

**John Barlow:** Mr. Speaker, I like it when the Liberals try to protect themselves with numbers they can fudge at any time. They are trying to lecture Canadians by telling them that they have never had it so good and that their fiscal position is great. I would ask the Liberal member to go to the grocery stores in his constituency and see what the response is if he tells Canadians and his constituents that they have never had it so good, that they should not be worried

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about beef going up 33%, apples going up 24% and coffee going up 22%.

[Translation]

**Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Foothills for his speech this morning. I have a great deal of respect for my colleague, and I quite enjoy working with him. He is an intelligent and eloquent man with whom one can hold a discussion and work constructively in committee.

However, I am a bit disappointed in the motion moved this morning. Once again, the Conservatives raised a real problem. About 95% of my colleague's speech was on the mark, but in the end, he once again finished it up with carbon tax slogans. I thought we were past that.

I clearly remember opposition days that I took part in with my colleague, whom I appreciate, as I said. At that time, I told my colleague that the carbon tax had no impact on grocery prices and that the carbon tax increased prices by only 0.01%. He stood up and said that, no, the carbon tax was responsible.

Now that the carbon tax no longer exists in English Canada, can my colleague explain why grocery prices there have not gone down? Here is where we see that these are just slogans.

[English]

**John Barlow:** Mr. Speaker, I too certainly respect my colleague from the Bloc and his passion for Canadian agriculture.

Food prices have not come down because the Liberals have not eliminated all the taxes they put on food production. Yes, they eliminated the consumer carbon tax. Canadians are very welcome for the work we did to force the Liberal government to do that. There is no way it would have eliminated that tax if not for the pressure put on it by the Conservatives.

I would say this to my Bloc colleague: The Liberals have not removed the industrial carbon tax. They are moving ahead with the P2 plastics ban. They are moving ahead with front-of-pack labelling. They have maintained the tariff on fertilizer imported into Canada. All of these things are having an impact on the price of food, from the farm gate to the grocery store shelf.

**Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, who has done an incredible job on this file.

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He was doing his intervention and rattling off numbers on Canadians who are desperate and cannot afford to put food on their table; all the while, the Liberals were heckling and laughing at the situation. As a matter of fact, as he mentioned, food insecurity is up 128%. The Retail Council of Canada reported that retailers lost \$9.1 billion in 2024 alone because Canadians could not afford to put food on their plate and resorted to stealing to try to feed their families.

I want to ask my hon. colleague, why do the Liberals continue to think that they know best and have a tone-deaf response when Canadians are really suffering under the government?

● (1020)

**John Barlow:** Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. The “let them eat cake” attitude from the Liberals is what is frustrating Canadians. They say that the debt-to-GDP ratio is at 47% and that Canadians should be thrilled with that. The fact is that 60% of Canadians are food insecure. Of Canadian families, 60% do not know where their next meal is coming from. There are four million Canadians around the greater Toronto area alone who are going to food banks. They are being forced to feed their families at the food bank.

Those are the facts. These are the things Conservatives are focused on, not the massive deficit spending the Liberal government is focused on to enrich its friends.

**Lianne Rood (Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be here in this place representing the good people of Middlesex—London.

As this is my first speech since coming back for my third term as a member of Parliament, I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to those who helped on my most recent campaign. First and foremost, I thank the people of Middlesex—London for putting their trust in me to be in this place on their behalf. They have sent a clear message to Ottawa that our diverse rural and urban communities want accountability and change in Ottawa. I will not let them down, and I will be that voice of reason for common sense as I work diligently as their representative.

To my amazing campaign team, who worked faithfully, day in and day out, keeping everything running smoothly, I want to thank Jordon Wood, Dalton Holloway, Tony Circelli, Evan Dunnigan, Tayler Fipke, Anna Rood, Yvonne Hundey and Kim Heathcote. I would also like to thank all those folks who volunteered in some way on my campaign. There are way too many to name as there were hundreds of volunteers. It means so much to me to have their support.

I would like to take a second to thank my parents, Theo and Diane Rood; my brother, Jeremy; and my niece, Anna Rood. I am so grateful for their love and support, day in and day out, and for their dedication to my campaign. I want to thank my dad especially for taking the time to make sure that signs were put up in all 3,000 square kilometres of the riding. Everyone loved mom's home-cooked meals and having her in the campaign office. I want to thank Anna for going out in rain, snow and sunshine to knock on all those doors for all those weeks. I want to thank Jeremy for always being there for me for moral support, which is really more like keeping me in line, even though he could not be there because he

was out fighting forest fires in Saskatchewan. I thank him for his support.

Now, since the good people of Middlesex—London brought me here to hold the Liberal government to account, let us talk about their atrocious record on food affordability in Canada. This issue has an impact on many families across Middlesex—London, a sensation they feel every single time they step through those automatic doors at the grocery store, the relentless squeeze of food inflation and the cost of living crisis that the Liberal government still refuses to confront honestly.

Back in May, when asked how Canadians could hold him accountable, the Prime Minister said, “Canadians will hold us to account by their experience at the grocery store”. He may regret those words today. Judged by that very measure, he is absolutely failing.

Food inflation is 70% above the Bank of Canada's target. Food prices are up 40% since the Liberals took power. Food bank use in Canada is up by 142% since 2015; the Daily Bread Food Bank expects four million visits to its food banks in 2025. Food inflation numbers released on Tuesday morning show overall inflation at 1.9% year over year in August, but grocery prices are up 3.5%. Meat is up 7.2% and beef is up 12.7% compared to August 2024. That is not a rounding error; that is a kitchen table crisis.

Families are not just making ends meet anymore or just making substitutions; they are actually skipping meals, and it is getting worse. Years of elevated food inflation mean that we are all paying today's higher prices on top of last year's increases. It is no wonder that Canadians feel as though the ground is shifting below them in the cereal aisle.

Let us be clear about the scale of hardship. In southwestern Ontario, local food banks repeatedly warn that it is tough to keep shelves stocked year-round as the demand grows. In Middlesex—London, one in four families is food insecure, which means they do not know where their next meal is going to come from. This is not and should not become normal in a country as blessed as Canada. When the government needs to step in to help feed people and their families, government policy is failing. Canadians see the disconnect.

Let us walk through how we actually got here. First, there are policy mistakes. The government slapped countertariffs on U.S. imports last spring, going far beyond steel and autos, and hit a long list of grocery items. Food economists warned that this would raise prices in the very aisles where Canadians were already hurting: coffee, tea, pasta, spices, nuts and citrus. Sure enough, we saw renewed pressure in July and August.

Then on May 7, after last spring's election campaign, the government quietly paused many of those countertariffs. There was no fanfare, no accountability, but this was a tacit admission that it had made a bad problem worse.

Second, there is volatile tinkering. The so-called GST holiday on groceries created chaos in pricing systems, compliance headaches and distortions across categories. Since January, food inflation has surged from -0.6% to 3.8%. Liberals claim this was inevitable, but federal meddling did not steady the ship; it rocked it.

Third, there are the structural costs the Liberals keep piling on. We can ask any grower, trucker, small processor or independent grocer about their biggest upward pressures. They are fuel costs, carbon taxes on the supply chain, red tape, slow approvals and a broken competition landscape that concentrates power in the hands of a few dominant retailers. When Ottawa pretends these inputs do not matter, it is pretending families will not see it reflected on their receipts at the grocery store, so let us dig into some numbers that Canadians are living with.

• (1025)

This is what the people in Middlesex—London are seeing at the checkout: beef top sirloin up 33%; canned soup up 26%, grapes up 24%, coffee up 22%, sugar up 20%, canned tuna up 19%, apples up 14%, vegetable oil up 13% and chicken up 11%. These are not luxury goods; these are staples. The average family of four is projected to spend almost \$17,000 on food this year. That is over \$800 more than last year. Sixty-one per cent of Canadians worry that they will not be able to afford groceries six months from now, and that fear is even higher among young adults and modest-income families. These are not abstract figures; they describe the family in the minivan beside us in the parking lot.

In Middlesex—London, local headlines have reported crowded food bank drives, community cupboards running at capacity and frontline volunteers stretched thin. I have met with many pantry co-ordinators who say demand spikes high right before rent is due or when the hydro bill lands, because people simply run out. When a mother tells us she has learned to ration fruit for her kids, we do not forget it. Across Canada, the story is the same.

Because I am a Conservative, I am going to talk about supply, not just the symptoms. I grew up on a family farm. I still run an operation today. I have said it many times before, and I will say it again: no farms, no food. If we do not support Canadian farmers, we will have less food and higher prices, full stop. The Liberals' poor policies on the carbon tax, fertilizer tariffs, carbon tax 2, the clean fuel standards, plastic packaging bans and red tape have punished farm families working on the thinnest of margins. The Liberals have piled costs onto producers, haulers and processors and then acted shocked when prices rise at the till. That is not economics; that is denial.

Let me also debunk a fashionable fallacy I keep hearing in Ottawa, that banning modern food packaging and plastics will magically make life cheaper and greener. Well, it will not. In committee rooms and on plant floors across Ontario, I have seen how safe, modern packaging prevents waste, extends shelf life and keeps costs lower for consumers. We import more than 80% of our fresh fruit and vegetables. Long-haul supply chains need reliable packag-

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ing to preserve the quality and safety of the food. When activists force rushed bans or label essential materials as toxic, they do not make food cheaper; they make it more expensive and more likely to spoil. That is not a theory; it is what the industry has warned, and it is what common sense tells us.

For any Liberal who disagrees, I will happily give any of them a book to read by a leading expert in the field, Chris DeArmitt. He has reviewed over 4,000 peer-reviewed scientific studies on plastic, and I agree with him that "The problem is clearly not with plastic itself, but with the...behaviour of some humans who [litter]."

In the real world, plastic films and trays extend shelf life, cut spoilage and keep food safer through transport and storage. This is critical in Canada. As DeArmitt says, smart packaging isn't the villain; it is the reason your lettuce is not soup by Tuesday. By banning plastics or replacing them with heavier, leakier alternatives, we do not get greener; we get more waste and more emissions. Treating plastics as toxic would add 50% more waste at retail and up to 150% across the full supply chain, and would add a further 22.1 million tonnes of GHGs tied to food waste, over 8% of national emissions. The bottom line is simple: Banning plastics would not solve the problem; it would create more problems.

The current Liberals have continued Trudeau's legacy by holding a disastrous record on making Canadians poorer and food more expensive. Current Liberal spending and deficits today are only getting worse. Canadians deserve better, and we will deliver. Effective policy will focus on better design, recycling and responsible use, not on swapping materials for food to spoil faster, break in transit or drive higher transportation emissions per kilogram of product delivered.

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If we care about climate and affordability, smart plastic packaging is part of the solution, not the scapegoat. Conservatives call on the Prime Minister to stop taxing food, by eliminating the industrial carbon tax on fertilizer and farm equipment; the inflationary money-printing deficits; carbon tax 2, the so-called clean fuel standard; and the food packaging plastics ban, packaging requirements and the plastics registry that will drive up both costs and waste.

• (1030)

**Hon. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member and I have the privilege of representing the good people of London West. I have spoken to so many people in London who, during the time that we had the GST pause, saw an increase of people using their restaurants and saw families go out and buy goods. I have heard from families in London that have benefited from the dental care program. More than 1,290 children in London West alone, not covering the entire region of London, have benefited from dental care. The child tax benefit has lifted so many families in London out of poverty.

Why has the member voted against all those things that help the people of London? Today the member is talking about helping and supporting. Why does she vote against them?

**Lianne Rood:** Mr. Speaker, the reality is that a GST holiday for a short period of time does not actually solve a long-term problem that the Liberals have created with affordability in Canada after 10 years.

Conservatives believe that the government should not have to pay for kids to eat; parents should be able to provide for that, but it is government policies that are forcing people to go to food banks, because it is increasing taxes. The Liberals continue to punish farmers with an industrial carbon tax that puts the cost of fuel and everything for food inputs higher.

If the member truly did want to help people in Middlesex—London afford food, perhaps the Liberals would look at some of their policies and actually do things that would bring the cost of living down for Canadians.

[Translation]

**Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member and I miss having her on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I mentioned that the other day.

My question is along the same lines as the first one I asked, which I did not get an answer to. I asked for an explanation as to why the cancellation of the infamous evil carbon tax did not lead to lower grocery prices.

Let me rephrase my question. Instead of throwing around slogans and labelling things as taxes that are not, such as the plastics ban, which we know is a reasonable goal, why are the Conservatives not putting forward practical proposals?

It seems to me that my colleague and I usually agree when we talk about practical measures, such as a process for reviewing grocery store pricing. We have worked together extensively on this issue.

[English]

**Lianne Rood:** Mr. Speaker, I do miss working with the member on the agriculture committee. It was great working with him on the committee, but he raises really great concerns.

When the government continues to have a commercial carbon tax on fuel for trucks that transport our food, whether from the farm field to a farm or to be washed, sorted, graded, packaged and sent again on another truck to a food distribution centre that then sends it on another truck to a grocery store, all the added fuel cost adds cost to the food itself. It is no wonder that when food arrives at the grocery store, retailers have to put up the price, because the price has gone up all along the value chain and the supply chain before it ever reaches the consumer at the grocery store.

If we want to talk about the P2 plastics ban's getting rid of plastic packaging, I will say that it would take more GHGs and more trucks on the road to deliver paper packaging to places versus—

• (1035)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments.

The member for Lethbridge has the floor.

**Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that with the coming budget on November 4, we should expect to see record deficits. This is very concerning for myriad reasons, but today we are talking about the increased cost to food, the increased cost of living and the struggle Canadians are having.

The government insists on spending more money that we do not have. What impact will this have on Canadians families?

**Lianne Rood:** Mr. Speaker, I am hearing from constituents from across Middlesex—London, and here is one example. They said:

...it has become evident to me that the government's response has fallen short in proportion to the severity of the challenges faced by our communities. To be clear, there is nothing normal about what is happening in Canada, and these issues must be approached with the urgency they require.

Families, seniors, students, and new Canadians are being forced to make impossible choices between putting food on the table and paying for other basic necessities.

Therefore we need to see less money spent by the government in deficits, we need to stop the money printing and we need to give Canadians policies that will make—

**Karim Bardeesy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to the motion. I appreciate the concern that is underlying it.



Like a lot of members on both sides of the House, I tend to do grocery shopping with or for my family on weekends when the House is sitting. Recently I shopped at the No Frills in Bloor West Village at the corner of Bloor and Runnymede on Saturday night, and I met some of my constituents there who were doing their shopping. In the case of our family, we also do a lot of shopping at Maple Produce for fruit and vegetables and the Hot Oven Bakery on Roncesvalles Avenue.

Before I get into the substance of the debate, I think it is important to show appreciation for all people in our community, in our country, including the member for Middlesex—London, who are involved in the food sector, whether it is retailers large or small, people who are bringing their wares to farmers' markets, people who grow and supply the food, or people who work on the packaging of the food, whether those workers are unionized or non-unionized. It is a big ecosystem and something of which Canadians are rightly proud. It is also an export market for us.

I want to give thanks for the work that has been done in the House both by the current government and by our predecessors on the industry committee, on which I sit, to really start to look at and tackle the issue. Some of the measures have been mentioned already. My colleague, the deputy government House leader, mentioned the GST holiday. The industry committee in its previous incarnation did a lot of work on competition in the grocery sector. Thanks to its work and the work of the previous industry minister, we now have a grocery code of conduct and some other measures that are coming to help address some of the issues that are talked about in the motion.

It is important to realize what has been done, including the very first actions that the government took. On day one, the government cancelled the consumer carbon tax, and I want to situate the issue in the larger set of circumstances around affordability in this country. The motion talks about food prices, although there seems to be a bit of confusion in the sense that, and I am just getting ahead of some of what I am going to say, the answer in the motion appears to be to abandon our climate commitments, which I do not think is advisable. I think we can do both.

Let us situate this in the broader context of affordability. On day one, there was the cancellation of the consumer carbon tax. It was an important measure and something that affected and benefited folks in every one of our ridings. Definitely in Taiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park, the impact was immediate and benefited our constituents.

There was the lowering of income tax, which I am glad to see there was some support from the other side of the aisle. It had an immediate effect on July 1. We moved very quickly. There were different ways to design it. We could have cut a cheque and said, "Here you go" and had a very expensive process to get money back to people, but we did it in the most efficient way possible, which was lowering income tax rates for people in the lowest income tax bracket, saving them up to \$840 a year by next year. It has a real impact on the pocketbook of our constituents.

Additionally, I have the benefit of sitting beside my colleague, the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, the parliamentary secretary to the minister of industry, who has some facts I know he will be

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wanting to share later. Because of lowering inflation in some circumstances, the overall economic circumstances around the consumer price index and a variety of other circumstances, the Bank of Canada was able to make its move to lower interest rates most recently.

This is some of the broader context, and there are probably some areas of agreement on what I have said with respect to the issues. However, a lot more has happened since the consumer carbon tax cancellation and the income tax cut, and I will go through a few of the measures, because when we add them up, they add up to a lot of support for Canadians.

There are the new EI supports. In the commercial war that we are in with the United States, we have to support our workers in a more diligent way, especially in affected sectors, and so we have some new employment insurance supports. We also have the ongoing and increased support with the Canada child benefit, one of the signature initiatives of the former government. It is something I wish we could get more support on from the other side of the aisle, from which we continue to hear nothing about the benefits of the Canada child benefit. However, in my riding, I am constantly hearing from constituents about the benefits of the program.

● (1040)

The Canada child care program and the benefits that accrue to families and the real, meaningful cost of living change that has resulted have changed the lives of families. I was canvassing in the Bloor West Village area of Taiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park over the weekend. I spoke to some constituents on Armadale Avenue. When I run into families with kids under the age of 12 in my riding, there is not a family that says this initiative has not changed lives. This initiative has changed lives. I want to pay tribute to the late Ken Dryden and our colleague in this House, Chrystia Freeland—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just a reminder that the member cannot use the names of currently sitting members, either their first name or their last name, only titles.

The parliamentary secretary.

**Karim Bardeesy:** Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. I want to pay tribute to the late Ken Dryden and the member for University—Rosedale for their work, transformative social policy work that was decades in the making and is having an impact right now. It is helping with families' changing their lives for the better.

The Canada dental care plan is another example of an affordability initiative that in fact continues to grow under this government, now reaching Canadians who are neither seniors nor youth. In my riding, on Bloor Street West and Dundas Street West, there are sandwich boards in front of dentists' offices saying, "Canada dental care plan welcome". It is a sign of an initiative that is attracting health care workers into work and is attracting constituents into getting the health care needs attended to that they used to have to pay for.

### *Business of Supply*

The pharmacare program is another example. I see the Minister of Health has been in the chamber here, and I know there is a commitment to continue to work with provinces to make sure we have deals to extend those benefits to Canadians who need help with their cost of living expenses around pharmaceuticals.

The Canada disability benefit has just come in. I know there has been mention of the Daily Bread Food Bank and Neil Hetherington. I want to thank Neil for his work advocating for the Canada disability benefit with a large coalition of social policy actors and activists across the country. That is now in place and starting to assist Canadians who need that extra cost of living support.

Finally, the national school food program. This is a very interesting one that is changing lives on the ground, again in my community and in communities across the country, including those represented by the members on the other side. Again, I just want to go back to my canvassing experience last weekend with our volunteers in Bloor West Village. Actually, the last door we knocked on before we took a break was on Grassmere Road. I knocked on the door of Don Walker.

Don came out and said, “I just want to send you a message about the national school food program.” Don is a volunteer with an organization called the Angel Foundation for Learning. He is so committed to this program that he wanted to share this with the constituents of Taiaiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park and the Minister of Jobs and Families, and I am going to give him the extra benefit of sharing his story with the rest of this House. This is his comment on the national school food program: “It has been a game changer. By the time we get to next year, by the end of 2026, all our schools, elementary and secondary, we believe, will have the program up and running.”

Don and the Angel Foundation for Learning are especially involved in Toronto Catholic District School Board school food program delivery, but there is also a Toronto District School Board program delivery that he mentioned that he is involved in a little bit as well. Here is Don again: “Every child will have a nutrition break during the day. It may be a very simple thing of fruit and cheese, but in some homes that constitutes as breakfast, so it's been an amazing thing; it's been a game changer. I'm so appreciative of the government for supporting this initiative.”

The national school food program, Canada dental care plan, pharmacare and child care are real initiatives that are really affecting and changing lives for the better in Canada. I am new to this place. I have been here for almost five months. I would like to think there is a way to reach across the aisle to talk about how these initiatives are helping Canadians for the better. I have not seen that from the other side. In fact, what we seem to have seen is a set of propositions. We always like to know what solutions are being put forward for the challenges of the day.

In this opposition day motion, there are four measures the party opposite wants us to take. It seems to me that they want us to abandon our climate change initiatives, our climate change ambitions. While I have been here for almost five months, I have not heard an effort to tackle climate change that the party opposite does like. Am I mistaken? I do not know. I have not seen anything. I have not

heard anything yet, a measure that will help to meaningfully reduce greenhouse gas emissions, that the party opposite supports.

The party opposite wants to further degrade the measures we do have, in exchange for affordability measures. I know the residents of Taiaiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park and the constituents of many on not only this side but the other side of the aisle believe we can do both, that we can have affordability and we can have climate change action. We can have affordability and we can, for instance, take on Russian aggression.

• (1045)

We recently brought in some prohibitions on the import of Russian fertilizer. I think that is something Canadians support. To suggest we would welcome back Russian fertilizer to achieve the purposes of the motion is misguided.

My friend the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, my fellow Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, reminds us he was a former Quebec minister of finance and also a former chief economist. He just reminded me that some of the figures that have been used today need to be updated. For instance, food CPI between July and August is zero. We know these things bounce around from time to time, but it is important to put the fact on the table that food CPI, food inflation, between July and August increased by 0.0%.

I will be opposing this motion. We can do, and have done, a lot on affordability. There is a lot of attention to this issue. There is no one on this side of the House who is not living this in their communities through their own personal experiences and the experiences of working with their constituents. We have a number of programs directly aimed at supporting the affordability challenges in our communities, especially targeting lower-income Canadians. These are good initiatives that I wish the party opposite would take a second look at and maybe support this time.

For those reasons, I will be voting against this motion.

**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal promise was to reduce or control grocery prices. That was the promise.

The government printing money or producing deficits and, as a consequence, borrowing money to cover those deficits increases inflation. Does the member agree that increasing the government deficit and debt will increase affordability pressures, including grocery costs, which the Liberals promised to control?

**Karim Bardeesy:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin is chomping at the bit. His economics background is bursting through, and I cannot wait to hear from him in this debate.

I will say in the meantime that the national school food program is providing money for kids in the Toronto Catholic District School Board that Don Walker is attending to every day. Don is a volunteer. It is not a big government bureaucracy program. This is a volunteer working with the Toronto Catholic District School Board to get food into the mouths of hungry kids every day.

• (1050)

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives often have the habit of presenting serious problems for discussion and then putting forward rather simplistic solutions, intellectual shortcuts or sometimes even populist shortcuts. The issue we are discussing today is serious. The cost of food and groceries is a serious problem. Even high-income families now have to make choices and be careful about what they buy at the grocery store, so imagine how much the less fortunate families must be struggling.

In the previous Parliament, the current Minister of Finance, who was the industry minister at the time, met with the owners of the big grocery chains, and he claimed that that was going to fix everything. He was going to succeed in lowering grocery prices. Today, the carbon tax has been eliminated in the rest of Canada, but grocery prices have remained the same.

What exactly has happened since those meetings? Other than the programs that are in place, what is the government doing to try to bring rising grocery prices under control?

**Karim Bardeesy:** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, work has been done, and it was accomplished with the collaboration of several parties in the House. We now have the necessary structures and processes in place to ensure that this debate is resolved. The large grocery chains now have a relationship with the department and the Competition Bureau.

I hope that the situation will improve thanks to the work that has been done.

[English]

**Dominique O'Rourke (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague, who is also the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry. I wonder if he wants to confirm that rising food prices are a global phenomenon driven by a number of factors like tariffs, the supply chain and especially climate change.

Does it make any sense to remove environmental regulation that seeks to temper that climate change as a driver of higher food prices?

**Karim Bardeesy:** Mr. Speaker, in the member for Guelph we have a great champion for both climate action and affordability, as well as strong manufacturing and agricultural sectors.

It is a “yes, and” answer, in that we can tackle both issues at once in a context of unprecedented global change where our trading markets, our trading routes, are being disrupted in a fashion we have not seen in decades. I agree with her that we need to do that.

**Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite confirmed what we are saying. His solution to the food crisis is a school food program. Why do we need this program in place? It is because people cannot afford to buy groceries.

### *Business of Supply*

Would the member not agree with me that he has just, basically, granted us the entire premise of our argument?

**Karim Bardeesy:** Mr. Speaker, the party opposite is not calling for, in this motion, the abolition of the school food program, although its members did not vote for the program. Instead, they are compounding the issue by saying that they not only do not like the school food program, but they also want to abandon our climate targets. If the money is going to kids for food, then I think it is a good program.

**Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke about the connections between increased prices on food and the climate crisis, yet the Liberal government will not meet its climate targets by 2030. We know now, in terms of public criticism, that the government has no climate plan.

If Liberals are serious about tackling the food crisis, why is my colleague's government not serious about putting in place a climate plan that actually meets targets?

**Karim Bardeesy:** Mr. Speaker, like a number of new MPs, climate action is one of the reasons I decided to stand with this party and this Prime Minister in the last election. I am confident we are going to have a plan and updates to the plans that have already been tabled, including action on methane, all while ensuring we can meet our affordability challenges.

• (1055)

**Ben Carr (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I spent a decade in the school system as a teacher and a principal. I have heard the Conservatives talk a lot about how the national school food program is bureaucracy and say that not a single meal has been served. I would certainly invite any member to come to my riding and actually see the kids who are benefiting from that program eating the food.

Of course we want people to be able to provide to the best of their ability for their families, but has there even been, in the history of our country, even in, let us say, the 10 years that Stephen Harper was prime minister, a 100% ability for all families in the country to provide the amount of food that was necessary? The answer to that is, of course, no.

The point I think the parliamentary secretary is raising, and my question for him, is as follows. Notwithstanding our best efforts to have families be self-supportive, is there not a role for a school food program to play in this country?

*Business of Supply*

**Karim Bardeesy:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, who is also the chair of the industry committee. He is absolutely right: We strive to that future where we do not need these kinds of programs. Right now, this is a vital program, and it is a direct benefit to the kids. I am so appreciative of knowing that the hon. member worked in that system. He has stories in his riding, and I invite members opposite to consider the words of Don Walker. This is having an impact right now and benefiting kids right now.

**Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the words that were presented this morning. We know this is an issue right across Canada, but specifically, I would like to mention a couple of statistics coming out of Barrie. Right now, there are over 500 households using the Barrie Food Bank each day, and 38% of those clients are now children. Those are heartbreaking statistics.

Will the member opposite support our common-sense Conservative motion today to help lower pricing on groceries?

**Karim Bardeesy:** Mr. Speaker, in my last speech, I am on the record saying that I will be opposing this motion because we have these affordability measures that we have already brought in. Unfortunately, the party opposite has rejected a number of the most recent ones. I do not believe any Canadians, including the residents of Taiaiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park, want to sacrifice climate objectives. I believe they think we can achieve both affordability and climate progress.

[*Translation*]

**Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry for his speech.

I think he has a lot of work to do in his portfolio. I know he is a new member. His government can count on our co-operation if it wants to take action.

Earlier, my colleague from Drummond mentioned the work that has been done with grocery CEOs and major grocery chains. We know that Canada has a concentrated grocery sector, and that is certainly not helping to improve costs. Small suppliers, among others, have repeatedly suggested implementing some sort of price-fixing oversight, because there is not a lot of transparency in this sector.

I would like to know whether my colleague is aware of this and whether he is prepared to work on it with his minister.

**Karim Bardeesy:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question.

We are working with the Bloc Québécois critic in committee to address this challenge. The Competition Bureau now has more resources to do that work, and I look forward to working with the Competition Bureau and the department.

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by stating that I will be sharing my time with our chief whip, who is first and foremost the member for Berthier—Maskinongé. I think that he himself would say that his role as a member of Parliament is the more important one. We Bloc Québécois members are, above all, here to represent our constituents.

It is in the rather unusual context of the return of Parliament, where we are hearing one thing and the complete opposite at the same time, that I rise today to speak on this Conservative opposition day. I will not read out their motion in full, but will instead focus on certain facts that we can share with the Conservatives. These are things that we observed while travelling around our respective ridings this past summer.

The first part of the motion talks about “food inflation”. It says that food prices have risen, food banks are expecting high volumes of visits, and food bank use is up. These are things that we, too, are seeing.

I will not speak to the second part because, as usual, the Conservatives are offering bogus solutions to real problems.

I have seen what the situation is in my own riding of Shefford. My principal role is to represent the people of Shefford, but I am also the Bloc Québécois critic for status of women and seniors. In my speech, I am therefore going to highlight what I am seeing with regard to growing poverty among women and seniors.

Costs are exploding in the agriculture sector, as we know, and this is having a definite impact. Producers are telling us that their input costs are up. Many Quebec farms are already drowning in debt. According to the Union des producteurs agricoles, farm debt in Quebec exceeded \$20 billion in 2022.

I wanted to start by taking stock of the situation because the motion talks a lot about the increase in food prices and food bank use. For the agricultural community, there is no question that the rise in input costs and debt levels are having an impact on food prices down the line.

Then there is inflation. The middle class is getting poorer. Cumulative inflation in housing, food and transportation is driving some members of the middle class to the brink of poverty. Low-income households now spend nearly two-thirds of their income on non-discretionary expenses, including housing, food and transportation. They have very little left to make ends meet.

Yes, people are going hungry. I have heard about it first-hand. We have a hunger relief organization in my riding called SOS Dépannage. This outstanding organization told me that there has been a major uptick in demand for food banks, which are now receiving over two million visits a month. Food banks say they are overwhelmed. This is not right.

I have also seen numbers showing that unemployed people are not the only ones affected by this problem. Many workers, people with jobs, are being forced to visit food banks. That is shocking. This is a new reality for food banks. Again, SOS Dépannage told me that more and more people, including people with jobs, are using food banks. More seniors and single mothers are also visiting food banks. This is the new reality.

Poverty among seniors is not getting any better. Seniors are losing their homes. With both rent and food prices rising, more and more seniors are being forced to choose between putting food on the table, heating their homes and paying rent. I think it is worth noting that people 65 and over will account for nearly a quarter of Quebec's population by 2031. We know that many seniors rely solely on the public system and therefore live on an average of \$24,500 a year. As the Observatoire québécois des inégalités, with which I jointly organized a conference on seniors' financial health, has noted, this amount is not nearly enough to cover housing, food and health care.

Seniors are being forced to re-enter the workforce after retiring. They have no choice, if they want to eat. Many have been reduced to picking up shifts at the age of 70 just to pay for groceries. This should not be happening. Staying in the workforce should be a choice seniors make because they want to work and continue to participate in the workforce.

● (1100)

Let us talk about women and poverty. Women stay in violent situations because they are afraid of ending up on the street. This summer, funding for shelters was blocked. As a result, women and children were forced to move back in with their abusers. Bloc Québécois members told me about this situation that was happening in their region this summer. It is unacceptable. According to a recent study, violence against women is the most common cause of homelessness among women. The number of senior clients is rising, and more and more women are ending up on the street. Those seeking shelter are struggling: 84% of the women staying in shelters were fleeing intimate partner violence, and 70% had been living with their abuser before leaving. For some of them, not being sure if they can find a shelter bed or housing forces them to remain in violent situations. This cycle is hard to break.

Affordable housing is at a standstill. Projects that had already received their promised funding have been put on hold by Ottawa, including the shelters I mentioned. Meanwhile, families are sleeping in their cars. In Granby, which is in the riding of Shefford, 1,275 households, or 4% of all households, are living in core housing need, which means their living situation is less than satisfactory. The town is doing incredible work. It is doing what it can, but it will need other levels of government to step in and lend a hand. Among seniors, 11% of Granby's households over age 65 are facing a dire housing situation. In terms of rental housing, nearly half of Granby's households are renters, and many are dependent on an already strained rental market. Among homeowners, 8.2% spend 30% or more of their income on housing. Even owning a home is no guarantee of long-term accessibility or security.

Then there is youth and poverty. This summer, people talked to us about how the poverty rate among youth aged 18 to 24 is 14.3% , one of the highest among all age groups. Many young people are employed in precarious jobs or working part-time or on short-term contracts, so they are not eligible for employment insurance, which has a big impact on their mental health. We might also talk about marginalized communities, indigenous people, immigrants, who are overrepresented in statistics on poverty and homelessness. Since Granby is such a welcoming community, that is another reality I heard about this summer.

### *Business of Supply*

I will now tie all this back to the Bloc Québécois's demands. The Bloc Québécois is calling for a complete overhaul of employment insurance, because the social safety net is so full of holes that entire families are being left to fend for themselves. This fall, I will also be returning to an issue that we discussed during the election campaign. I hear about it in the community from seniors' groups. In fact, I have meetings scheduled soon. People want us to bring back the bill to increase old age security starting at age 65, because it is not acceptable to divide seniors into two categories: those 75 and over who can afford to eat and those 74 and under who should go hungry. The age of retirement is 65. The government boasts that it lowered the age of retirement to 65 from 67, but what does that age of retirement actually mean to the Liberal government?

We are also calling for the funds for affordable and social housing to be released. Meaningless announcements and withheld cheques will not shelter anyone from the cold weather that is on its way. We are a few weeks from seeing people on the streets run the risk of getting frostbite and freezing to death. That is not acceptable. We are also calling for immediate support for shelters. Women should not have to choose between violence and homelessness. People are not asking for much. They just want to be able to eat three times a day and be able to live and age with dignity. We can see that this government has failed to guarantee even that. The Liberals brag about being great with the economy. During the election campaign, they said they would be there to solve the crux of the crisis, the cost of living issue.

In July, I took advantage of my summer tour on employment to meet with representatives of organizations using this program constructively. People like this program. That being said, the representatives wanted me to be aware of the increase in violence against women and the increase in homelessness among seniors. In August, people focused more on the economy. Representatives of businesses and agricultural producers told us climate change was affecting them and that this was affecting grocery prices. They also talked about temporary foreign workers. They need labour. That also has an impact on grocery prices and the economy in general. In short, we need to take action, not propose bogus solutions to real problems.

● (1105)

[English]

**Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed being on the status of women committee with the hon. member.

As the critic for seniors, I have a question we need to address.

*Business of Supply*

According to Statistics Canada, there were 6.8 million seniors representing 18.5% of the population in 2021, and this will grow to 25% in 2036. In my riding, seniors have to look for work because they cannot afford their expenses and have to choose between heating and eating. I am concerned that, because of the high unemployment rate, they cannot find work to continue to survive.

How can we address this if the current government continues to waste money and cause inflation to go up?

• (1110)

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to work with my colleague on sensitive issues such as women experiencing violence and the need to empower women economically so they can break the cycle of poverty.

Like me, she is her party's critic for seniors. I remember going to her office to discuss the importance of increasing seniors' income in order to improve their financial situation. That is crucial. The government did increase the income of seniors aged 75 and over by 10%, but it is not like all seniors aged 65 to 74 are able to work. Furthermore, poverty and illness do not necessarily wait for people to reach 75. People can get sick and be poor before the age of 75. These seniors need the same 10% increase.

We are not asking for the moon. We are asking for just the bare minimum so that seniors can age with dignity. I hope my colleague will continue to support us when we reintroduce a bill.

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very sympathetic to the affordability issue for our seniors and always have been. In the 2011 election, there were numerous examples of sad stories about seniors because of Harper. When the Trudeau government first came to be, we made dramatic increases in the guaranteed income for seniors. Every year, there are annual increases that go to the OAS and the GIS. There have been special programs and additional investments in the new horizons program.

How can we ensure there is disposable income going to our seniors? Let us look at what the current Prime Minister has done. Whether it is the tax break for 22 million Canadians or getting rid of the carbon tax, there are initiatives that deal with affordability.

I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts and ideas on how the government can continue to advance.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, the tax cut was just a scheme to get more votes, and it was temporary. Cutting the carbon tax was the same thing. What seniors want is a long-term increase in their income. If my colleague opposite were listening to seniors' groups, he would know that they need long-term assistance. The government needs to increase pensions by 10% for seniors aged 65 to 74, who were left out last time.

I am also told that the guaranteed income supplement needs to be reviewed. The method used to calculate indexation will be important and crucial. In short, it is important to take a long-term view

rather than simply taking action to get re-elected. That is what seniors are asking for.

**Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent speech.

I would like her to expand on how we can support the agricultural sector. We hear a lot about the climate crisis and climate change. We need to adapt to it, but we also need to support the agricultural sector. I always advocate the following solution: Any income collected should be returned to the agricultural sector to encourage innovation and adaptation to climate change.

Could my colleague talk about that?

**Andréanne Larouche:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé, whom I call the super whip and who is also the agriculture, agri-food and supply management critic.

That is, of course, what the agricultural community is asking us for right now. I must applaud my colleagues for passing the Bloc Québécois's bill because, this summer, people were thanking me for getting that bill passed. We need to continue to defend that legislation and review the "Agri" programs so that they are better adapted to the current situation. That is something that was mentioned.

Yes, farmers are asking to be supported in their transition. They are asking us to take into account the fact that they have to adapt to climate change. They need to be supported in that. We also need to do more research and development. These are all things that the agricultural community asked me about this summer.

I look forward to showing my colleague the little questionnaire that I was able to fill in thanks to my meeting with farmers in Shefford, whom I sincerely thank for their work.

**Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today. I would like to begin by acknowledging that today is the anniversary of the Franco-Ontarian flag. We salute our neighbours who share our language.

I turn now to the item on our agenda. As I mentioned in my questions, I am deeply disappointed. Many of my Conservative colleagues are extremely intelligent, and I really enjoy working with them in committee. We are all passionate about farming, and in committee we are able to work together on sustainable solutions. However, when they introduce yet another motion on carbon pricing, I feel compelled to remind them that they already won that debate. The carbon tax has been withdrawn.

*Business of Supply*

Of course, the Conservatives are talking about industrial carbon pricing today, but the fact is we have to continue taking action on climate change, which is having long-term impacts on the cost of food. Anyone who has spoken with our agricultural producers, especially vegetable producers, has come to understand the harsh reality they face. This situation calls for ingenuity on our part and a willingness to work together to improve commercial risk management systems, because the current systems are no longer working.

Some producers have no choice but to insure against cloudy weather. If they are unlucky enough to have to make a claim, then their group insurance premiums will sometimes double or triple the following year, which makes the system untenable. More and more producers are opting not to get insurance, not because they do not want to, but because it is simply no longer cost-effective. They look at whether their insurance will be worth it if they were to suffer some misfortune. If they have to make a claim and, the following year, their premiums quadruple, they are no further ahead. Sooner or later we are going to have to clue in to this as a group, and by that I mean all members of the House of Commons. There has to be adequate support for our farmers.

Returning to the motion before us today, the Conservatives won the debate over the carbon tax. However, grocery prices have not gone down. The carbon tax was removed in English Canada, not in Quebec, but prices in Quebec are no higher than in the rest of the country. Prices have not come down everywhere else in Canada. It might be a good idea to stop taking lazy, populist shortcuts like this.

This is what is called an inflationary tax, but the deficit is not a tax. On this point, I agree with my colleagues that the deficit is ludicrous. It is atrocious, and it is bound to have a negative impact over the medium and long term. The more debt we carry, the more we have to spend a significant portion of our income on interest to pay down that debt. That is true for taxpayers, and it is also true for the government.

What worries me most about all this, despite the Liberal rhetoric we are going to hear all day that they are here to support people, is that the government has increased spending. As my colleague pointed out when talking about old age pensions, transfers to taxpayers and the provinces are insufficient. Take employment insurance, for example. It is a completely obsolete system that is not working. Nearly one in two workers are not eligible for benefits, despite their contributions. That is unacceptable and it does not work. Spending in this area has increased by only 2.6%.

Meanwhile, contracts awarded to private firms to conduct studies or make decisions on behalf of the government have increased by 26%, even though the resources exist within government. Government procurement is up 300%, and that does not even include military spending. We can do the math; it is not looking good. The Conservatives are right: The deficit is not good. It is not a tax, though. Shortcuts do not move us forward.

They are talking about the second carbon tax, the clean fuel tax, which has such a minimal impact on food prices that it is virtually impossible to measure. The government will eventually have to stop giving handouts to oil companies that keep polluting our air and water while making a profit. I find it exhausting and, with all due regard for my Conservative friends, I have to say that enough is

enough. Can we work on concrete proposals instead? I have listed a few.

They are talking about a “packaging tax”. What good is a packaging tax when we want to reduce plastics? If the Conservatives want a better understanding of the issue, I would be happy to recommend some news stories or documentaries about the state of our oceans. There is only one planet, and we are all connected. If we can start using less plastic, that will be a step in the right direction, but we have to be smart about it. That is where we can really shine.

• (1115)

Indeed, some plastics still have a place in the agricultural sector to preserve the quality of some foodstuff, such as vegetables. Vegetable shelf life would decline by a factor of four or five if plastics were banned overnight. As a government, we should not be dumb enough to ban everything overnight. More research and development and more academic research is needed. Solutions must be found and validated before we get rid of things. That being said, generally, the intent to restrict plastics is not bad, quite the opposite.

I do not know whether this fixation that drives the Conservatives to keep using the terms “tax” and “carbon tax” shows perseverance or a lack of imagination; in any case, it is time to move on. I will move on to something else and talk about what is really going on with food prices.

First, this is a global phenomenon that is very difficult for a government to control. I do not want to excuse the Liberal government but would simply like to say that there is no magic solution. However, there are things we could do.

I will give a simple example that nobody is talking about. I would remind members about the ongoing wars. We have the war in Ukraine. Russia attacked Ukraine without justification. Ukraine is the bread basket for a large part of the world. The war has therefore had an inflationary impact. This is one factor that is beyond our control. However, we can control some things.

For instance, the government decided to impose a surtax on Russian fertilizer. I welcomed this measure initially. I thought it was a good idea. We must impose consequences on aggressors. However, when we consider that Canada is the only G7 country that has taken this step and that ultimately, it has not had any impact, we can do away with this measure and use other means of coercion to bring Russia around.

However, the Canadian government lacked judgment. It simply decided to reimburse the farmers, but when the time came, it could not even manage to do it. We do not know who paid what, and then there are grain co-ops. Eventually, the government put this money into a program, but now, it is the very farmers who need help who are funding it. It is still going on, and they have to pay for it. It is not working. This is just one example of what I mean when I say we need to be serious.

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Then there is also the labour shortage. We need to play it smart when it comes to temporary foreign workers. The government is currently in the process of changing the thresholds. That is fine, and I am not saying the government should not review them, but this needs to happen gradually, particularly in terms of making the change from 20% to 10% across the other sectors. Even if we are only talking about the food sector, all of the sectors are interconnected in an economy. We have asked for a moratorium and a transition period to allow businesses to adapt to this.

Some will say that the agricultural sector is exempt. They are right, but I want to talk about agri-food. What we produce has to be processed, and processing involves costs. There was a pilot project in the agri-food sector, where the threshold of 30% foreign labour was lowered to 20%. There was talk of lowering it to 10%, but fortunately, the government had the presence of mind to leave it at 20%. That is a minimum, and it could be raised to 30% again. I invite my colleagues to visit food processing plants. That will help them understand. These factors all indirectly affect grocery costs.

Reciprocal standards are another consideration. We cannot keep demanding that our producers meet extremely strict standards while we allow low-quality foreign products to enter the country. At some point, we need to get serious. Although we do try to ask questions about reciprocal standards, there are three different agencies involved. For instance, when we try to speak to one minister, we are always told that we have to contact another one. Is anyone responsible and accountable? Can we start by getting things on track?

These are quick and easy measures that the government can take to provide some support to the public. Can we finally get down to business and approve the OAS increase starting at age 65? Every member of the House, whether in private or in public, thinks that this move makes sense, especially in the current context, so, let us do it. If only political posturing and point-scoring would stop getting in the way. Could we not work together for the common good?

There is a great deal of inefficiency within our government food regulation organizations like the Canadian Food Inspection Agency or the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, the PMRA. We will be meeting with representatives from those organizations this afternoon at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. I look forward to talking to them, but what I am hearing from people in the agricultural community does not make any sense. In some cases, Quebec government scientists and independent scientists had a position to share, but the people at the PMRA did not want to hear it because it came from the provinces. This week we talked about federal supremacy. This is true in all areas of this federation.

• (1120)

Let us be serious and work for everybody. Enough with the populist slogans. Let us work on solutions to lower the cost of groceries.

[English]

**Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been pointing out that they are the solution to their own problems, that they are the heroes of their own stories. When we point out that grocery prices are unaffordable for the average Canadian family, they say, “Don’t worry about it. We have a school food program.”

I am wondering if the hon. member has any comments about that.

[Translation]

**Yves Perron:** Mr. Speaker, one of our Liberal colleagues mentioned earlier that he worked in the school system for 10 years. I was a teacher for 25 years. I think it is good that the government is helping food banks, but I do not think that any government should ever boast about having to give money to feed children at school because their parents cannot afford to feed them at home. That really bothers me. The Liberals need to stop bragging and start coming up with real solutions to help people.

• (1125)

**Dominique O'Rourke (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his acknowledgement of the 50th anniversary of the Franco-Ontarian flag. I am a proud Franco-Ontarian, and I can tell my colleagues that we are celebrating today in Guelph and across Ontario. I really care about the French language and culture.

As members know, Guelph is also a major agricultural centre. I invite my colleagues to come visit and see the eco-packaging solutions developed by the University of Guelph. Our city firmly believes in climate change and environmental issues.

Since three of the four solutions proposed in this motion to lower the cost of groceries attack the environment and since climate change contributes to the cost of groceries, I certainly cannot support the motion. I thank my colleague for his suggestions.

**Yves Perron:** Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Guelph, and I wish our neighbours a happy anniversary.

I am interested in university research and development. We have an R&D sector at the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières and throughout Quebec, and it is essential.

This is another area where the federal government is absent. In terms of predictability and long-term vision, there is currently a shortage of veterinarians for large animals. That is an example that springs to mind. It seems innocuous, but there will be consequences. We have to train future veterinarians and welcome them, but we are not able to make the necessary adjustments.

Let us be efficient.

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech, which I think complemented mine well. Today's discussion covers a very broad topic. We see the consequences of inflation, price increases. I thank him for pointing out that creating false taxes or waving a magic wand for solutions does not work. It takes real action.



Right now, farmers are the first to see the effects of climate change in their fields, year after year. Instead of being blamed, they should be made part of the solution and they should be rewarded for their good practices. I would like my colleague to tell us more about that and about the progress that the agricultural sector wants to make in terms of the environment.

**Yves Perron:** Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. I will give a very clear example. In my region, we are currently working with farmers on preserving the Lac Saint-Pierre biosphere to better protect and expand the shoreline. There are even projects that help re-meander certain waterways because that will have a significant impact. We cannot just tell farmers that they are going to lose money every year with the lot of land they cultivate, and then wish them good luck. We cannot do that. We decide what to do together. Farmers are therefore compensated for that and, in the long term, we are able to renew these programs. These are good solutions. The Bloc Québécois also has clear positions on this. I invite my colleagues to consult our platform.

**Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Prince Albert.

I am very pleased to rise in the House today back in good health. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Lévis—Lotbinière for once again renewing their trust in me for this 45th Parliament. It was truly a very special election for me. Every election is special, but I will remember this one since I had to undergo radiation every day of the campaign.

That said, I need to sincerely thank my entire family, my wife Chantal, my children and grandchildren who kept my spirits up during this ordeal. I also want to thank all the health care professionals at the Lévis cancer centre for providing me with such good care. Finally, I want to thank my entire team, who held down the fort while I was away having treatment.

Without all those people, I might have gotten discouraged, but in life, like in farming, we reap what we sow. I had always gone out of my way to support others, but this time, other people supported me. I will always be grateful to them for that.

I might have been tempted to retire, but my mission here in the House is not yet accomplished. My mission is to do my utmost to help the people in my riding and make their lives better. That has always been my purpose in politics, and I want to keep pursuing that purpose.

I rise today to speak to the motion moved by the hon. member for Foothills regarding the Prime Minister's failures.

The Liberal Prime Minister said he would be judged by the cost of groceries. If he still wants to be judged by that standard, the verdict is clear: He has failed.

This is not surprising given that, during the eleventh-hour Liberal leadership race to replace Justin Trudeau, he was the only one who could not say what the average Canadian family spent on groceries.

I would even suggest that he is one of the few Canadians who has not felt the pinch of rising costs across the board. He is a former head banker who, unlike a growing number of Canadians, does not have to get his meals from a food bank.

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The Daily Bread Food Bank expects four million visits in 2025, twice as many as prepandemic levels.

This represents a 142% increase in food bank use compared to 2015, when a Conservative government, of which I was honoured to be a part, left the Liberals with a strong, proud, free and prosperous Canada. It is sad to see what they have done with it.

As I said earlier this week in the House, the Prime Minister's honeymoon is over. I think all indicators show that this is true.

This Liberal government will be no different from those that came before it. Food inflation is 70% higher than the Bank of Canada's projections. Food prices have increased 40% since the Liberals came to power.

Now, let us talk about solutions, which are readily available and on the table. We invite the Liberals to have the courage to copy our ideas, as usual.

Here is what we want.

That...the House call on the Liberal Prime Minister to stop taxing food by eliminating: (a) the industrial carbon tax on fertilizer and farm equipment; (b) the inflation tax (money-printing deficits); (c) carbon tax two (the so-called clean fuel standard); and (d) the food packaging tax (plastic ban and packaging requirements).

As a farmer myself, I know that producers want to feed the world. That said, obstacles and excessive taxes prevent them from offering good quality products at low cost. Consumers are the ones paying the price.

Food should never be a luxury. I was talking to other producers who explained to me that one of the problems they face is red tape, those unnecessary regulations that set arbitrary rules or formal standards that are seen as excessive, rigid and redundant. This is what we have come to expect from the Liberal government over the past 10 years. That is why, at times, producers say that, far from being the solution, the government is sometimes the problem.

● (1130)

A hundred years ago, seven out of 10 people were farmers. Today, only 1% of the population works in agriculture, and that percentage keeps dropping. Farmers contribute to Canada's food security. If we want to encourage the next generation of farmers, it is important to give that 1% all the flexibility they need to produce our food.

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The Liberal Prime Minister played a trick on us when he claimed he had axed the carbon tax. There is still a hidden carbon tax. It is the industrial carbon tax, which applies directly to farm machinery and fertilizers used in the fields. Just like the former carbon tax, it directly affects the price of food by punishing work at the source. Few farmers can do without fertilizer to fertilize their land. The government is still taxing this essential item, however, and that is directly reflected in food prices.

On top of this, the Liberals are on a green crusade against plastics of all kinds. Far from actually helping the environment, all it does is make life more difficult for grocers, who have to worry about alternative packaging. All of these laws are directly reflected in food prices.

Here are some striking examples.

Food inflation in Canada is up 3.24% over last year. Food inflation is now 70% above the target. Meat prices are up 7.62%, after a 4.7% increase in July alone. Fresh and frozen beef are up 12.7%, and processed meat is up 5.3%. Coffee is up 27.9%, and infant formula is up 6.6%.

Canadians are struggling. Their paycheques are being eaten up by these price increases. However, the Liberals are still imposing their philosophy of centralizing, regulating and taxing everything instead of leaving all the power in the hands of the people closest to production.

I would now like to take a few moments to speak to a very big concern I have about agriculture in Canada. I worked in agriculture all my life, ever since I was a young man. A very high percentage of the population at that time was passionate about farming and also had the opportunity to work in agriculture. Over the years, that percentage has declined significantly, to the point where only 1% of the Canadian population now owns farms in Canada.

This is a tiny percentage, given the enormous responsibility these individuals bear. These people are passionate about their work, but the entire mental and financial burden of owning Canada's agricultural heritage falls on just 1% of the population. That said, these people are doing an exceptional job. They have innovated and invested in high-potential machinery technologies, but they still have to work countless hours to successfully support their businesses. During peak production times, they work between 75 and 95 hours per week. These individuals often get little rest and have to sacrifice their precious time, including time with their families, to support their businesses and feed Canadians.

We owe them our deepest gratitude, and I hope that Canadians will give farmers the respect they deserve. If there is a farmer in the area who has a farm stand, I want Canadians to support them by buying produce directly from the farm. This gesture is greatly appreciated by the farmers and provides them with extra income to help them get through the more financially difficult months.

In closing, I want to thank the entire agricultural sector and all the hard-working women and men in this industry. It is my hope that they will be allowed to continue their work in peace. The Conservative Party of Canada will always be the party of farmers, and we will ensure, to the extent that our nation's finances allow, that

farmers can keep plying their trade with the same passion for generations to come.

• (1135)

**Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech. I am very pleased to see him looking so well. So much the better, because we need him here.

I have a very simple question. As a farmer who is very familiar with the agri-food sector in Quebec and Canada, does the member think that the Conservative Party policy of ending the temporary foreign worker program immediately, without replacing it with anything, is a good idea?

Does he not think that this could raise production costs and consequently raise the cost of food for consumers?

• (1140)

**Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, it is rather interesting to hear the comments of a Liberal who has let pretty much the entire planet come to Canada over the past 10 years, who has brought many refugees here. We have really exceeded our capacity to take in all of these people and, of course, we need to take care of them too.

The temporary foreign worker program will undoubtedly be around for a long time. It will no doubt be changed and could be replaced. However, we are going to ensure that our farmers are able to get the workers they need, given that they represent only 1% of the population.

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we know that inflation is driving up the cost of food. We could pass legislation to set a cap on grocery prices. We could increase transfers to the provinces and Quebec. We could do a lot of things to fund food banks.

However, as we speak, oceans are warming, icebergs are melting and forests are burning. There is more and more smog everywhere. The planet is suffocating, yet the Conservatives are proposing that we do away with the gas tax to help lower grocery prices.

I am sorry, but I do not see where they are going with this. They are making the problem worse, not solving it. Does my colleague not agree that it makes no sense to eliminate the gas tax when what we need to do is cap grocery prices?

**Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk about my extensive experience in agriculture. I started helping my dad when I was just four years old. In my opinion, transportation plays an enormous part in the farm-to-table journey, whether in terms of ordering inputs or getting the food to consumers. Transportation costs are one of the main factors affecting food prices, and the price of gas has an important impact on transportation costs. The more gas prices go up, the greater the multiplier effect, making costs 25 or 30 times higher, depending on the stage of the process. Lowering transportation costs will definitely lower food costs.

[English]

**Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's speech. He spoke of the reality that there are fewer farmers. He also spoke of the reality that there are more Canadians who have no understanding whatsoever of the amazing work our farmers do, and that they are so innovative and care about the environment, because that is where they earn their income and how they feed Canadians.

What does the member think of the reality that the federal government, in the middle of last year, cancelled all funding to Agriculture in the Classroom and 4-H programs, which are so crucial for this generation of young people who do not understand where their food comes from? Does the member have any comments on that?

[Translation]

**Jacques Gourde:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very interesting question.

Unfortunately, today, when we ask city children where milk comes from, they say it comes from the corner store. Although this example might be a little simplistic, it reflects the reality. We really need to educate all Canadians. Unfortunately, just 1% of all Canadians are feeding the entire population of Canada. The next generation interested in pursuing this occupation with dignity will face a huge challenge. Now is the time to give this issue our attention if we hope to avoid hitting a wall in the next 15 years.

[English]

**Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to be in the House this time of the year talking about harvest, food security, food safety and the cost of living.

I come from Prince Albert. The riding of Prince Albert is an agriculture-producing region. It is a very viable part of the province of Saskatchewan, which produces a lot of the food we eat across Canada and around the world. What we are seeing happen right now in this economy and the bad policies of the government are really putting people in a bad situation. When we look at the cost of food right now, we are seeing food purchases and storage rising 3.5% year over year, versus 1.9% in the U.S. If we look at the costs in Canada, they are double the costs in the U.S. The prices have risen 48% faster in Canada. Food inflation has been 1.5%, which is double the 0.8% increase headlines in the CPI. Canadians are struggling.

I do not want to give the impression that because food prices are going up, farmers are making a pile of money or getting a fat wallet out of this. Nothing is further from the truth. If we look at what was

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facing farmers when they were making decisions last spring, at that time they had a carbon tax, a cost other producers around the world did not have. Now that the carbon tax is gone, inflation has gone down substantially. It is not because of good policy from the government; it is the government taking the Conservatives' policy and applying it that brought inflation down. Let us, the Conservative party, accept a thank you and take a bow for that, because that is something we, for the last 10 years, have been saying would happen, but the Liberals did not listen until the voters decided they were going to turf them unless they listened.

In Saskatchewan, we are a big canola-producing province. In fact, canola was developed in Saskatchewan, and it has grown in Alberta, Manitoba and parts of Ontario. Canola farmers are going through a really tough season this year. When we put tariffs on EVs roughly a year and a half ago, the 100% tariff, we and the canola and fisheries industries knew at that time that there were going to be consequences.

The government did not prepare for those consequences. It had six months before the tariffs started to hit the canola and seafood industries to proactively develop a game plan for how to mitigate the damage, to go to China and say, "We are going to work something out for our canola and seafood industries." The Liberals did nothing. They could have put together a mitigation plan with the canola producers, crush plants and facilities and say, "Here is a game plan to help adapt to the new environment we are possibly going to be faced with," but there was nothing. What they did offer were more loans and debt, but those do not solve the problem.

As producers look at a combine that is going up to \$1.5 million and the machinery going over \$1 million for an air drill, they are really starting to feel the pressures of the costs. When my dad first started farming, if he had a bad year, he could work in the winter time and catch up. Now, if these guys have a bad year, they are done. There is the amount of capital they have to put out in the spring and the lack of the ability to get that capital back in the fall if they have a bad crop, tariffs, bad market conditions or bad weather. There is so much going on that people who farm really have nerves of steel. There is no question about that.

At least the Premier of Saskatchewan was willing to go to China and talk about canola, and I will give credit to the parliamentary secretary for going with him, but I will say that, when we had these problems under the Harper government, it was not even a day and a half before Minister Ritz would be on a plane and in China to sort out the problem. There would have been a proactive game plan put together, sitting with canola producers and growers and talking to different associates, to figure out how to mitigate this and move things forward, "Can we get more crush? Can we do more? Can we step up to the U.A.E. or Dubai? What are the options to make sure we do not feel the harm Chinese tariffs will place?"

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Nothing was done by the government. The cost to the Canadian economy is going to be substantial because of that, as will the hurt felt on the prairies and how that will domino back to Ontario and the rest of Canada.

I was talking to some of the prairie machinery manufacturers, and they are looking at things very closely, too. Their sales are down substantially because their costs are up. The industrial carbon tax on steel, for example, is something they have to pay that their competitors around the world do not. When they export into Kazakhstan, China and around the world, they are already at a disadvantage because of the costs they bear here in Canada because of the bad policies of the Liberal government.

● (1145)

That is the problem I see with the Liberal government. It brought in policies so quickly and blindly without listening to the industry, which has added costs to the system. It made the system so expensive that it has to subsidize people now just to stay alive.

Members have been talking about the food program for schools. I think the aim is \$4.50 a plate. Nobody wants a kid to go hungry. The science is there. If children have full stomachs, they will learn better and grow, but I will remind the members opposite that kids only go to school five days a week. They are also not at school on holidays and during the summer break. If their parents cannot afford food when the kids are at school, what are they supposed to do when they are not at school?

Would it not be a better policy to look at things to bring costs down instead of bringing in a new program to help people out? Would that not be a better policy? Would it not be better to analyze what the real problems are and what is driving the cost of food up? The Conservatives put forward some solutions. Those are the things the government has to focus on, not looking at how to spend taxpayers' money to patch things up from A to B.

I will use the example of the plastics program. When that was proposed, those in the industry very quickly asked if we understand the consequences of this. They explained very clearly that a lot of the fruits and vegetables that come in plastic are shipped from around the world in that type of material. They made it very clear that they are not going to change the packaging in which they ship food to Canada to accommodate Canadians without somebody paying the cost for something different. They also said that the amount of food waste will increase substantially because of rotting and not having the proper packaging material and that there are no alternatives at this point in time, but there is research going on for alternatives.

What does the government want to do? It wants to barrel ahead with blinders on and bring in this kind of policy, a policy that is going to increase food waste, which increases cost. It is going to increase the cost of food because the packaging will have a higher cost. It is going to bring zero benefit to the environment.

I understand that we want to take care of the oceans and all that. I am all for it. I think we should be doing everything we can to do those types of things when it makes sense and when we have the science, technology and materials to do it. In the meantime, we can do things to mitigate the problem. There is a gentleman in Prince

Albert who does plastic recycling. He has a home for it all. He is looking for ways to recycle.

I want to highlight for the Liberals that, when they bring in bad policy, there are costs. They say they are going to stick with the bad policy, but make it better by subsidizing, with a bit of a tax benefit, a food program, a dental program or something else. There was a time when Canadians did not need those types of programs. There was a time when I could go to the grocery store and fill up the cart, and it would only cost a hundred bucks. When I go to the grocery store now and put two items in the cart, it costs 250 bucks. It was 10 years ago that it was a hundred bucks. Today, it is substantially more.

I was joking with a guy in the grocery store. We were waiting in line, and he said that we do not need these big carts anymore because he cannot afford to fill it. He is right. Bacon has gone from \$17 to \$23. I used to buy hot dogs for \$12 and they are now pushing \$18. It used to be \$18 for a pound of coffee and it is \$32 now. These are the result of bad policy.

Farmers are not getting rich. This is not going into farmers' back pockets. If the farmers are not getting it, and I do not think the supply chain is getting it, who is getting it? It is the taxes being paid, directly and indirectly, to the federal government, which it is then paying back in some sort of subsidization program. It is absolutely stupid.

When the Prime Minister was elected, he made all kinds of promises. I will remind members of his promises, the things he said during the campaign. These are not made up. Conservatives are repeating word for word what he told Canadians. All I want is for him to keep his word.

The Prime Minister said he was going to reduce food costs, and he has not done that. He said he was going to make things better and be elbows up with the U.S. I am not sure if that was the right policy to begin with, to be honest, but he said it was the right policy and sold that to Canadians. Where is he today? He is scared to come into the House. We do not see him in question period or at any time during the day.

The reality is that costs have gone up. Bad policies have made costs go up, and the government is so blind and so much like a cult on the environment and in so many other areas that it refuses to make decisions that would make things—

● (1150)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments, the chief government whip.

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if I heard the member correctly, during his speech, he said that inflation came down on food because the carbon tax was eliminated. Unfortunately, the reality does not match up with what he is saying. The carbon tax was eliminated in April, yet inflation had been coming down for a year before that and met the Bank of Canada's target rate in August 2024.

How can the member say that just last April, inflation suddenly came down when the data does not support that in any way whatsoever?

**Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member did not hear me right. I did not say food; I said inflation in general.

Second, when the government reduced the carbon tax, what was the price of fuel at the pump? It went from two dollars a litre down to I think \$1.29 in Prince Albert. Where do members think inflationary pressures were relieved for Canadian consumers? It was from the savings they had on the price of gas so they were able to afford other things.

That is what is showing up in your inflation numbers. Nothing else you have done has brought costs down. The reality is the reality. Go to the gas station and look at the price of fuel today compared to when you were in charge with your carbon tax.

• (1155)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Just before I recognize the next member, I will note that the Speaker is not responsible for responding to questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Drummond.

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there are also many farmers in the Drummond area. I realize that this is a complex problem. The issues facing farmers are complex. My colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière spoke about this earlier, and he speaks from experience.

However, it seems to me that the Conservatives are reducing this to a very simplistic, even populist solution and are refusing to see the problem as a complex whole.

This morning, we learned our oceans have reached a level of acidity that is almost irreversible, which will have enormous repercussions on the ecosystem. The entire environmental ecosystem is threatened, and the consequences for future generations will be catastrophic. I do not understand why my colleagues who defend the agricultural sector refuse to see the massive consumption of petroleum products as a major issue for future generations and why they see this tax as a panacea and the solution to all problems.

I would like my colleague to talk about this phenomenon.

[English]

**Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, I will go back to what the member he is referring to said. We have to make changes when it makes sense. He used the example of tariffs on fertilizer. If we put a tariff on fertilizer and nobody else does, what impact does it have? If we put regulations in place that nobody else in the world is putting in

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place, all we have done is added costs to our consumers that nobody else is bearing.

Let us look at that. The member is right. It is a complicated thing, but let us use common sense, which the member before him said, as we go through that process. Let us not disadvantage our farmers and manufacturers in the process just because we think we are right when nobody else is following that in this area.

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

A Conservative member is answering my question, and I would like to hear him. However, his own Conservative colleague is making noise. I would have liked to hear my colleague's answer.

I wonder if he could say it again so I can understand his answer.

No? That is too bad.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would remind hon. members that if they wish to have discussions, I invite them to do so outside the chamber. Sometimes there is a lot of noise from members talking to each other after a member has been recognized. I would ask members not to do so in the chamber.

The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

[English]

**Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the member is saying. This debate today is on the cost of food and the Prime Minister saying he would bring it down.

What we hear constantly is a pivot to affordability, which of course is an issue that we have a lot to say about, but the reality of this circumstance is that the cost of groceries is not dropping and Canadian families are not able to afford food. Putting forward a food program is not the answer; meeting the needs of Canadians is by dropping the cost of food.

**Randy Hoback:** Mr. Speaker, we have another person from Saskatchewan who is full of common sense. It is nice to see that show up here in the House.

The member is absolutely right. We have to look at the things that underlie the increase in the cost of food. If it is increased taxes, increased indirect costs, or regulations coming into the sector that nobody else faces around the world and that are not providing food safety or food quality, those types of costs should not be borne by Canadian producers. Then they would not be passed on to the consumer.

Let us use some common sense in this House, take a step back and keep in mind that people have to eat. They have to be able to afford groceries. That is the number one requirement. If the government keeps bringing in bad policies, as it has over the last 10 years, this is going to get worse.

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**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

I want to do a bit of follow-up on how misinformation gets to the floor of the House of Commons. Let me give a good example. The member opposite talked about the food program. Somehow he believes that the food program is an absolute total waste, that the Government of Canada should never have had the school nutrition program. It is not only the member who has implied that; other members have also implied it. In fact, they voted against it. They did not want the government to bring it in.

I was first elected in 1988. Guess when I first started to hear about the need for a school nutrition program. When I was first elected, people were talking about it. I remember Sharon Carstairs, who was the leader of the provincial Liberal Party back in 1988, saying that children cannot learn on an empty stomach. It was a sound policy back then, and it took decades for a national government to turn it into a reality. Truth be told, a national nutritious food program is good for the kids of Canada. It is a sound policy.

The Conservatives, on the other hand, obviously voted against it, and now they continue to criticize it. Am I to assume that a Conservative government would get rid of the national school food program? That is sure what it sounds like. That is one of the reasons Canadians did not vote for the Conservatives' current leader to be prime minister. Instead, Canadians went with the Prime Minister we have today. Why? It is because Canadians could not be fooled. They looked at what the Prime Minister brought to the table and contrasted it with the leader of the official opposition.

What took place? We have a Prime Minister today who was the governor of the Bank of Canada. He was the governor of the Bank of England. He is an economist. He understands the economy, and that has been the priority.

Let us contrast that with the leader of the Conservative Party. What was his involvement in the private sector? I think the answer is not very much, but I will let one of the Conservatives bring it up.

**An hon. member:** That is personal.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the member is saying it is personal, but let us look at the attacks the Conservatives make every day. Take a look at the late show last night and the character assassination that was being used on the floor of the House of Commons. That is the reality. I am sharing with the Conservatives the facts. They are proposing, through votes and by the things they say in the chamber, to get rid of a good, solid national policy that is good for children.

Let us look at what our new Prime Minister did just months ago by taking solid policy actions. One of the very first things he did was to get rid of the carbon tax. That in itself has made a difference. One thing that Canadians received exceptionally well was the tax break he gave to Canada's middle class. Twenty-two million Canadians got more money, more disposable income in their pockets because the Prime Minister wanted to provide more money for issues like affordability.

We talk about housing. We hear about it a lot. We all recall that when the current leader of the Conservative Party was the minister responsible for housing, he built an ever-so-impressive six homes across Canada. We have committed to building thousands of homes. I say that because one of our first initiatives was to give a tax break to first-time homebuyers, therefore making housing more affordable. They do not have to pay GST. That has made homes more affordable for a good percentage of our population, while at the same time enhancing the opportunities from the announcements the Prime Minister has made.

● (1200)

The Conservatives say the Prime Minister should be measured by grocery prices. I wonder if they are even aware of what the CPI from Statistics Canada indicated the food inflation rate in the month of July was. Is there a Conservative member who actually knows that number? I will give them the answer, because apparently they do not. It is 0%. Inflation did not go up at all on food in the month of July.

We do not hear the Conservatives talk about baselines. When they report their stats, what do they talk about? Who knows where they go? They cherry-pick. When they talk about affordability, we hear the numbers, and the numbers are meant to scare people. Yes, affordability is a serious issue. Every Liberal member of Parliament is aware of that, and we are working to make things more affordable, but there is also the reality out there.

I had asked for a simple cross-Canada assessment on minimum wage, for example. Here is what I was provided. Back in 2015, minimum wage in B.C. was \$10.25, and it went up to \$17.85 in 2025. That is a 74% increase. In Manitoba, it was \$10.70 in 2015 and is \$15.80 in 2025. That is a 47.76% increase. In Nova Scotia, minimum wage was \$10.60 in 2015, and in 2025 it is \$15.70. That is a 48.11% increase.

Inflation is a real thing. Not only has it occurred in the last decade, but it was there for Stephen Harper and every Conservative prime minister in the past. Inflation is a part of life, just as we see wages increase. At the end of the day, a number of factors have to be looked at, and that does not take away from the need for compassion and for the government, in particular through the Prime Minister's commitment, to deal with what we can to keep inflation down, particularly on groceries.

We saw a good indication from the current Governor of the Bank of Canada. We just had the interest rate once again get reduced, and that is apolitical. It is not a political party driving it. It is an economist who is responsible for setting interest rates for the Bank of Canada. Why was the rate reduce? It is because we are still on target with 2% or less. We do not need to feed fear and try to give a false impression. Yes, the numbers in certain areas are concerning. There is absolutely no doubt about that. However, if the Conservatives genuinely believed in the issue of affordability and supporting Canadians, I would challenge them on some of the things they voted on.

Let us remember pharmacare. I am a very strong advocate for pharmacare. I believe the pharmacare program is the right type of program, and we should be looking at how we can expand it to provide Canadians good-quality health care from coast to coast to coast. It is saving money for Canadians. If they are diabetic and we have negotiated an agreement with their province, they are saving a great deal of money. Let us think of the seniors, people on fixed incomes, who have diabetes. This is a real, tangible thing. The Conservatives voted against it.

What about the dental program? The dental care program provides all forms of cost savings for individuals who need them the most. Every member of Parliament has constituents who have directly benefited from that program, yet as with pharmacare and the school nutrition program, the Conservatives voted against it.

If we take a look at them cumulatively, these programs make a huge difference. This is not even talking about things like the child care program, the Canada child benefit, the increases to the OAS in excess of 10% for those 75 and above or the increases to the GIS to ensure we get more seniors out of poverty.

The difference is that this is a government that truly cares about the issue of affordability, and we are working toward trying our best to build a stronger, healthier economy that will support the social programs we have. This has been highlighted by the Prime Minister and every Liberal member of Parliament in the House of Commons today.

• (1205)

**Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our hon. colleague never misses an opportunity to stand and debate. Every day, he stands up. There are a lot of newbies on the other side of the bench who are probably waiting to get their—

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, is it appropriate for a member to be talking about how much somebody speaks? Every member has the right to speak in this place as much or as little as the Speaker recognizes. I do not think it is appropriate to be critical of that, given the fact that it is a right of every member in the House.

• (1210)

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is a point of debate. Members are free to debate that.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

**Todd Doherty:** Mr. Speaker, I guess I have hurt his feelings.

All I was going to say is that the member espouses, every day, the Liberal talking points. He does a great job for his team. I am just saying that there are a lot of other MPs on the other side who are probably waiting to give their maiden speech.

Food insecurity has gone up 128% since the Liberals took power. One in four Canadians cannot afford basic necessities. There are record numbers accessing food banks. It is being said that the numbers are to the levels of the Great Depression.

All we are saying is that the Prime Minister said he would be judged by the food prices and that he was going to lower the food prices. Prices have risen since he took power.

### *Business of Supply*

To our hon. colleague—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have to interrupt the member to give the parliamentary secretary a chance to respond.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to the member because, when I speak, he feels uncomfortable with the reality of what has actually taken place and the type of misinformation the Conservatives continue to put on the record to try to misinform people and ratchet up debate, in order to try to justify their fundraising drives. That is what it is all about for the Conservatives. They are more concerned about raising money for their coffers than they are about the interests of Canadians.

To prove that point, the member was there when I said that the inflation rate in the month of July was zero. What does the member say about that? He obviously avoids—

**Laila Goodridge:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, while I appreciate the member opposite, he spends a lot of time in the chamber and speaks a lot. He also knows the rules quite well, or should. He is not allowed to point out whether someone is in the House.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order.

When I made reference to the member, I said that he was listening to what it was that I said. That has nothing to do with whether he was sitting inside the chamber or in the MP lobby, listening.

I would suggest that it is definitely not a point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** On this point of order, in case there is anyone else who wishes to participate, we have to be careful when referring to the presence, or lack thereof, of a member in the House. We cannot do that. To say whether the member is listening or whether the member is circulating in the House is permissible.

I will let the parliamentary secretary finish.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Liberal caucus work day in and day out to ensure we are dealing with the issues that are important to Canadians. Affordability is one of those issues, along with building a stronger and healthier Canada.

**Wade Chang (Burnaby Central, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his hard work.

Can my hon. colleague please share with us how our federal climate programs are helping farmers build resilience to climate change and, in turn, keep food prices more stable for Canadian families?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, we have a very progressive Minister of Agriculture who has been out and about, meeting, consulting and working with farmers. It is one of the aspects that I think are really important to recognize in this particular debate. We owe a great deal to our farmers. I am a prairie boy. I have lived in all three prairie provinces. I value the many contributions our farming communities and farmers make to our country. I thank them for that.

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**Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington—Tyendinaga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the member is really concerned and cares about affordability, as he alluded to in his speech, I would perhaps give him the opportunity to speak about how the government has doubled the national debt, has run up a \$40-billion deficit and is spending more on interest than it does on health care.

How much longer will the government continue to provide failures to the Canadian people?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would highlight this: When we look at the most powerful nations, the G7 countries, Canada is one of only two with a AAA credit rating.

Second, I would suggest taking a look at our net debt-to-GDP ratio and again contrast it with other G7 countries, where we find that Canada is doing an exceptionally good job. We might even be leading the pack on that particular issue.

At the end of the day, sometimes we need to spend money on housing and infrastructure, for example, in order to generate the potential wealth we are going to see in the future. It is one of the reasons the Prime Minister has come up with the five major projects. We will receive a new budget on November 4, and another five projects will be announced before the Grey Cup game. We are interested in developing these major national projects, which create jobs and opportunities. The five projects account for \$60 billion in investment. This is investing in Canadians, which is something we are committed to doing because we know this is what it takes to build a stronger and healthier nation, which will provide more support for social programs.

• (1215)

**Leslie Church (Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretaries of State for Labour, for Seniors, and for Children and Youth, and to the Minister of Jobs and Families (Persons with Disabilities), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today on the Conservative motion to discuss the actions the government is taking to address food affordability.

Affordability continues to be a critical issue, and many Canadians are struggling to get ahead. Food inflation for groceries has fallen from a peak of 11.4% in January 2023 to 3.5% in August 2025. Progress is being made.

Our government has taken, and will continue to take, concrete actions to help ensure that Canadians pay fair prices for groceries. We are deeply committed to improving affordability for Canadians, and that begins with prices at the grocery store.

That is why we introduced, in Parliament, Bill C-4, the making life more affordable for Canadians act. This act would cut taxes, saving more than \$800 per year for the average family. Twenty-two million Canadians are set to benefit from that tax cut.

It is also why the government has invested in the national school food program, providing nutritious meals for over 400,000 kids every single year. Even without support from the opposition, this program is saving Canadian families up to \$800 a year on groceries, taking pressure off parents across the country. Combined with the Canada child benefit, that is almost 600,000 kids protected from

falling into poverty, and that is why child poverty has dropped from 16.3% to 10.7% since the Leader of the Opposition was the minister of employment and social development.

The government is taking concrete steps to bring down the price of groceries but, for many Canadians, especially those in major cities like Toronto, the cost of housing remains a central driver of the affordability issue. In my riding, the beautiful Toronto—St. Paul's, almost two-thirds of households are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. That is why our government is launching “build Canada homes” to build affordable housing at a speed and scale not seen since World War II. With an initial investment of \$13 billion, we are going to be building tens of thousands of new homes using cost-efficient Canadian methods of construction. We are going to grow the supply of affordable housing and bring prices down for all Canadians.

We also recognize that addressing the growing cost of essential goods, including groceries, requires a strong consumer advocacy framework as well as timely independent research on consumer issues. That is why the government is providing a voice for consumer advocacy with the Canadian consumer protection initiative. This program supports independent research and strengthens organizations that represent consumer interests. In its latest call for proposals, the CCPI identified topics such as barriers to competition in the grocery sector and protection against junk fees and price gouging as central to reducing costs for Canadian consumers. Reflecting these priorities, we supported a national consumer movement that reached Canadians from coast to coast to coast, offering practical tools to help decode grocery-pricing strategies and empower consumers to make informed choices at the checkout.

The government has continued to reiterate its commitment to providing Canadians with the tools and data they need to make informed choices in the marketplace. We have maintained the food price data hub to give Canadians up-to-date and detailed information on food prices to help them make decisions about their grocery options. Additionally, the government's grocery affordability web page creates greater transparency around pricing to foster competition and help consumers increase their confidence in participating in the marketplace. Increased consumer choice, investments in supply chains and increased competition in the grocery sector are key to improving food affordability in serious, concrete ways.



In recent years, the Government of Canada has modernized the Competition Act, making amendments that affect how the bureau can investigate anti-competitive conduct and deceptive marketing. For example, changes to the act require vendors to be more transparent in their advertising, recognizing that showing prices without all the mandatory fees included is misleading. This practice, known as drip pricing, makes it harder for consumers to make price comparisons to find the best value, and it hurts those vendors who are the most up front about the total cost of their products.

● (1220)

Furthermore, amendments to the Competition Act through Bill C-56, the proposed affordable housing and groceries act, would affect how the Competition Bureau could examine potentially anti-competitive agreements, such as controls on the use of commercial real estate. The widespread use of these property controls can make it more difficult for firms like new grocers to enter new markets or expand, and that reduces the choice that is available to Canadian consumers.

Since the amendments passed, there have been a number of concessions by major grocers, such as willingly removing some of the controls they had in place and helping to open up markets. This is positive news for Canadian consumers and families. However, food price stabilization also requires the complete engagement of the full supply chain.

Our engagement with industry has been focused on ensuring the continuous improvement of food affordability. After many years of collaboration with provincial and territorial ministers of agriculture, and widespread industry engagement, we were pleased to announce that all large grocery retailers committed to the grocery sector code of conduct. The code is a positive step towards uniting supply chain partners under a set of ground rules and bringing more fairness, transparency and predictability to Canada's grocery supply chain for consumers.

Last, we recognize that global and external pressures like tariffs imposed by the United States are contributing to cost increases that affect consumers, workers, and businesses in Canada. These pressures reinforce the importance of a long-term, coordinated approach to food affordability and economic resilience.

The Government of Canada has worked hard and will continue to do so to address affordability issues and take action to improve affordability for all Canadians. We are going to continue to work to develop a strong consumer advocacy culture and ensure that Canadians are equipped with the tools they need to navigate food prices and make sound purchasing decisions. We will also remain dedicated to investigating harmful practices impacting Canadians, ensuring continued collaboration on areas of joint jurisdiction we have with the provinces and territories on consumer protection, and working to strengthen competition in Canada's grocery sector.

Ultimately our goal is to make sure that Canadians and Canadian families benefit from food affordability across the board.

**Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest struggles, though, is that the government fails to recognize that when it doubles the deficit, it increases

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inflation, and that when it increases inflation, it creates issues where families cannot afford to make choices.

The Liberals have created band-aid solutions like the school food program because parents cannot afford to feed their own families. Absolutely, children need to have healthy, nutritious food in order to learn; I do not think anyone in the entire chamber would argue for anything different. However, what the Liberals are doing is impoverishing families and forcing them to rely on big government. They fail to accept that deficits are causing the problem.

Will the Liberals admit that their deficits are the problem and fix it?

**Leslie Church:** Mr. Speaker, I take umbrage with the member opposite's saying that solutions like the school food program are band-aid solutions and that no one would argue against this, when, in fact, it was the member's party that actually voted against the school food program.

The fact remains that we were the last of the countries in the G7 to actually adopt a national school food program and that families across the country are benefiting from it, to the tune of \$800 a year. Those are healthy school lunches that Canadian families now have through the program. It is an important program that we maintain. I think that as we are going forward, it is going to help children across the country. The Canadian Teachers' Federation supports it as well.

● (1225)

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is not a problem that can be solved with just one solution. There is not just one key that can unlock this door. In my view, the government's efforts to engage the grocery giants have not been successful.

In particular, my colleague talked about a code of conduct that the big grocery chains have pledged to follow. I would like to know what has actually gotten done so far, because we are not seeing any results when we get to the register. I would like to know, specifically and concretely, what is happening with the government's discussions with the big grocery chains regarding rising food prices.

[English]

**Leslie Church:** Mr. Speaker, I think we have made concrete changes to things like the Competition Act where, for example, reducing the property controls that have previously existed in this sector is a way for us to actually have more grocers enter and provide a more fulsome marketplace for Canadian consumers. More choice equals better prices and more pressure to bring prices down. I think that is definitely one of the concrete measures we are seeing.

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However, I would like to remind the member opposite that we are also in a place where food inflation has decreased. Some of the inflation was caused by external factors such as the tariff war with the United States or a global pandemic and the ramifications of that on our supply chains that no one would have seen coming or predicted. Coming out of that time period and making these changes to help bring food prices down is what we are committed to continuing to do.

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thought the exchange with the Conservative member was quite telling of the Conservative Party's position when it comes to things like giving kids a shot at proper education by having proper nutrition at school. The Conservatives talk about it as if it were a band-aid solution.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, they are heckling “yes, it is”, and they are talking about how provinces were doing it. I can say that the province of Ontario pretty much had nothing. It was done heavily through volunteers and donations. Now there is an actual school food program in place. By the way, we are the last country in the G7 to adopt one. People like Andy Mills, who has been running the Food Sharing Project in Kingston, have been doing these things since the eighties, yet Conservatives want people to believe it is a new problem.

Can the secretary of state comment on how valuable a program like the school food program is, especially in the context of Canada's being one of the richest countries in the world?

**Leslie Church:** Mr. Speaker, the data shows that providing kids with a healthy lunch or breakfast at school is key to learning. We absolutely need a program, and the fact that the Liberals are implementing a national school food program is something we are proud of and proud to support. Every other G7 country has a program. This is a program that has been a long time coming and that is going to benefit almost half a million children across this country. There is no better investment we can make than supporting kids for healthy learning and a better outcome in the classroom.

[Translation]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about our objectives as the official opposition and as the future government.

[English]

Our goals are very clear: stronger take-home pay with affordable food and homes, safer streets by locking up the criminals Liberals turned loose, secure borders by fixing the broken Liberal immigration system, and a self-reliant Canada by unlocking the power of our resources, industry and entrepreneurs, but first among all these is that we must be able to feed our people.

Conservatives believe that everyone, including our families, seniors and workers, deserves nutritious, delicious, affordable food on their table: meat and potatoes night after night, not as a once-in-a-while treat. They should not feel stress and anxiety as they walk down grocery aisles. In fact, they should be looking at the items they cannot wait to bring home and transform into the next delicious family meal, rather than looking at the price tag and wonder-

ing whether it will empty their bank account. They should have a full fridge, a full stomach and a full bank account, all at the same time. That used to be what we took for granted in Canada.

After 10 years of Liberal inflation, the cost of food is up over 40%. In fact, since the current Prime Minister took office, promising that he could be judged by the price of food, food prices have been rising 50% faster in Canada than in the United States. The Daily Bread Food Bank says that this year, Toronto alone will have four million visits to the food bank. That is double what it was two years ago, meaning it is worse than it was under Justin Trudeau.

The average family of four is expected to spend almost \$17,000 on food this year. That is up well over \$800 over the previous year. This is at a time when wages are flat and joblessness is skyrocketing. One hundred thousand more people lost their job this summer under the Prime Minister's high tax, low-growth policy, which has given us the fastest-shrinking economy in the G7. Meanwhile, jobless people are walking down grocery aisles and seeing that beef is up 33%; canned soup, 26% grapes, 24%; roasted and ground coffee, 22%; and beef stewing cuts, 22%.

Food costs should be dropping in this country, because the amount of fertilizer, fuel, water and labour that goes into producing food has dropped dramatically. The average dairy cow can produce four times as much milk as 50 years ago, and the average acre can produce four times as much corn.

All the costs of producing food are dropping, but the price of buying food is going up. What explains the difference? For part of that, we will have to wait to hear from the member for Chatham-Kent—Leamington, a very esteemed colleague with whom I will be splitting my time. I can guarantee that he will tell us that part of it is the cost of government, which, again, is the biggest cost contributor, and it has been rising under the Liberal government.

The Prime Minister has three main grocery taxes, all of which he has been raising. First, there is the industrial carbon tax on fertilizer and on farm equipment. That tax increases costs right up through the food chain; it is a tax the Prime Minister intends to more than triple if, God forbid, he stays in power until 2030. Then there is the fuel standard tax, a 17-cent-a-litre tax that the government is imposing that would apply to diesel and gasoline, replacing the carbon tax fuel charge that was in place up until I forced the government to remove it just a few months ago.

I warned that the Liberal government would simply bring in a new carbon tax if given the chance, and that is exactly what it is doing. That will, of course, raise costs. This one is worse, though, because unlike the previous fuel charge, which exempted tractors, combines and other on-farm use, it will apply to the fuel that goes right into the combine, the seeder, the planter and the tractor at the farm gate. It will be even worse for food prices than the previous tax was.

• (1230)

Then there is the inflation tax itself: the most immoral, destructive tax there is and the sneakiest tax. The inflation tax happens when the government prints money to pay its bills, ultimately bidding up the cost of everything Canadians buy. If we have an economy with 10 loaves of bread and \$10, it is a buck a loaf; if we double the number of dollars to 20, but we still have only 10 loaves of bread, each bread purchase goes up by 100%. It doubles in price, and that is what we call the inflation tax.

The Prime Minister is familiar with it. He caused the inflation and housing crisis in Great Britain, where he was a disastrous and now totally despised Bank of England governor. He will hopefully be apologizing to the British people for the economic hell he left behind in that role, but instead he is bringing that hell here to Canada.

Today we learned that the Prime Minister is even more expensive than Justin Trudeau. Who would have thought it possible? The deficit for this year, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, will be two-thirds higher than the one Trudeau left behind. Over the next five years, the deficits will add up to \$314 billion, more than double the deficits that Trudeau was expected to add over that period of time. In other words, he is borrowing at twice the rate of Justin Trudeau, which will be more expensive. Of course, much of that money will be printed.

Already, the Bank of Canada is signalling that it is again doing away with its main mandate, which is to fight inflation. They have taken that mandate off the main web page, where they used to describe their mission as low and stable inflation, and they have replaced it with a grand pronouncement that they are not just any bank, they are “the Central Bank”. What they really mean is that they are going back to printing money to pay for a Prime Minister who cannot control himself.

Every dollar the Liberal Prime Minister spends comes out of the pockets of Canadians in direct taxes or inflation taxes.

**An hon. member:** I didn't even know they had a website.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, the member across the way, who is the whip, is saying he did not know the Bank of Canada had a website. That is another example of a Liberal who should do a little more research before opening his mouth. There are a lot of things they do not know over there or that they do not want Canadians to know.

We know that inflation is very good for Brookfield, because the CEO of that company said so. He said that his company profits from inflation, so the Prime Minister will get richer as he makes Canadians poorer and hungrier through his inflation tax.

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Our goal on this side of the House is exactly the opposite.

• (1235)

[Translation]

That is why we are proposing to eliminate the grocery taxes. We believe it is possible to lower the cost of groceries by eliminating the industrial carbon tax, which is pushing up the cost of fertilizer and farm equipment. We want to eliminate the fuel standard tax on diesel and gas so that food can be produced and transported more efficiently. We want to eliminate the “inflation tax” by reducing inflationary deficits.

We need to reduce red tape, consulting contracts, private sector lobbyists, international aid, as well as funding for fake refugees. We need to reduce the deficit, because doing so will lower the cost of living. We do not want Canadians to have either a fiscal deficit or a nutritional deficit.

We want a country where every hard-working Canadian can put delicious, affordable food on the table for their family and enjoy an exceptional quality of life. There is no reason this should not be possible in a country with such incredible geographic, demographic and economic advantages. We have a wonderful future ahead of us, provided we make the right decisions. Let us start by eliminating the grocery taxes.

[English]

Today we call on the government to stop taxing food; allow Canadians to have nutritious, delicious food; and make this a country where anyone who has worked hard can enjoy meat and potatoes on their table in a beautiful house that they own, on a safe street, with a wonderful Canadian flag hanging off the front porch.

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, does the Leader of the Opposition's senior political adviser, Jenni Byrne, still work for Loblaw's?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, of course she does not. The answer to the question really is that we have the ultimate corporate lobbyist as the Prime Minister of Canada. He is lobbying for tax evasion. His investments are stashed away in offshore bank accounts in the Caribbean, where they do not pay the taxes that Canadians pay. He wants to force Canadians to subsidize the electric car production system that profits Brookfield. He wants Canadians to pay higher inflation, which the CEO of Brookfield said would profit his company. We have a corporate lobbyist as our Prime Minister, and that is why a small group of people are getting rich, making everyone else poor.

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would have liked to hear the Leader of the Opposition talk more about how the Prime Minister has a stake in just about every decision he makes and how he benefits financially.

### *Business of Supply*

However, I want to circle back to today's topic, which is the cost of groceries. I see that the Conservatives are proposing to eliminate many taxes, including all carbon taxes and the packaging tax, meaning the plastic ban.

I would like the Leader of the Opposition to tell us about the Conservatives' plan to combat climate change. Whether we like it or not, it exists, it is here, and it also has consequences for the agricultural sector. We will have to deal with it, beyond all these tax cuts and all these cuts to carbon pricing.

● (1240)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, we are proposing that we export our clean energy, namely nuclear, hydroelectricity and natural gas, to replace much dirtier and more polluting modes of production. That is the Conservative approach.

I forgot to mention another tax: the plastic tax that the Liberals want to impose. It is a tax on food. If plastic is banned, food will spoil more quickly. This will rapidly increase the cost of groceries. We want to eliminate this tax in order to keep food fresh for longer and increase the number of jobs in the chemical sector in Canada. It is a major industry across the country.

We must eliminate all taxes on groceries so that there can be more jobs and Canadians can eat better for less.

[English]

**Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer's fiscal update today is truly a horror story. It shows that in five years, we will be paying over \$80 billion for interest on the Liberal debt. This is far more than we are actually paying for health care transfers in the country. I wonder if my colleague could opine on his beliefs about the government's spending more money on interest than helping out with health care.

[Translation]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, that is more money for bankers and less money for nurses.

I know the Prime Minister likes to help make profits for bankers and people who work for banks instead of taxpayers. That is why he has no problem doubling the deficit that Justin Trudeau left us for the next five years. It is unbelievable that we now have a Prime Minister who costs more than Justin Trudeau did. I would never have thought it possible.

I would add that the Parliamentary Budget Officer's projected deficit does not even include the increases for the armed forces that the Prime Minister has committed to or most of the election promises in the Liberals' platform.

The deficit is out of control. Every dollar this Prime Minister spends comes out of the pockets of Canadians, who have none. We need to eliminate the deficit and this Prime Minister's inflationary tax.

[English]

**Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to bring the voices of Chatham-Kent—Leamington to this chamber.

On food and food security, governments around the world have the desire and, indeed, the responsibility to ensure that their citizens can afford food. What has an impact on the price of food? There are obviously many things: weather, the cost of inputs, trade wars, government policy and many other things. I am a Conservative, so I believe that the market mechanism is the most efficient way to transfer the value of goods and services between buyers and sellers, between parties, and to account for all the impactful factors that I previously mentioned. This applies to all sectors in our economy and, indeed, to agriculture and the agri-food industry.

However, markets only work sustainably when there is a balance of power between buyers and sellers. Over time, structures and regulations, if we want to call them that, have developed to bring about that balance of power. The less the better, obviously, but over time, four things, in my mind, particularly apply to agriculture and, to a varying extent, to different food products.

The first factor is the perishability of food. I will illustrate. If we were to negotiate the price of a glass of milk, a tomato or a bushel of wheat, but we do not agree today and want to come back two weeks later to pick up the discussion, the value of those three different items will have certainly depreciated differently. Therefore, there are different mechanisms that bring about a timely response to perishability and determining price.

The second factor is the ratio of buyers and sellers. We know about oligopolies and monopolies. We have discussed in this chamber and at the agriculture committee the food retail sector and the development of a grocery code of conduct to address concerns about how values transfer between our food processors and manufacturers to the retail sector. This obviously also applies to the areas of telecom, airlines and banking.

The third factor is the complexity of the biology, or the size of the investment. It is a little different when one builds a dairy herd, a vineyard or an orchard. There is an expression that one plants pears for one's heirs. It takes seven years to bring pears into a full harvest, versus the annual crops I am used to, which I have another shot at next year.

The last and most important factor is the international trading arena. At times, especially in today's environment, everything, from border measures to tariffs, non-tariff trade barriers, etc., has an impact on how food is marketed.

*Business of Supply*

Why do I say this? What is my point? Government policies can have a positive impact on the cost of food for citizens by creating the climate that balances the power between buyers and sellers, through healthy competition, which drives innovation and drives lower costs to the final consumer. Every functioning government around the world is involved in agriculture and agriculture markets to different degrees to bring about food security.

I should quickly mention one other area, and that is the whole area of production insurance or crop insurance. No private sector insurance company takes on the massive risks that our farmers do without some form of government intervention to aid with those costs. The private sector simply will not do it on its own. Farmers need to survive to another season in the face of disastrous losses.

Government policies also have a negative impact on the cost of food, and that is why we are here today. The Prime Minister said at the swearing-in of his cabinet on May 13, “Canadians will hold account by their experience at the grocery store.” The grade is in. Food Banks Canada gave Canada a D on poverty and food insecurity, which rose almost 40% over the past two years. The poverty rate in Canada has risen for three straight years in a row, and one of the main factors in food insecurity and poverty being up 40% is the fact that food prices are up 40% since the Liberals took power.

We have heard the numbers today. In August alone, food inflation came in at 3.4%, well above the Bank of Canada's targets. According to the Food Banks Canada report, 25.5% of households are struggling to afford food; this is up from 18.4% in 2023. The Daily Bread Food Bank expects four million visits to its food banks in 2025, double the visits from two years ago. Food bank use is up 142% since 2015.

From the field to the fork, costs and, hence, prices are rising. It is often said that farmers are the first link in the food chain, which is actually not quite accurate. Farmers have many input suppliers, but whether it is from skyrocketing input costs, higher interest rates or burdensome regulations, Canadian farmers are being squeezed harder every year. Another expression is that farmers buy retail, sell wholesale and pay the freight both ways. I will come back to that in a moment.

● (1245)

That is why Conservatives call on the Prime Minister to stop taxing food by eliminating the following four things.

First is the industrial carbon tax on fertilizer and farm equipment. Statistics Canada has reported that realized net farm income fell 26% in 2024, the largest single decline in a decade. Meanwhile, rising costs for fuel, fertilizer and feed continue to make farming less economically viable. While the consumer-facing carbon tax has been removed, the buried industrial carbon tax remains, and its costs are embedded in several inputs in food production, including farm equipment and the production of fertilizers. Canada also remains the only G7 country to maintain tariffs on Russian fertilizers, effectively raising the cost of fertilizers sourced from anywhere in Canada. The U.S. never applied the tariffs, and this past year its imports of Russian fertilizers have rebounded higher than they were the last two years.

Second is the inflation tax, the money-printing deficits. The previous Liberal government increased the money supply by 40% to address massive deficits while the GDP grew only 4%. The result, obviously, could be expected: inflation. Revenues now from the GST flow almost exclusively to cover the interest on the debt, and that is before we have this upcoming budget. With the budget delayed until, what is it now, October 35, we will only know about the budget two-thirds of the way into this fiscal year. Again, the PBO report this morning anticipates what those deficits will be. Canadians deserve a government that will cut wasteful spending so Canadians can afford to put food on their tables. There are human consequences to these policies: more empty stomachs. The Prime Minister promised affordable food, but now Toronto's food banks are expecting those previously mentioned four million visits. Also, 86,000 jobs were lost after he promised more jobs.

The third thing to be cut would be the clean fuel standard, better known as “carbon tax two”, again adding up to 16¢ or 17¢ per litre of diesel. Fuel is not an option for farmers. It drives the tractors. The consumer-facing carbon tax is gone; this cost is not, and it is buried. It is not transparent, and it gets passed on down to consumers. I mentioned before that farmers pay the costs of freight both ways. Transportation is involved in almost every step of the food value chain process, not only on the farms. That fuel cost is buried in every step of the way.

Lastly is the food packaging tax, the plastics tax. Alternatives to plastic come with their own environmental costs. According to the government's own analysis, banning single-use plastics would actually increase waste generation rather than reduce it. The ban would also dramatically increase food waste costs that are embedded back into the system. The answer here is not banning single-use plastics but increasing recycling.

We are the loyal opposition. We will oppose bad policy, but we will also propose solutions. Moving forward with positive actionables, here is what Canada must do. We must build a national agri-food brand and make Canada synonymous with safe, premium, innovative foods. We must treat food security as a national priority. We must modernize the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. Approvals must take months, not years. We need to back entrepreneurs, cut costs in our transportation sector and other areas, and invest in processing.

*Business of Supply*

We will oppose, and we will propose, but we will also expose. We call on the government to appoint Jason Jacques, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, for a full seven-year term; to be honest with Canadians about “how money-printing deficits will again cause rampant inflation of food, housing and other prices...when Canadians are [so] broke”; and to explain to Canadians “how big a financial mess [the Prime Minister has] made, with what is expected to be a 100 per cent increase in the deficit under [his] watch”.

Just from the PBO's report this morning, in the absence of final financial results for the past year, we expect there would be a budget deficit of \$51.7 billion in 2024-25, \$68.5 billion this coming year and rising from there.

To conclude, government policy can affect, positively or negatively, the price of food. The record over this past decade is self-evident. The new Prime Minister said he should be judged by the prices at the grocery store. Well?

• (1250)

**Carlos Leitão (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question for the member opposite. I would ask him if he agrees with his leader, who just said the Bank of Canada has removed from its website any reference to its goal of containing inflation.

I am looking at the Bank of Canada website, and it is still right there on page 1: “low, stable and predictable” inflation, which is at 1.9%, the lowest in the OECD. What gives?

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Speaker, what gives is that food inflation this past August was 3.4%.

What we are talking about today is the price of food and Canadians having access to safe and affordable food. What we are talking about is inflation. That is what Canadians are concerned about, not what is perhaps on or off a website. Canadians are not looking for that every day, but they are going to the grocery store and trying to fill their fridges.

[Translation]

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier when I was asking our Conservative colleague a question, I think it is absurd to ask for the gas tax to be cut as a way to lower food prices.

I would like my colleague to tell me what the Liberal Party plans to do about the cost of food. Is it considering imposing a price cap through legislation, or increasing transfers to Quebec and the provinces to improve funding for soup kitchens? What tangible measures is it going to take, other than cutting the fuel tax?

[English]

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Speaker, I will state upfront that I do not know what the government is going to do. I can see what it has done so far, and it is obviously not working.

As I said in my comments, what we need to do, what the responsibility of government is, is to create the climate for the market to work, to drive innovation, to drive competition and to drive prices lower while maintaining profitability throughout the food value chain. There is nothing wrong with profit in there, but when there is unnecessary regulation, unnecessary duplication and bureaucracy

that interferes with that, it adds unneeded costs and reduces profitability throughout the food chain.

• (1255)

**Pat Kelly (Calgary Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I share the member's view that the best protection for the consumer is a free and unfettered market.

In the member's speech, he talked about how regulation puts the thumb on the scale in opposition to the consumer. I wonder if he could use more of the time we have to talk about any of the specific regulations or the role of regulation in the cost of food.

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Speaker, regulation is not a bad word. Regulation is necessary. The point is that we need efficient regulation. We need an economic lens that is applied to regulatory structures so that we balance food safety with a proper response so that markets can function.

Specifically, within the agri-food committee right now, we are looking at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. We are looking at the Pest Management Regulatory Agency. When it takes 11 years to review a project, that is ridiculous. Situations like that impose costs and delay on the industry.

The burden of regulation is something that has come up over and over again. Regulation, properly done, is necessary. What the industry is experiencing now is unfathomable.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the member should reflect on the leader of the Conservative Party, who spoke just prior to him. When he spoke, he indicated that certain information on the Bank of Canada website is just not there. Then the member gets a question that questions the integrity of his leader, and he chooses not to defend his leader.

Does the member believe that the Bank of Canada is correct, or does he believe his leader is, and I would not say correct, but misleading?

**Dave Epp:** Mr. Speaker, what I believe is that Canadians were paying 3.4% more for their food this past year. Inflation is rising, that is what we are talking about, and it is because of government policies. That is what our opposition day motion is about. That is what we are trying to hold the government to account on. Not only that, but we are proposing solutions for it, and we are asking for the waste and deficit spending to be exposed by the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

**Kent MacDonald (Cardigan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's debate.

Our government is committed to doing everything it can to help make life more affordable for people from B.C. to Nunavut to P.E.I. Today, I would like to highlight the measures we are taking to build the strongest economy in the G7 while bringing down the cost of living. The affordability challenges that have long impacted low-income Canadians are now having serious impacts on middle-class households. Islanders and Atlantic Canadians, in particular, know this all too well, whether it is paying for groceries; heating our homes through long, cold winters; or trying to secure affordable housing.

Since elected, the government has been focused on delivering a plan to address the cost of living challenges that have affected Canadians' quality of life. We are letting Canadians keep more of their hard-earned paycheques by delivering a middle-class tax cut and by removing the consumer carbon price. The middle-class tax cut provides relief for nearly 22 million Canadians, and over the next five years it is expected to deliver more than \$27 billion in tax savings. Importantly, this relief is targeted to those who need it most, with nearly half of the benefit going to Canadians in the lowest tax bracket.

In addition to tax relief, we are protecting and expanding programs that are already saving families thousands of dollars each year. The Canadian dental care plan now covers about eight million Canadians, with average savings of more than \$800 annually. For families in Prince Edward Island and across Atlantic Canada, this makes a real difference in household budgets.

Affordability challenges also extend to home heating costs with climate change considerations. By driving down both energy bills and harmful pollution, the benefits of switching to a heat pump are clear, and the Government of Canada has been bringing these benefits to Canadians through the oil to heat pump affordability program. This program is helping households across P.E.I. and Atlantic Canada make the switch from expensive oil heat to efficient, clean heat pumps. Families are saving hundreds of dollars each year on energy bills while reducing emissions and building a more sustainable future.

We are also acting to make food more affordable through the grocery code of conduct. We are standing up for fairness in the food supply chain. This measure will bring greater accountability to Canada's largest grocers, help curb unfair retail price increases and protect small suppliers. This gives families across the country a fairer deal at the checkout counter. We know the code of conduct has been fought by the grocery chains for years now. I participated in many committees over the years, representing agriculture, to fight for a code of conduct, and I am pleased that we are bringing it in.

Affordability is also about housing. Rents and home prices are out of reach for many Canadians, not only in large urban centres but in small towns and rural communities just like Cardigan, the riding I represent. That is why the Minister of Finance and National Revenue has tabled proposals to eliminate the GST for first-time homebuyers on new homes under \$1 million and to reduce the GST for homes between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. This will save first-time homebuyers up to \$50,000, putting home ownership within reach and spurring construction across the country.

### *Business of Supply*

We have also launched "build Canada homes", a new special operating agency designed to double the pace of housing construction over the next decade. This agency will build affordable housing at scale, fight homelessness and partner with the provinces, territories, municipalities, indigenous communities and private sector. By focusing on non-market housing and innovative building technologies, "build Canada homes" will create supply faster, support Canadian workers and materials and help restore affordability.

Islanders and Atlantic Canadians want to see real solutions. They want fairness at the grocery store, lower heating bills and a realistic path to home ownership. That is exactly what we are delivering.

● (1300)

Our government remains focused on what matters most, which is creating good, well-paying jobs, growing the economy and building stronger trade ties with trusted partners to strengthen our resilience and security. We are acting with urgency and determination to make life more affordable and to confront the housing crisis head on.

Canadians can count on the government to continue presenting serious solutions that make a real difference in their lives and ensure families are better off. We will build the strongest economy in the G7.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we had a federal election a few months ago. During that election, the Prime Minister made a series of commitments to build a strong, one Canada economy. In a relatively short period of time, there have been a number of initiatives the Prime Minister, cabinet and the Liberal caucus have taken action on. For example, we have the tax break for 22 million Canadians, the middle class. Another example would be getting rid of the carbon tax.

Would the member agree that those types of policy initiatives, which the Prime Minister has not only taken into consideration but has put in place, are making a real difference on affordability for Canadians?

*Business of Supply*

**Kent MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, there are many programs we have announced so far that have had a big impact on Canadians, particularly in P.E.I. and in my riding of Cardigan. For example, we reduced the cost of the ferry by 50%, and we put the bridge toll at \$20. This is adding to economic activity in P.E.I. Trucking has come down. Food affordability will come down as a result of that. Many islanders are realizing the benefits of the government's interventions to make life more affordable.

• (1305)

**Kyle Seeback (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his wonderful reading of PMO speech number three.

The issue we have in Canada right now is the cost of food. The member's leader said he was going to fix that cost. The Liberals talk about all these programs they are bringing in, but a decade ago, people did not need all these programs because they could go to the grocery store and afford food. In fact, many people on social media have reordered the same basket items they did at Walmart or somewhere else. They compared the prices from 10 years to the prices now, and the change is astounding.

Does the member think the Prime Minister should be held accountable for his words? He said he was going to bring down the price of groceries and he has failed miserably.

**Kent MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, I will let the hon. member know that I produced food for over 40 years before I took time to come up here and give back to my community. I will take no lessons from the hon. member.

Would the hon. member not agree that food security is very important to Canadians, and it is more important that we invest in greenhouses, hydroponics and the growing of vegetables in controlled environments, so we are not dependent on importing? It is also more important to support supply management to guarantee food security for Canadians in various sectors across the country.

[Translation]

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today we are studying a motion that seeks to eliminate the fuel tax. However, the government already decided to eliminate the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act in Bill C-4.

Apart from these measures, which seek to produce more oil, does our colleague's Liberal government have any tangible measures to propose for combatting rising consumer prices? I am thinking of a price cap on groceries or transfers to the provinces so that they can better fund food banks.

What does my colleague think his government could do?

[English]

**Kent MacDonald:** Mr. Speaker, there are many things going on. I just spoke about investing in hydroponics and greenhouses, so we can grow food and gain more food security. There is also a clean energy corridor that is part of our build Canada program. We are looking forward to that in Atlantic Canada as we look for clean energy solutions, such as wind and hydro.

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to this

opposition motion, but I cannot help but think it is just the same old Conservatives we have been seeing for years in this place. I am actually quite surprised they have not caught on to the fact that the tricks and misinformation they had been laying before Canadians for the last four years, in an effort to somehow try to clench power, has been unsuccessful for them. It did not work, yet here they are using the exact same tactics and thinking that Canadians are going to buy into their extremely disingenuous information.

Every Conservative wants to somehow blame the cost of rising food prices on the government and the actions of the government, but most Canadians realize that, when we trade in a global environment, prices are affected by global situations and global events. I will give a perfect example. In 2021, Ukraine was exporting roughly 87 million metric tons of wheat. Now it is exporting about 21 million tons, which is about a quarter of what it used to export.

When we consider that Ukraine was looked at as the breadbasket of the world and a major supplier of wheat, what did members think that would do to the price of wheat throughout the world when Ukraine had been distributing wheat throughout the world? Did they not think it would impact inflation? Conservatives want us to believe that it has nothing to do with it, that it is somehow only because of choices made by the government.

What flabbergasts me even more is the fact that I witnessed this for years before the last election. The Conservatives did the same thing. They deployed the same tactics and used the same false arguments, and then they lost an election on it. They promised that, if we eliminated the carbon tax, inflation would go down. I also heard a member say earlier today that inflation did go down when the carbon tax was eliminated in April. This is not true.

If we look over the last year and a half, inflation had been at, below or around the Bank of Canada benchmark for a solid eight to 10 months prior to the carbon tax being eliminated. Even the false logic the Conservatives are trying to use today in the House is extremely misleading and untrue, yet they continue to do it.

I am really concerned about some of the things I heard in the House today. I heard Conservatives asking questions, and then heckling during responses, about the national school food program. I heard someone heckle that it was a band-aid solution.

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure the member is heckling me again right now. It is not a band-aid solution. National school food programs have been in all G7 countries except Canada for decades.



In Kingston alone, Andy Mills, who runs the Food Sharing Project in Kingston, has been facilitating some form of school food sharing through donations and volunteers since the eighties.

Governments have been calling for this for years, because the reality is that there are different socio-economic circumstances for different children, and they should not interfere with their ability to have proper nutritious food in the morning before they start to learn in school. To try to conflate such a meaningful program for so many young children in Canada with a band-aid solution for tackling an inflation problem is disingenuous at best and completely misleading at worst.

I am also concerned about some of the things I heard from the Leader of the Opposition. He was talking earlier about the Bank of Canada, and I find his comment really interesting, because when we are in the House, we are expected not to mislead. We are expected to give factual information to the best of our abilities. Sometimes that can be based on opinion and sometimes it can be based on information we get from one place that is argued by somebody else.

• (1310)

Moments ago, the Leader of the Opposition had this to say. I want to quote him, so I went to his YouTube channel to replay the video, where he was on YouTube Live while he was speaking. He said, “Already, the Bank of Canada is signalling that it is again doing away with its main mandate, which is to fight inflation. They have taken that mandate off the main web page, where they used to describe their mission as low and stable inflation, and they have replaced it with a grand pronouncement that they are not just any bank, they are ‘the Central Bank’.” Members will remember that he used some language there and he got a good little cheer from the swath of Conservatives who were sitting in the perfect camera shot behind him. They all cheered for it.

However, if we actually go to the Bank of Canada website, right on the main page, and this is not in bullet point form or somewhere random, buried in a policy document, there is an infographic on the main landing page of the Bank of Canada. It says, “What does the Bank of Canada do? Our primary responsibility is to preserve the value of your money by keeping inflation low, stable and predictable.” The Leader of the Opposition came in here and just spoke about something that was completely untrue.

I made a bit of a joke during that exchange, saying “I didn’t even know they had a website.” He laughed and got his cohort behind him to chuckle along as he said “the whip...is saying he did not know the Bank of Canada had a website”, and that maybe I should do some research. The only thing worse than not knowing the Bank of Canada even has a website is knowing they have it and not being able to properly read it when quoting it. That is exactly what he did.

I asked him a question. I just wanted to know if his senior policy adviser, Jenni Byrne, still did paid lobbying for Loblaws. It was a simple question. The Leader of the Opposition stood up and said “of course she does not”, as though it was impossible for me to even think that could possibly be true and to ask that question. She was registered as a lobbyist on the Ontario lobbyists registry as late as early 2024.

### *Business of Supply*

It is very fair, when the Leader of the Opposition brings into the House the topic of discussion of the cost of food, inflation and the challenges that Canadians have buying groceries for me to ask if his campaign manager and senior policy adviser is still a lobbyist for Loblaws, helping to lobby government to reduce regulation so that it could make greater profits. He comes in here and acts as though he is the all holy individual who could properly represent and speak on behalf of the Canadian people, meanwhile his campaign manager is a lobbyist for Loblaws.

I will go back to how I started this speech, which is that Conservatives are up to the same tactics they have been up to since I came here in 2015. One would think that after having leader after leader, Conservatives would finally realize that maybe they have to try something new. I even thought that maybe after losing his own riding in Carleton, and having to go to find the safest Conservative riding in the country to run in to fight his way back to that seat, that maybe he had learned something along the way and would have a different approach.

There is nothing. It is the exact same. The only difference now is that he is the member for Battle River—Crowfoot instead of Carleton, but it is same Leader of the Opposition playing the same tricks and, unfortunately, bringing the same misinformation into the House.

• (1315)

**Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know that members on the opposite side of the House think that if they yell and are really super angry about a bunch of things, maybe we will get intimidated or stop sharing facts.

The facts are that food insecurity is up, and 25% of families are struggling. They do not know where their next meal is coming from. Food insecurity has gone up 128% in the last 10 years the Liberals have been in power. This means that families are struggling to put food on the table, and the solution from the government is to build more bureaucracy rather than bring down food prices so that families could have the autonomy of being able to put healthy, nutritious food on their family table.

I fail to understand how members from the Liberal benches could somehow think that Ottawa feeding families is better than a family being able to put food on their own table.

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I am definitely passionate. This is why we speak through the Speaker. I am certainly not trying to bully anybody. I am speaking with the passion I have for this place and this particular issue.

For the member to say that I am misleading is completely false. Where the Conservatives and the member are misleading is in the characterization that somehow the problem we have here is uniquely and solely the responsibility of this government. It is not. By the way, Canadians agree and realize it is not. They realize there are external factors. That is why we are still sitting on this side of the House, and why despite all of her work doing the same thing in the preceding Parliament, she is not.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is talking about solutions to a crisis. Today's motion is talking about the rising cost of groceries.

As I said earlier, there is not just one solution to such a complex issue, certainly not a simplistic solution like the one the Conservatives are proposing. Earlier, the Liberals said that there was already a code of conduct that grocers and major grocery chains had agreed to comply with, but consumers have not seen a difference in the price of groceries.

However, perhaps it would be possible to look at the purchasing power of people feeling the pain of inflation. The government has not yet increased old age security for seniors between the ages of 65 and 74 years. The pension increase was limited to those aged 75 and older. We could also consider increasing the GST credit on an exceptional basis when inflation rises in a given quarter.

Is the government considering such solutions, namely to increase people's purchasing power while simultaneously trying to control the price of groceries?

• (1320)

[English]

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, for starters, I would like to thank the member for offering some solutions. He talked about cutting the GST in certain circumstances. I am not entirely opposed to that. I would love to hear more of his thoughts on that.

I know a sticking point of the Bloc Québécois for years now has been the increase to the OAS for seniors over 75 versus between 65 and 75. We are a data-driven party. We look at the data; we make decisions, and the data showed that seniors over the age of 75 had a more precarious financial status and therefore needed larger supports. It made more sense to make sure that seniors over 75 were getting more, because the data shows that they are, as a whole, struggling more than seniors between 65 and 75. That is not to say there are not challenges among all demographics and all ages.

I appreciate him bringing forward ideas. I would like to hear more ideas, rather than just slogans.

**Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands outlined external factors that he said contribute to the high cost of food in Canada. Can the member outline what Canadian factors have contributed to the high cost of food in Canada? Is the Government of Canada to blame for anything?

**Hon. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, I love how the member phrased that preamble. He said that I said there are external factors. It is not me saying there are external factors; it is economists throughout the world, not just Canadian ones but those everywhere.

I will say back to the member what I said earlier. When Ukraine starts producing a quarter of the wheat it produced before the war, how does he not think that will impact inflation related to wheat and any product that comes from wheat?

**Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time.

It is an absolutely honour to once again rise in the people's House to address the important opposition motion we put forward today for consideration. It is clear that Canada is in the midst of a crisis. Canadians are struggling to afford food, and the cost of living is quickly rising. Many Canadians are finding it harder and harder to meet their everyday bills and obligations, let alone plan for their futures. Younger Canadians are increasingly despairing about their future prospects of ever owning a home, and many are even struggling to afford to pay rent.

On top of this, what we have is a continual soaring of the price of groceries, which affects every household in Canada and every age bracket. In my region in particular, it does not matter which age bracket. We are seeing a massive increase in and strain on the budgets of our seniors. They are having a harder and harder time making ends meet on fixed incomes while their costs for things like heat and groceries continue to soar. When it comes to individual grocery items, grapes are up 24%. The cost of canned soup is up 26%. The cost of sugar is up 20%. The cost of potatoes is up 16%. I do not know about other members, but coffee is pretty essential to my household, and it is up 22%. I think that is a crisis in and of itself for those who partake in coffee.

Let us set the scene a little further. There are even more food inflation considerations we have to put into the mix. Food inflation is 70% above the Bank of Canada's target. Food prices are up 40%. Food bank usage is also up 142% across the country. We are dealing with devastating facts and realities relating to food inflation in the country.

The government needs to take action and it must take action quickly. We have had lots of happy talk, lots of meetings, lots of photo ops and lots of chances to discuss and think about this. We have put it under active study and review and reported back to the overarching committee that reports back to the supreme committee that gets back to the House, which gets back to the minister, who eventually gets back to us. Someday, maybe, they will consider taking some kind of action so they can have another photo op to talk about what they have been talking about for months.

Canadians are demanding real action and tangible results. They want a government that will do what it says it is going to do. It was the Prime Minister who said that Canadians will judge him by the price of their groceries. They will be able to render their verdict on that.

When we look at the prices of groceries in the six months since he has been Prime Minister, they have done nothing but continue to soar and go up. Canadians are struggling as a whole right now, as 61% of Canadians lack confidence in their ability to afford groceries six months from now. This is staggering, and 70% to 80% of young Canadians worry regularly about covering the costs of essentials. Food Banks Canada found that 40% of Canadians thought they were financially worse off compared to the previous year. These are devastating findings from reputable sources, and it is time for the government to take action to remediate and address those concerns.

There is a common denominator throughout this crisis. It is a denominator that has been there for over 10 years now. We are talking about a decade's worth of common denominators. It is the current and previous government.

The Prime Minister stated that Canadians would judge him by the cost of groceries, and what we know is that they have. They are continuing to look at it, and they realize that he is not taking action despite the great promises. What are the reasons for us to call upon the Prime Minister to address this right away? What are some of the things we should make sure get done in order for these problems to be addressed?

• (1325)

First, here are some of the big ones. Let us go to the source: those who grow our food. What are the farmers across the country asking for this government to do? What are those who grow our food telling us we need to do to address this problem? They would like to see the industrial carbon tax removed from fertilizer and farm equipment. That would certainly help. They want the government to deal with inflation, because as everyone who follows it knows, inflation is the most harmful tax of all. It eats more and more of people's paycheques and incomes than any other tax right now when we consider its overall effects, especially as it pertains to groceries.

Farmers want us to address the clean fuel standard tax. That has been added on. It is basically a second version of the carbon tax, which the Liberals said they would remove. They took the carbon tax off, supposedly, in one name, but it has come back as the clean fuel tax, which only augments further the cost of anything that is trucked, shipped, hauled and exported.

Then there is the food packaging tax, the attack on plastic. To everything that gets packaged and everything that gets put in a bag and shipped, that tax is applied. It affects the cost of goods, and it is putting our farmers and producers at a severe disadvantage as far as competitiveness goes with neighbouring jurisdictions and other jurisdictions around the world. It is hard for these farmers and growers to keep pace with the rest of the developed world and compete economically when their input costs continue to soar.

We have heard producers ask repeatedly, and I hear it back home in my area, when the government is going to get off their backs, get out of their way and let them do what they can to help Canada get through the challenges we are facing right now and help Canadians. It is hard to help others when the burden of taxation continues to be put on their backs layer upon layer, with further regulation upon regulation. There are all these hurdles to overcome, and that is let

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alone competing in international markets. It is time we addressed these things.

Since March 2025, food inflation has risen 1.5%. Food prices have risen 48% faster here than in the United States. Canadians make over two million food bank visits per month, which is a 90% increase since 2019. These are staggering statistics, yet we are whistling, humming, taking photo ops and talking happy talk about how we are going to be the greatest and strongest economy in the G7. The average Canadian is looking back and saying that feels like a fairy tale to them. That is a long way from reality in their households. They are just trying to figure out if they can afford a certain grocery item this week or if they are going to have to stop a subscription in order to continue purchasing the basic needs for their households.

We have big challenges, and I wanted to talk for a brief moment, as I come to close, about the impacts on rural Canada. I am a rural Canadian. I live in rural New Brunswick, and I represent a rural riding that is filled with small towns and rural communities. The government's approach to various regulations, taxation and policies has had a discriminatory impact on rural Canadians, whether it is the EV mandates that eliminate their ability to choose for themselves and their households the vehicle they want to drive that best meets their needs and their budgets, the anti-firearms legislation the Liberals continue to bring in year after year that goes after their way of life and traditions, or even the attack on farmers and those in the natural resources sector, who see their input costs continuing to go up year after year because of taxation.

Why does the government not get onside with us, support our opposition motion, bring some relief to this sector, which so desperately needs it, and help bring down the price of food across this country?

• (1330)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member to comment on two points. The government does understand and appreciate what is taking place in terms of the affordability issue. I have provided ample comment in regard to that, and we are taking actions to support Canadians and put more disposable income in the pockets of Canadians.

Having said that, I am wondering if the member would acknowledge that in the month of July, food inflation was at 0%. The Bank of Canada, just last week, reduced the interest rate, and that is a fairly positive signal to Canadians meaning that we are hitting our inflation targets.

Could the member provide his thoughts on those two issues?

*Business of Supply*

**Richard Bragdon:** Mr. Speaker, I respect my hon. colleague, but I want to say that it is, again, extremely misleading to the House. There is no way possible a government can double its deficits and continue to spend at the rate it is spending and expect inflation to go down. Inflation is continuing to go up, especially as we look at competitive and comparable nations across various jurisdictions.

We talk to the folks back home in New Brunswick and the folks across Canada, especially in rural Canada, about the cost of living. They do not at all feel like their cost of living has suddenly dropped since the election. They are feeling it more than ever, and it is time we addressed it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I go to the next member, I would like to tell members to be careful when referring to “misleading” in the House. The adjectives and adverbs used before can get a member in deep trouble, so I am just cautioning the member.

[Translation]

The member for Drummond.

**Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my Conservative colleague on his speech and I applaud his passion. He is clearly very committed. I can tell that this really matters to him and gets him fired up.

The cost of food is a major problem, but I do not think the solution is as simple as what the Conservatives are proposing. It is much bigger than that.

Does my colleague agree that we need to do more to support and ease the burden on the agricultural sector, much more than slogans and axing taxes? Experts say those taxes have a negligible impact on the actual cost of food.

[English]

**Richard Bragdon:** Mr. Speaker, one thing that is abundantly clear is that, in all the considerations of the current government, rural Canada is left out. Our agricultural and natural resource sectors are not top-of-mind considerations. What needs to happen is a reprioritization so the perspective of the people who are most affected by the government's policies and have been harmed by them the most, including our agricultural producers, farmers, fish harvesters and energy and natural resource workers, is heard and heeded in the House.

Rural Canada was the key to building this country, and it will be rural Canadians who will be key to its comeback, so their perspective needs to be weighed in on this. The more it is considered, the better we are all going to be and the better their prosperity will be. It is time for rural Canada to be heard.

• (1335)

**Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I seconded the motion here today. All we are saying is that when the Prime Minister came in, he said to judge him by food costs. That is why the motion is what it is.

I had the opportunity all summer to go to various food outlets in my city, Saskatoon. All one has to do is sit around the meat freezer. People come, and they have sticker shock. Families cannot afford to eat, and they are making choices, not good ones, at the grocery store. I can say that because I have hung around them in my city. I

want the hon. member from New Brunswick to talk about that. Families are now making some drastic decisions at the food store, because of cost, that may not be healthy for their entire family.

**Richard Bragdon:** Mr. Speaker, it is so true; Canadians are facing some really tough choices. They are facing some unbelievably difficult scenarios in their own household as they make decisions pertaining to their budget, and that includes seniors and young people.

I see in my own home area of Woodstock, New Brunswick, that the local food bank's usage has doubled since the same time last year, and a worker there said that it is from all age brackets, from young to older. She said, “Richard, this is at a crisis point; we have got to have additional help.”

It is time we prioritized the plight of ordinary Canadians who are being hurt.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, or possibly even a privilege issue.

You just made reference to the potential of saying, “misleading information” in the House, and that is what I want to make reference to. It is a very serious issue, and in doing a very quick search, I found that the Speaker made, I believe it was on October 30, 2013, an indication, and he was talking about misleading information. I am cutting through it, and so there has to be, no doubt, more information to look into on the issue. I will read the resolution of the Speaker's decision:

Considering the high threshold to prove that a Member misled the House, the Speaker concluded that there was no evidence that the Prime Minister's [in this case] statements were deliberately misleading, that he deliberately provided incorrect information, that he believed his statements to be misleading or that he intended them to be misleading. Accordingly, he ruled that there was no prima facie question of privilege.

I raise the issue because of my deep level of respect for the Bank of Canada. All of us should respect that it is arm's-length and independent. However, earlier today, the leader of the Conservative Party stated, “Already, the Bank of Canada is signalling that it is again doing away with its main mandate, which is to fight inflation. They have taken that mandate off the main web page, where they used to describe their mission as low and stable inflation, and they have replaced it”. It continues on. Again, it is the issue of the Bank of Canada that we are talking about and the website.

I would ask for unanimous consent, or I could provide, in both English and French, the mandate letter. The mandate, as posted on the website, states, “The Bank's monetary policy framework aims to keep inflation low, stable and predictable—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The parliamentary secretary is now engaging in debate. He referred to a previous Speaker's ruling in years past. Is there a particular standing order or usual practice of the House to which the parliamentary secretary can draw my attention?

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, I could reference page 112, “Privileges and Immunities”, in Bosc and Gagnon—

• (1340)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am going to interrupt the parliamentary secretary, as I believe that would be the section for a question of privilege, which requires notice to the Speaker, and I have not received such notice at this time.

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, in order to—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am going to interrupt the parliamentary secretary. He cannot choose to raise a point of order and a question of privilege at the same time and combine them. He has to pick which one he is doing, at the time he rises.

The parliamentary secretary was recognized on a point of order, then clearly said that it was maybe a question of privilege and was trying to explain, referring to a previous Speaker's ruling, which is why I let the parliamentary secretary continue. I have not heard what the point of order is at this time.

With that being said, Standing Order 10 says that if I make a ruling from the chair, there is no further debate on the matter. I would invite the parliamentary secretary to look at it. I would also invite the member, if he wishes, to rise at a later point on either a point of order or a question of privilege, and I will leave that to the member to decide.

We will resume debate.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Côte-du-Sud-Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomik—Témiscouata.

[Translation]

**Bernard Généreux (Côte-du-Sud-Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomik—Témiscouata, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is my first time rising in the House this fall. Unfortunately, in the spring, I did not have the opportunity to thank my constituents, who re-elected me on April 28 with a very clear majority. I am extremely proud to represent them and to be here in the House of Commons for them. I thank them for their trust.

Food inflation has become one of the most painful realities for families in Canada and Quebec. Canadians themselves say that they do not see the Liberals' failure in economic stats; they see it when they go to the grocery store. The Liberal Prime Minister himself said that Canadians should judge his government by prices at the grocery store. Well, Canadians have judged, and they are still judging, and they have clearly given the Liberals a failing grade.

In August, food inflation rose 3.4% compared to last year. That may seem innocuous, but it is 70% higher than the Bank of Canada's inflation target and nearly 80% higher than overall inflation. When we get into the details, it is even more shocking. Beef is up 12.7%. The overall price of meat is up 7.2%. It is a good thing I do not drink coffee, because the price of coffee is up 27.8%. Infant formula, which I do not drink either, is up 6.6%. Even the price of soup, a commodity, is up 5.3%.

These are not luxuries; these are foods that families eat every day and every week. As a result, nearly one quarter of Canadians and

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5.5% of households are now food insecure. That is the highest number ever recorded. In Toronto, for example, the Daily Bread Food Bank now welcomes over four million people a year, twice as many as it did just two years ago. Imagine. The number of users has doubled in two years. At the national level, Food Bank Canada gave the Liberal government a terrible grade on its report card on poverty and food insecurity.

I would like to talk about how this debate relates to my constituency, Côte-du-Sud-Rivière-du-Loup—Kataskomik—Témiscouata. Moisson Kamouraska is on the front lines of the fight against food insecurity in our region. It serves thousands of people in the surrounding regional county municipalities, namely Montmagny, L'Islet, Kamouraska, Rivière-du-Loup, Témiscouata and Les Basques. The only RCM from that list that is not in my constituency is Les Basques. My riding has five RCMs and 75 municipalities. That represents a large number of people and municipalities, and the figures are alarming.

In 2024 alone, Moisson Kamouraska responded to 8,977 requests for food assistance, impacting more than 9,000 people. Of those people, 27.8% are children. More than 18,600 meals and snacks were served. I want to highlight a disturbing fact that the director pointed out to me: 34.2% of the people helped by Moisson Kamouraska have jobs. These are people who sometimes work full time but can no longer afford to pay for their groceries. By comparison, only 30% are on social assistance. This means that the middle class has become the main clientele of food banks. The government has been boasting for years that it is helping the middle class, yet today, there are more middle-class people than people on social assistance using food banks.

According to what the director of Moisson Kamouraska told me, right now, the vast majority of clients are not people on social assistance; rather, they are middle-class workers and families who can no longer make ends meet.

The organization also said that food aid in Kamouraska is distributed once a month, and that they have had to come up with alternative solutions, such as community fridges, vegetable boxes and food baskets at a low fixed cost, so that people can cover their basic needs between distributions.

• (1345)

The creativity of community organizations is a testament to their dedication, and we must sincerely thank them for all the work they do. However, let us be clear, it is not normal for working families to have to wait four weeks to get a grocery hamper or to have to use a community fridge to survive.

Again this fall, when school started, Moisson Kamouraska saw an increase in demand both by students and families. Parents who were unable to cover back-to-school costs were forced to use food aid so that their children could have enough to eat. That is the reality in our regions. I could go on.

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This is the direct consequence of Liberal inflation. The Liberals have been in power for nearly 11 years. We had consecutive deficits for 11 years in Canada. This created inflation, which has not stopped rising, and, this morning, the Parliamentary Budget Officer told us that the deficit will be at least \$65 billion. That is double the amount forecast by the former finance minister, who ultimately did not want to table her budget because it ran too high of a deficit. Things are going from bad to worse.

I would like to highlight the work of Maison la Frontière in Montmagny and Bouffe Pop in Rivière-du-Loup. These organizations provide food assistance in the area that I represent. There are also some in Témiscouata. In reality, these organizations should not even exist. Obviously, they have been around for a long time, but they should not have to exist, because people should not need to rely on them.

According to Statistics Canada, Canadians who earn less than \$75,000 a year are now spending 57% of their income solely on basic necessities such as food, housing and transportation. In addition, 43% of Canadians have to spend more than 30% of their income on housing alone.

When we also consider the tax hikes, the 4.2% increase in mortgage interest rates and the 4.5% increase in rent, it is easy to see why so many families are knocking on food bank doors.

In 2023, the Liberals promised to obtain meaningful commitments from five major food retailers to stabilize prices. The member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, who is now the Minister of Finance, was bragging about it in the House. He said that the Liberals would lower food prices by working with the big chains. The result is that prices have risen by 6.4% since then.

I can say that the reality of the Liberals' record and their misleading promises is only getting worse, as unnecessary spending is piling up. Billions of dollars have been spent on private consultants and the bureaucracy is growing. Again, the Liberals are promising to cut spending in Ottawa by 15%. That is what the Minister of Finance has asked all his ministers to do.

Yesterday, I attended a meeting of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage with officials from Canadian Heritage. The department's budget is \$2 billion and I told them that 15% of \$2 billion is \$300 million. They agreed. Okay, but where are they going to make cuts to save 15%? We are keen to see whether that will come to fruition.

Deficits continue to increase the national debt. Another \$65 billion or \$100 billion in debt will be added this year. Let us not forget that this is interrelated. The Parliamentary Budget Officer told us this morning that in 2030, or four years from now, we might end up paying up to \$80 billion in interest on the country's national debt. That is more than the government spends on health transfers across Canada. It is unbelievable.

All of this fuels inflation and makes Canadian families even poorer. The Conservatives are proposing another way. We will end out-of-control spending. We will cut the red tape. We will scrap costly contracts awarded to consultants. We will help ease the tax pressure and give power back to Canadian families. We will cut

taxes and make sure that Canadians can once again afford decent housing, transportation and food.

In my riding, more than a third of people receiving food assistance are middle-class workers. This is unacceptable.

● (1350)

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is a good idea but the motion, as written, is misguided, unfortunately. We cannot vote for it.

A tax is a charge levied by a government to fund public services. However, according to the Conservatives, anything they do not like is a tax. A deficit is not a tax, particularly if it is the result of, among other things, reducing taxes. Phasing out and replacing single-use plastics is not a tax. Requiring that fuels create less pollution is not a tax.

I am in favour of voting for good motions. However, it appears that the Conservative Party's whole objective in introducing this motion is for it to be defeated so that Conservative members can generate content for their social media.

**Bernard Gagnéux:** Mr. Speaker, every political party makes its own choices about which policies it wants to put forward. The Conservative Party's priority is to put more money in Canadians' pockets by cutting taxes.

My colleague can choose to disagree with that. He can tell his constituents why they are paying more and more for the food on their plates, because he is going to hear about it.

People in Lac-Saint-Jean pay taxes like everyone else. The Bloc Québécois has not supported the policies that are best suited to the present time: making cuts and putting money back in people's pockets.

[English]

**Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Retail Council of Canada says that record levels of theft from stores took place in 2024: \$9.1 billion. The number one item being shoplifted was meat because Canadians cannot afford to put food on their tables. They are resorting to theft to try to feed their families, yet the Liberals say Canadians have never had it so good.

Is that wilful ignorance, honest ignorance or just plain ignorance?

[Translation]

**Bernard Gagnéux:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are deliberately turning a blind eye if they think that everything is going well for the people of Canada. Clearly, that is not the case.

More people are being forced to steal in grocery stores. That is nothing new. Shoplifting has been around for a long time, but due to the pressure on all Canadians, some families have to shoplift in grocery stores if they want to eat. It is no joke.

Honestly, I do not understand why the Liberals are not paying down our debt. The interest that is piling up is obviously driving up inflation.

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is saying that the Bloc Québécois did not do the work in its ridings. Are people in Lac-Saint-Jean really asking their MP to eliminate the gas tax because of rising grocery prices? That seems a bit strange to me.

In my riding, people are asking whether prices can be capped, whether we can get inflation under control and whether we can subsidize food banks, but no one has ever asked me about getting rid of the gas tax.

I would like my colleague to confirm whether that is really what is bothering people in Lac-Saint-Jean.

**Bernard Généreux:** Mr. Speaker, I have been to Lac-Saint-Jean many times. People have F-150s and big GM and Dodge trucks parked in their driveways. That town probably has the highest concentration of trucks in Quebec.

There are hunters and fishers. It is a beautiful region for hunting and fishing. Yes, I can guarantee that these people would like to see a drop in gas prices. It is just that no one has ever talked to them about it. If we had the opportunity to offer them a tax cut, they would obviously never say no. So much the better if we can lower taxes.

As many of my colleagues have mentioned in the House since the beginning of the debate, food prices are closely linked to transportation costs. In Canada, transportation is not electric, at least not for trucks. They run on gas and diesel. This inevitably drives up food prices.

• (1355)

[English]

**Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time.

I am thankful to be speaking today on what is a very important issue to the people of the riding of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan: Canadians would judge the Prime Minister by the cost at the grocery store.

Before I continue, this is the first opportunity I have had to speak in the House, and I would like to thank the people of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan for their confidence in sending me back to Ottawa to be their voice. The riding of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan is five square kilometres bigger than Switzerland. It may have better chocolate, but we have better cows, better hockey players and better maple syrup.

I would like to thank my campaign team, who helped me cover this vast territory: Scott Pettigrew, Kyle Lillie and Avery Boechler, who showed up every single day and may have missed a couple of classes at high school, but do not tell his mom. I also thank Barb

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and Mick LeBoldus, Ken Schwalm, Karen Vishloff and numerous others who door-knocked, put up signs and went from community to community, door to door, knocking and putting on events.

I also want to thank my two beautiful daughters Saoirse and Eilidh, who are ages 13 and 10, and who are asking good questions about democracy, sacrifice, why Daddy does what he does and why he represents the people of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan. I know they do not like me saying “Daddy” anymore at that age, so I have to start using “Dad”.

The Liberals have continued their disastrous record of making Canadians poorer and food more expensive. Canada's core inflation for August came in at 50% higher than the Bank of Canada's target as the deficit balloons the cost of living. It does not stop there. Food inflation came in at three-quarter per cent this year over last year, which is 70% over the Bank of Canada's target. As a result, food banks gave Canada and the Liberal government a D on poverty and food insecurity. The Prime Minister's spending and deficit today are not as bad as Justin Trudeau's. No, they are worse. Today's PBO report made that abundantly clear. All of his extra spending on bureaucratic administration and high-priced consultants is costing Canadians higher debt and taxes, and more inflation.

I shared the vast size of my riding of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan. It is truly blessed with an abundance of potash, which is fertilizer for those who do not know, railway lines that take goods to market and a first-class military base that trains the next generation of pilots and is home to the world-famous Snowbirds air demonstration team.

However, it is also home to fertile lands that are considered the bread basket of Canada. We cannot have a bread basket without farming. The challenges and extra costs facing our agricultural producers have been piled on and on by the Liberal government. Costs are then passed on to consumers.

I would like to share a broad overview of what Canada's agriculture sector is facing.

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

● (1400)

*[English]***RECOGNITION OF PALESTINIAN STATE**

**Fares Al Soud (Mississauga Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as parliamentarians, we carry the voices of our communities while carrying our own. Mine is that of a Palestinian Canadian. I am the son of parents who never had a country they could truly call their own until they became Canadian. Growing up, my parents would speak of the immense suffering our people endure, fearing it would be forgotten, but they also spoke of their immense pride in being Canadian.

Only days ago, my parents were once again reminded of that pride. Canada's recognition of Palestine is historic. It affirms that we lead not only in words but in action.

*[Translation]*

While recognition is not an end in itself, the moment for which generations of Canadians have worked so hard has finally arrived.

*[English]*

A genocide continues to unfold in Gaza. Recognition is not the end of the road, but it is an important affirmation that all peoples deserve to live freely with dignity, self-determination and, above all else, hope. This is Canada.

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**YOUNG MEN IN CANADA**

**Jamil Jivani (Bowmanville—Oshawa North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a message today for every young man across Canada, every one who feels anxious about his future because he works hard and cannot get ahead and every one who wonders if the struggle is worth it: It is not their fault.

They are not the problem in this country. In fact, they are a big part of the solution. They deserve better leadership in Canada. They deserve a government that empowers them to live up to their potential. The reality is that this is not the case right now.

They deserve better, and a brighter future is possible, a future where they are valued and encouraged, a future where they are treated like a priority. We need them, and we need them to speak clearly, tell the truth, organize and be undeniable.

We need them to help us restore the north.

\* \* \*

**RETURN OF UKRAINIAN CHILDREN**

**Ernie Klassen (South Surrey—White Rock, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this Tuesday, the Prime Minister and the President of Ukraine co-chaired the high-level meeting of the international coalition for the return of Ukrainian children, which was held during the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Thousands of Ukrainian children are victims of Russia's crimes, where some of the most vulnerable populations are being targeted.

Russia first abducted and deported them, and now it seeks to erase their culture, identity and their bond with family.

As a parent and grandparent and a child of Ukrainian refugees, I cannot imagine the horror these families are experiencing. We have to ensure they are returned as soon possible.

Canada is intensifying its work, together with Ukraine, our European partners and the U.S., to secure the immediate return of Ukrainian children. I thank the Prime Minister for his leadership in advancing peace. We should not and cannot rest until Ukraine's children are home.

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**NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION**

**Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, September 30 is the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Also known as Orange Shirt Day, we remember the indigenous children who were taken away through the residential school system, and we honour their families and communities that continue to feel the weight of that loss.

Orange Shirt Day began with Phyllis Webstad in Williams Lake, British Columbia, which is also the hometown of my seatmate. At just six years old, Phyllis had her new orange shirt taken away on her first day at residential school. That shirt has become a symbol of what was stolen and a reminder that every child matters.

Reconciliation cannot be marked by a single day. It is, yes, about wearing orange but also about listening, learning and committing to action every day and ensuring that no indigenous child should ever again feel invisible, neglected or unworthy.

Let us remember the children who never came home, honour the survivors who carry those stories and work toward a future where justice, respect and dignity are the foundation of true reconciliation. Let us say today, and every day, never again.

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● (1405)

*[Translation]***FRANCO-ONTARIAN FLAG**

**Marie-France Lalonde (Orléans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago today, our magnificent green and white flag, a symbol of Franco-Ontarians, was raised for the first time in Sudbury.

This morning, together with the Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture and Minister responsible for Official Languages and colleagues from across Canada, we proudly raised the flag on Parliament Hill.



Ontario is home to the largest francophone population outside Quebec. As the proud member for Orléans, a vibrant francophone community enriched by its linguistic diversity and home to the Mouvement d'implication francophone d'Orléans, I see every day how proud people are to live, work, learn and thrive in French.

On this historic day, I join Franco-Ontarians from across the province in celebrating our beautiful language. May our flag continue to fly proudly for another 50 years.

\* \* \*

#### FRANCO-ONTARIAN FLAG

**Gaétan Malette (Kapuskasing—Timmins—Mushkegowuk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, September 25 is a special day for Franco-Ontarians. On this date 50 years ago, we unveiled the very first Franco-Ontarian flag.

I will borrow a few words from Maurice Duplessis to celebrate our flag:

A flag is an emblem; a flag is a rallying sign; a flag is a manifestation of [pride]. It reflects a desire to live and survive...A flag says that we are someone, that we are descended from someone, that we want to live our lives and survive in a way that respects everyone's rights, demanding full respect for our prerogatives, our rights and our freedoms.

That is our Franco-Ontarian flag.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### TUBERCULOSIS

**Jacques Ramsay (La Prairie—Atateken, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, dozens of tuberculosis advocates and survivors are here in Ottawa today. They have come from across Canada and around the world to raise awareness among parliamentarians about this ancient infectious disease, which remains the deadliest in the world. Their tireless efforts have pushed governments worldwide to act on TB. Despite their successes, TB still claims the lives of over 1.2 million people each year. Here in Canada, TB disproportionately affects indigenous communities, as we have seen with recent outbreaks in Nunavut.

Canada has been a global leader in our fight to end TB. Our investments in the global fund have helped to save countless lives, and Canadian researchers have helped transform the way we can detect and treat TB.

As the United States pulls back from our world, Canada's continued leadership is critically needed to end this deadly disease. Join me in thanking the advocates here today who are working tirelessly to achieve this world.

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#### WOMEN'S RUGBY WORLD CUP

**Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this Saturday, Canada takes the field against England in the Women's Rugby World Cup final. This is the biggest rugby match in the history of Canada and the women's game.

These athletes have shown true ingenuity, crowdfunding to reach the world cup and competing on a budget that pales in comparison

#### Statements by Members

to other nations. Canada sometimes plays unconventionally, generating opportunity and space with a speed, accuracy and discipline the world has never seen before. In their historic semi-final win over the New Zealand Black Ferns, I am told Canada played with the fastest average ruck speed of any team, men or women, ever. Behind this team stands an incredible coaching staff, led by Kevin Rouet.

No matter what the outcome on Saturday, Canada is proud. We are behind them all the way. They have established themselves as the world leaders in rugby. They have inspired boys and girls across Canada to pick up a rugby ball and run with it.

On behalf of Canada's Parliament, I say, "Go, Canada, go!"

\* \* \*

● (1410)

[Translation]

#### INTERNATIONAL SENIORS DAY

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on October 1, International Seniors Day, I want everyone to take a moment to think about those who built Quebec. We need to find solutions to the issues that affect them most, such as isolation and abuse. More importantly, we need to take action to support them in dealing with the skyrocketing cost of living.

That is why the Bloc Québécois is taking this opportunity to announce that we will be reintroducing our bill to increase old age security for people aged 65 to 74 and to end age discrimination against seniors. This was an election promise, and we are committed to making it happen because financial insecurity does not wait until you are 75 and inflation directly penalizes those on fixed incomes.

We will also take action to allow those who wish to continue working to do so without being unduly penalized. We must remember that it is our duty to protect the social safety net and to enable older people to enjoy a well-deserved and dignified retirement. It is a matter of respect.

This is true every day, but October 1 is a perfect opportunity to remind ourselves of it.

\* \* \*

#### FRANCO-ONTARIAN FLAG

**Hon. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier—Gloucester, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker,

Glory to my fair flag,  
the flag of Ontario's francophones  
I raise my flag high  
So all can see  
That I am Franco-Ontarian!

### *Statements by Members*

Today we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Franco-Ontarian flag, a powerful symbol of our identity, our pride, and our contribution to Ontario's rich culture.

As a proud Franco-Ontarian, I wish to pay tribute to all the communities and francophiles who contribute to enriching our culture and showcasing our identity.

To put the focus where it belongs  
We need to stand up and celebrate  
Our Place  
Today and tomorrow.

Long live the Franco-Ontarian community, long live the francophonie, and happy Franco-Ontarian Day.

\* \* \*

[English]

### ANIMAL WELFARE

**Scott Anderson (Vernon—Lake Country—Monashee, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has failed to do its job, letting the Canadian Food Inspection Agency order the slaughter of a herd of ostriches with no transparency or communication with farmers or Canadians.

Since the beginning, apparently unlike the CFIA, I met with the farmers and raised their concerns publicly. These farmers love their animals. Senior academics are begging for access to potential research on diseases. Canadians are travelling from all across the country in outrage. This communication fiasco has been allowed to escalate into a crisis. Now tens of thousands of Canadians have raised their voices on the issue, wanting to know why.

Why is the Liberal agriculture minister not forcing the CFIA to properly retest these 400 ostriches? Why would the Liberal health minister want to throw away valuable potential medical research?

The nation is watching, and Canadians demand answers. Why will you not explain yourselves?

**The Speaker:** I would remind the member that it is through the Chair. I do not know that much about ostriches.

\* \* \*

### GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this year, Atlantic Canada has experienced a troubling increase in gender-based violence. Women and girls across our region continue to endure violence, often from current or former intimate partners, with tragic consequences. This ongoing crisis highlights a harsh reality: When circumstances become difficult, women often suffer.

Breaking down the barriers that prevent women from living safely and freely is more urgent than ever. Ensuring security and justice is essential not only in protecting lives but in creating conditions where women can fully participate and contribute to society. Building on what my colleagues have shared earlier this week, we must recognize and support the strength of survivors and the dedication of those working tirelessly to address this issue on the ground.

As we continue Gender Equality Week, I want a world where my nieces, and all women and girls, can live free of fear and can thrive.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

### THE ECONOMY

**Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, every dollar the Liberal Prime Minister spends comes straight out of the pockets of Canadians. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said the deficit this year is going to be at least \$26 billion higher than what was projected just six months ago.

These money-printing deficits drive up the cost of everything we buy. That is the inflation tax. Nowhere is this more evident than at the grocery store. In August, food inflation outpaced all other inflation by 84%. Food prices have climbed 48% faster in Canada than in the U.S.

Under the Liberals, Canadians are paying 33% more for beef sirloin, 26% more for soup and 20% more for sugar. The Daily Bread Food Bank warns visits will increase by millions above last year, and Canadians are going without meals.

The Prime Minister said he would be judged by the price of groceries. The verdict is in. He is a high-promising, low-delivering failure.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

**Giovanna Mingarelli (Prescott—Russell—Cumberland, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate Franco-Ontarian Day. This year is extra special since we are marking the 50th anniversary of the Franco-Ontarian flag. It remains a living symbol of pride and unity for the francophone community in Ontario.

This week, people in Prescott—Russell—Cumberland paid tribute to this historic day with flag raising and other ceremonies in Casselman, Clarence-Rockland, Hawkesbury, Saint-Albert, Embrun and Alfred. Of course, many other celebrations were held in all the communities in the region, each contributing to promoting the francophonie.

To this magnificent community, I say thank you for enriching the national capital region. To Ontario and the rest of Canada, I say happy Franco-Ontarian flag day and happy Franco-Ontarian Day.

*Oral Questions**[English]***ORAL QUESTIONS****PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA**

**Vincent Ho (Richmond Hill South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Prime Minister promised the fastest-growing economy in the G7. Instead, Canada has the fastest-shrinking economy, the second-highest unemployment, the worst household debt and the most expensive housing. It is another Liberal broken promise.

He told Canadians to judge him by grocery prices, but the food cost is rising faster today than when he took office. That is another Liberal broken promise.

He promised “build, baby, build” and 500,000 new homes a year, yet his own housing agency says homebuilding will actually fall by 16%. That is another Liberal broken promise.

He vowed to have nation-building projects done at unimaginable speed. Six months later, all he has done is take credit for other people's work. That is another Liberal broken promise.

He promised to spend less and invest more, but taxpayer-funded spending is up 8%, the inflationary deficits are doubling and \$63 billion has fled the country, a record outflow. That is another Liberal broken promise,

Canadians see the pattern. The Prime Minister does not just break promises; he is breaking Canada.

\* \* \*

**CANADA-IRELAND RELATIONS**

**James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate one of our country's oldest friends and allies, Ireland. The ties that bind our two countries are many; they are economic, historical, cultural and emotional.

In 1866, the first transatlantic cable between Europe and North America connected Canada and Ireland. Irish Canadians helped build our country. During challenging economic times, Canada and Ireland have stood together to ensure our nations thrive.

The resolution of the troubles in Northern Ireland was a result of a common desire for peace and hard work, and Canada was there. This led to the historic Good Friday agreement, signed almost 30 years ago. A Canadian general, General John de Chastelain, helped steer that process and was responsible for getting the guns out of Northern Ireland.

Today, we welcome the Irish Taoiseach, Taoiseach Micheál Martin, to Ottawa to join with Canada in our ongoing efforts to make the world a better place. Today's meeting is not just a meeting between two great countries but also a meeting between two great friends. We thank him for coming to Canada. He is always very welcome here.

*[Translation]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is off on another pointless and costly trip to escape the scandals, inflation, crime and problems related to the Minister of Public Safety here at home. This minister lost track of 600 foreign criminals who are here in Canada. He broke the Liberal promise to hire 1,000 border guards and he admitted that his program to harass farmers and hunters will not protect Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister protect the lives of Canadians and fire this minister?

● (1420)

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Yes, the Prime Minister is travelling around the world building bridges. Yes, the government will present a generational plan, a plan to build Canada and to grow Canada, a plan to create jobs across Canada.

Instead of criticizing, the Conservative leader should stand up and congratulate the Prime Minister for building relationships and building a stronger Canada. On our side of the House, we plan to build a future for Canadians.

*[English]*

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is on yet another costly and useless photo op tour to escape inflation, criminality, the housing price crisis and, of course, the scandal around his public safety minister. That is the minister who lost track of 600 foreign criminals on our streets, broke the Liberal promise to hire 1,000 new border guards and was caught on tape admitting that the Liberal plan to harass farmers and duck hunters has nothing to do with saving lives and everything to do with preserving the Prime Minister's political fortunes.

Will the Prime Minister put Canadian lives first and fire the minister?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is another day, but it is the same old Conservatives. On this side of the House, we are about building the future. We are going to present a budget to build this nation. It is going to be a generational investment in our future. We are going to build the country. We are going to build jobs. We are going to create the opportunities for young people in this country.

We are going to build the strongest economy in the G7, and we hope the Conservatives will vote for this budget, because it will build up our nation.

*Oral Questions***THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my mother and people like her actually built this nation, and today is my mom's birthday. It reminded me that even when my schoolteacher parents were struggling, we always had delicious, nutritious meals. We had meat and potatoes on our plate, and we had to eat all the broccoli. When I called her today for her birthday wishes, she said grocery prices are terrible. I did not have the heart to tell her that the Prime Minister's bait and switch is the culprit.

Will the Prime Minister give my mother the ultimate birthday gift and end all Liberal taxes on groceries?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish the member opposite's mother a happy birthday, but I am also very sad to tell her that her son voted against the school nutrition program. I think she would be really disappointed, because when I spoke to teachers and volunteers and met with students, they talked about how this healthy nutrition break for their students helped those students reach the goal of having careers as architects, teachers, engineers and tradespersons.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my mother, as a substitute teacher, sometimes taught math. She would not be happy with the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report today, which reveals that the Prime Minister is more expensive than even Justin Trudeau. The PBO reports that the deficit is now two-thirds higher than the one Trudeau left behind. Over the next five years, the Prime Minister will add an amazing \$300 billion of additional inflationary debt, twice what Trudeau would have added, all of which will add to the cost of living for Canadians.

How is it possible that any prime minister could be more expensive than Trudeau?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me start by wishing the mother of the Leader of the Opposition a happy birthday. I am sure she is watching TV today during question period. I have good news for his mother: We cut taxes for her, along with 22 million Canadians.

I do not know his mother, but I know in her heart she must be proud of the Liberal government. We cut taxes, we are fighting for families and we are going to build the country of the 21st century. Let us celebrate.

• (1425)

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that he definitely does not know my mother. My mother knew how to budget better than anyone. She could stretch a dollar further. In fact, I think she should come in here as the finance minister. We would have a balanced budget right away. We would surely not have a PBO report showing the government adding a third of a trillion dollars of extra deficits.

We know that every single dollar the Prime Minister spends comes out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians. Why do they not know that?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, keeping with the theme of mothers, one thing I know about mothers is that every mother is certain that no child should go hungry. It was particularly disappointing to see the members opposite, many of whom I know are mothers, vote against the school nutrition program, which is making sure that no matter a kid's circumstances, they have the nutrition to learn and grow.

We will always stand up for Canadian families on this side.

[Translation]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, another thing my mother always taught me is to keep my promises. The Prime Minister promised to spend less, but the Parliamentary Budget Officer showed today that this Prime Minister is going to make his inflationary deficit two-thirds higher. He is going to add another \$300 billion, or a third of a trillion dollars in deficit. That is double what it was under Justin Trudeau. That caused inflation and pushed prices up.

Why should Canadians who cannot even feed their families have to feed the debt of this irresponsible Prime Minister?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Finance and National Revenue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the opposition leader's mother is watching, I would not want to tell her that the Leader of the Opposition voted against the child care program, that he voted against the dental plan, that he voted against pharmacare and that he voted against school nutrition.

On this side of the House, we will always be there for Canadians. Even the opposition leader's mother knows that.

\* \* \*

**CANADA POST**

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, mail is an essential service, but the Canada Post reform the federal government just announced seems to forget that fact entirely, and in doing so, it has forgotten thousands of Quebecers. Some seniors need to get their mail delivered to their home, especially those outside the major cities. People with disabilities are also worried about this.

Can the government guarantee all Quebecers who feel abandoned today that they will continue to get the home delivery services they deserve?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I fully agree with her. Canada Post is an essential service for all Canadians across the country. That is why, today, we are introducing reforms needed to ensure Canada Post's long-term viability.

As for her question, even though we are lifting the moratorium on community mailbox conversions, Canada Post has a service in place, an accommodation program, to ensure that Canadians who are older or who have a disability can access their mail. We want to ensure that all Canadians have access to their mail and that Canada Post has a sustainable future.

**Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the regions are also being abandoned in the federal government's reforms to Canada Post. Today Ottawa announced that it is lifting the moratorium on closing rural post offices. This decision will set us back 30 years. People in remote areas rely on Canada Post, particularly to deliver medication. Canada Post absolutely cannot reduce services in rural areas when these are often the only services available.

Will the government ensure that Quebeckers in the regions will not be abandoned?

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes. We will ensure that all Quebeckers and all Canadians living in rural and remote regions and indigenous communities have access to Canada Post services. That is a priority for our government.

It should be noted that the moratorium we are lifting today was created in the 1990s and covers 4,000 locations, some in areas that used to be rural but may now be suburban or even urban. Those are the areas we are targeting, not rural and remote communities. I want to reassure my colleague about that.

**Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, modernizing Canada Post should not mean abandoning people with reduced mobility or Quebeckers in the regions. The minister did not adequately consult Quebeckers. He comes here today with what looks like a one-size-fits-all federal reform that does not take into account the specific needs on the ground.

He must ensure that people with reduced mobility continue to receive their mail at home just as quickly. He must guarantee that there is no reduction in service in the regions.

Will he commit to doing so?

• (1430)

**Hon. Joël Lightbound (Minister of Government Transformation, Public Works and Procurement, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yes.

I would like to remind my colleague that, right now in Canada, 77% of Canadians receive their mail through community mailboxes. We plan to convert the remaining four million addresses to community mailboxes. As Canada Post has done in the past, we will ensure, throughout the transition, that Canadians with reduced mobility have access to a service so that they can get their mail even if they are not able to get to a community mailbox.

### Oral Questions

I also want to point out that, since 2018, Canada Post has accumulated \$5 billion in losses. We had to inject \$1 billion. The corporation is losing \$10 million a day. It is time to act to save Canada Post.

\* \* \*

[English]

### FIREARMS

**Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what do we call a person who says one thing in public but admits the exact opposite in private? Most Canadians have their own word for it, but around here in this place, we just call them a Liberal.

The public safety minister admits that his government's gun buyback is a politically motivated scam that will not work. Those are his words. He is letting convicted criminals roam the streets and shoot up our neighbourhoods so he can play politics and pretend that he is actually doing something about it.

Everyone behind him is also wondering this: When is he getting fired?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the people playing politics are in the party opposite. They are actually fundraising off our buyback program.

This week, I had the chance to launch the program in Cape Breton as a pilot. We look forward to its expansion across Canada. We look forward to Canadians surrendering the over 80,000 AR-15s that are in their possession. We need to take dangerous weapons off our streets, and we will do everything we can to support Canadians in that effort.

**Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is a lot of bravado, and we are hearing the exact opposite when he thinks nobody is listening.

The minister got caught in a scandal of his own making, and it is so painful for everyone here to watch him pretend like everything is fine. He is going to go ahead and spend \$750 million on a confiscation program that he admitted no one will participate in and will not work. That is fewer cops on the streets, fewer scanners in our ports and less money for a leaky border, where the guns are coming in.

I have one question for the Prime Minister: Why is he keeping this guy around?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have a comprehensive plan to address guns. It starts with the buyback program that we launched this week. It is about investing \$1.3 billion at our borders to increase scanning capabilities, as well as new tools for law enforcement. It is about hiring 1,000 new CBSA and RCMP officers. It is about Bill C-2, which is in the House right now. If the party opposite is serious about guns, it should support Bill C-2's passage and get it to committee.

**Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in a leaked recording this week, the public safety minister told the truth and admitted that his Liberal gun grab is a failure. It will not improve public safety, it will be expensive and it is politically motivated. Then on CTV's *Power Play*, he refuted his own words, saying they were "in jest".

Taking people's property without consulting them is not funny. Wasting \$750 million for the sake of crass politics is not funny. Demonizing vetted and tested law-abiding Canadians is not funny. The only funny thing here is that the minister still has his job.

When will the Prime Minister fire him?

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, law-abiding citizens abide by the law. We launched a program this week to support law-abiding Canadians in giving up their AR-15s and other prohibited weapons to obtain compensation. It is a fair way to treat law-abiding citizens. It is about ensuring that our streets are safer. It is in line with the work we are doing at the border, with \$1.3 billion in investments and Bill C-2, which is before the House today, as well as adding 1,000 CBSA and RCMP officers.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, senior Iranian government officials were banned from entering Canada in 2022 for gross human rights violations and state-sponsored terrorism. In June, border services still had 66 open cases into Iranian officials right here in Canada. We know the Minister of Public Safety has lost 600 foreign nationals with criminal records, and over 400 of those evading the government are convicted of serious criminality right here in Canada.

The minister has one job: keep Canadians safe. When will the Prime Minister fire the incompetent public safety minister?

• (1435)

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last year, the CBSA removed over 18,000 individuals who were ineligible to be in Canada. This year, we are on target to removing over 20,000 people.

The work that our frontline border officers do is incredible. I want to thank them for their work. We are going to be adding another 1,000 CBSA officers to ensure that our borders are even safer and more secure than ever.

**Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it did not take long for Canadians to see the public safety minister fail multiple times at his job. In just four

months, we found out that he needs to recuse himself from certain discussions on border security and that he is playing politics with the firearms confiscation program that he admitted will not work. Now he has lost 600 foreign nationals with criminal records in Canada who were ordered to be deported.

The public safety minister cannot deliver public safety for Canadians. He is already at three strikes. How come he is not out? When will the Prime Minister fire this failed minister?

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we witnessed the tragedies that took place at the Quebec City mosque, École Polytechnique and Portapique.

[English]

We have had mass shootings in this country, and Canadians have told us very clearly that they want the access to assault-style weapons of war to be limited. The one thing that has distinguished this party and that party over the course of all these tragedies is our willingness to put measures in place to limit assault weapons and their abject refusal to listen to Canadians and listen to reason on this issue. The Conservatives need to listen to Canadians and get serious about assault rifles.

[Translation]

**Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Radio-Canada reported that the Canada Border Services Agency intercepted more than 1,500 stolen vehicles last year at the port of Montreal, reflecting a steady rise in thefts linked to international organized crime. This criminal activity also includes the laundering of money from romance scams that are destroying Quebecers' lives.

The Prime Minister is making excuses to allow the Minister of Public Safety to keep his job even though he does not understand what is going on in this country. He knows that intelligence services suspect these criminal organizations of funding terrorist activities and having ties to Hezbollah.

Does the Prime Minister have the courage to fire him today?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety has just informed the House how many people were removed from the country. He clearly knows what he is talking about when it comes to ensuring our national security.

With regard to assault-style firearms, Canadians have been clear. In the wake of the tragedies at Polytechnique, in Portapique and at the Quebec City mosque, they want to get these guns off our streets. When will the Conservatives listen to reason and join us in restricting access to assault weapons in Canada?

**Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, clearly, the government House leader completely misunderstood my question. I was not talking about firearms. Incidentally, the weapons used in Portapique came from the United States and were illegal. That has nothing to do with what is happening in this country.

My question was about international organized crime operating at the port of Montreal and in the Montreal area. These criminals are financing Hezbollah. It is happening right under the Minister of Public Safety's nose. He is doing absolutely nothing about it and does not even understand what is happening in this country.

My question is simple: Will the Prime Minister have the courage to fire the Minister of Public Safety immediately?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Anandasangaree (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the number of car thefts is down significantly across Canada. Across Canada, they are down 19% year over year.

We have invested \$1.3 billion in the border. We have invested in new scanners. We have invested in new equipment that will ensure that items going out of the country are inspected more frequently. We are investing in another 1,000 RCMP officers. We will ensure that the border is more secure than at any other time.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## JUSTICE

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec announced that it wants to prevent the Hells Angels from displaying their colours. Quebec would not need to take action if the federal government did its job by making patches illegal under the Criminal Code, which falls exclusively under federal jurisdiction. The Bloc Québécois even introduced a bill to that effect in 2017, Bill C-349. Every party voted against it. Quebec is once again being forced to do the federal government's job for it because no other party here has the courage to take on organized crime.

Will the government finally take responsibility and make it illegal to wear the emblems of organizations—

● (1440)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my colleague for the question.

As the member knows full well, we are introducing new bills to protect communities that face hate from another community.

## Oral Questions

[English]

This piece of legislation includes the criminalization of the wilful promotion of hatred using specific hate symbols. Of course, as the hon. member knows, decisions as to which groups are included are subject to the terrorist organizations list in the Criminal Code, which does and should reflect the independent advice of the national security apparatus in this country.

[Translation]

**Rhéal Éloi Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government's Bill C-9 would make it illegal to wear the swastika. It would also make it illegal to wear symbols associated with groups that appear on the list of terrorist entities.

However, the government does not have the courage to do exactly the same thing for criminal groups, such as the Hells Angels. Their patches represent organized crime, murder and the rise in gang-related violence that is worrying Quebecers. It seems to us that this is a hateful enough symbol for the Liberals to ban it.

What are they waiting for?

**Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this bill specifically includes symbols that encourage the intentional promotion of hatred, including Nazi symbols as well as symbols of terrorist organizations.

[English]

It is essential that the decisions as to which organizations are treated as terrorist organizations in this country are made independently by the national security apparatus. However, should the hon. member wish to put this to parliamentarians through the committee process, he has something he can do: Vote in support of this legislation, send it to committee and say his piece in front of all members.

\* \* \*

## THE ECONOMY

**Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Justin Trudeau tried to make groceries the most expensive in Canadian history.

The Prime Minister said, "Hold my champagne." In August, food inflation outpaced overall inflation by 84%, and now the Parliamentary Budget Officer said the deficit could soar to \$70 billion. It is the Liberal deficit that fuels the inflation tax that made grocery prices go up.

Why is the Prime Minister so obsessed with making grocery prices more expensive than Justin Trudeau did?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the school nutrition program is saving Canadian families, on average, \$800 a year in food costs. That is just one example of the work we have been doing to ensure that Canadians have an affordable quality of life. The dental care plan in my riding is changing the lives of small business owners and artists who have gone for many years without dental care and who, for the very first time, have been able to access affordable dental care.

That is the kind of support that families expect, and that is what they get with a Liberal government.

**Jasraj Hallan (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that food program is feeding bureaucracy, not kids.

The finance minister made a grand show and said he was going to haul in all the grocery store CEOs, tell them what was on his mind and say, “Hey, buddy, you had better lower grocery prices, or else.” Then he doubled the deficit, making inflation go up, making food prices soar and sending two million Canadians into food banks.

Why does the finance minister not haul in the real inflation culprit, the guy who sits beside him, the so-called budget expert, and tell him to stop ballooning the deficit so food prices can actually come down?

**Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if they will not believe us, maybe they will believe an actual kid. A grade-7 kid actually said this: “An investment in healthy school food is a good idea because the healthier the kids, the healthier the society. School food matters to me—”

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Please, colleagues, I would like to hear what that 12-year-old had to say as well.

Go from the top, please.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Mr. Speaker, when a grade-7 student—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

• (1445)

**The Speaker:** I can't hear.

We are going to start from the top on that.

**Hon. Patty Hajdu:** Mr. Speaker, let us start with the voice of a child advocating for other children in this country.

This is what that grade-7 Canadian young person said: “An investment in healthy school food is a good idea because the healthier the kids, the healthier the society. School food matters to me because kids should be healthy.”

I am so proud of that empathetic grade-7 student who knows that young people in schools deserve the best chance at success. That is more than I can say for these Conservatives, who are actually laughing at the compassion of children in our country.

**Grant Jackson (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is so out of touch. She does not understand that those kids are still hungry every evening, every weekend and every summer holiday. Their parents cannot afford to put food on the table, because the Liberal government's inflationary deficits have been driving up food costs 48% faster in Canada than in the United States since the Prime Minister took office.

The Prime Minister asked to be judged by the cost at the grocery store, and we are well past judgment day. Money-printing deficits plus record-high food bank use plus Canadians skipping meals equals an F for the Liberal government.

Will the Liberals vote for our Conservative motion to cut their inflationary taxes on Canadians today?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we just witnessed something pretty shocking in this House. We had the finance critic for the Conservatives stand up and say we are creating bureaucracies rather than feeding children. I would like him to come to the elementary school where I helped serve breakfast to young kids, so I can show him the yogourt, orange slices and eggs that are handed out to those children every day.

To the member, no, we will not vote for their motion. We are going to be busy over here putting in place supports for Canadians that he will vote against.

[Translation]

**Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that Canadians should judge him by the cost of groceries. The Parliamentary Budget Officer revealed that the deficit would be double what was promised six months ago.

Does the globe-trotting Prime Minister realize that every dollar he spends comes out of Canadians' pockets? Does the Prime Minister realize that the broken promise about doubling the deficit is causing grocery prices to go up and skyrocket?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since we are talking about school food programs today, I invite my colleague to call the Quebec chapter of the Breakfast Club of Canada. It will not take long. It is an excellent organization that goes into the schools and provides oranges, yogourt, eggs and waffles. Sometimes, it might even invite the local member of Parliament to tag along so they can see first-hand how the program enhances our young people's ability to learn at school.

Canadians want support and assistance, not Conservative free-market rhetoric.

**Eric Lefebvre (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will take no lessons from the leader. I just set up a food program for schools in my riding with friends. I think there is a lesson to learn here for the leader.



The Prime Minister told Canadians to judge him by the cost of groceries. Unfortunately for him, that has been a total failure. Beef is up 33%, soup is up 26% and coffee is up 22%.

The Prime Minister has failed, his team has failed, the same Liberal team. Can the Prime Minister produce a respectful budget?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Finance, will not only produce a respectful budget, but a generational budget that will create opportunities for jobs and economic growth to build this great and beautiful country.

If he cares about school food programs, I invite the member to rise and defy his whip, someone he has probably not yet met, who will tell him to vote against help with school food programs.

I invite him to stand up for young people in his riding and in mine, and support school food programs in Canada.

\* \* \*

• (1450)

[English]

#### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians across the country are preparing to mark the day of truth and reconciliation on September 30. This is an opportunity for us all to commemorate the history and legacy of residential schools and to honour survivors and their families.

Can the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations share with us the importance of this day and how Canadians can do their part to address the legacy of the residential school system and advance reconciliation?

**Hon. Rebecca Alty (Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and his great work in his riding.

On the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we honour the children who never returned home and stand with survivors, their families and communities living with the legacy of residential schools. In response to call to action number 80, this day was established as a federal statutory holiday in 2021. Since then, our government has supported hundreds of community events every September 30, including 339 across the country this Tuesday.

I encourage my colleagues and all Canadians to participate in ceremonies or events in their communities and to reflect, remember and recommit to the ongoing work of reconciliation.

\* \* \*

#### THE ECONOMY

**Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, every dollar the Prime Minister spends adds to the deficit and pushes the price of food higher for Canadian families. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer revealed that the deficit will be higher than was promised just six months ago. Runaway deficits drive up the price of everything we buy. This is a tax on working families.

#### Oral Questions

The Prime Minister said that we could judge him by the prices at the grocery store. When will the Prime Minister finally admit that this is another broken promise?

**Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for someone who has actually put together budgets in the private sector, versus a Conservative leader who has never done it, I am proud to stand with a government that is going to deliver a plan on November 4 to cut operational spending so that we can invest more in our country and build our economy into the strongest economy in the G7.

The Conservative leader and the party opposite have fought against every affordable measure we put forward. I say shame on them.

**Carol Anstey (Long Range Mountains, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, regardless of the career of the member, the harsh reality is that Newfoundland and Labrador families are struggling just to eat. Nearly 40% of children live in food-insecure households, and single-parent families experience a 56% food insecurity rate. That is the highest in the country. Thousands of kids and parents are depending on food banks just to get by.

Meanwhile, food prices continue to climb. Does the Prime Minister understand that his broken promises and skyrocketing deficits are making food unaffordable for all families?

**Hon. Joanne Thompson (Minister of Fisheries, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague in the opposition from Newfoundland and Labrador for the opportunity to celebrate a very successful fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador: northern cod with increased quotas. I visited communities, spoke with harvesters, visited processors and spoke with plant workers. This is an economic boost for rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would invite the colleague for Long Range Mountains to work with this government to encourage young people to see the fisheries as a viable future. There is so much to celebrate.

**Sandra Cobena (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I hear it every day in the calls, the emails, the letters: We cannot afford food. The Daily Bread Food Bank expects four million people to visit, which is a lot of Canadians in despair.

Today, the Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that the deficit will be double that of Justin Trudeau. That is the reckless spending that drives up inflation and increases the cost of everything we buy. The Prime Minister himself said that he would be judged by the price at the grocery store. Well, he has failed, completely and undeniably.

When will the Liberal government stop emptying the wallets of Canadians to cover for their failures?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Adam van Koeverden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, studies show that school food programs improve student health and mental health. They also improve learning outcomes, for better grades in science, math and reading. Those healthy meals in schools can also save a family up to \$200 a month. That is a real solution for affordability and for health for Canadians.

Why did the Conservatives, when they had the chance to vote for healthy school food, vote against it? Why did the member for Calgary East just now talk down all those programs that are supporting tens of thousands of kids in Alberta and hundreds of thousands of kids right across Canada?

• (1455)

**Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after 10 years of the Liberal government, Canadians cannot afford to feed themselves. Printing money has resulted in inflation tax, which has driven up the cost of food. The Liberals' industrial carbon tax has increased the cost of farming, which has driven up the cost of food. The food packaging tax installed by the Liberal government has also driven up the cost of food. Families are struggling, and the hardest hit among them are children. In Lethbridge, food bank use among kids is up 150% in just the last four years.

Enough is enough. Will the Liberals support the Conservative motion to scrap the tax on food?

**Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the government has consistently stood by and supported families. We know they need support; they have asked for it. The result of the previous election shows that the plan and the commitment to support families, particularly children, is a strong record and a strong plan that we are delivering on.

We have a national food program. We have a national dental care program. We have the Canada child benefit. I would encourage members to support us in making that national school food program permanent.

**Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member says the Liberal government has "stood by and supported families", a direct quote.

I would like her to tell that to Scott. Scott is in my riding. He has children and a wife. He works hard, but he finds it very difficult to make ends meet. We recently got off the phone, and he was telling me on that call that he is struggling to feed his family. In fact, he and his wife are down to one meal a day to make sure that his kids get enough food and their bills can get paid.

This is a hard-working family that is not able to make it happen for them. They are struggling. What would this member have me tell Scott and his family?

**Hon. Anna Gainey (Secretary of State (Children and Youth), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have a number of supports for children and for families, including a national school food program, including a dental program, including the Canada child care benefit.

I would encourage the member to vote in favour, and support these programs that deliver meaningful supports to families, not only in her riding but in mine and in all of ours across the country.

**Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, how do the Liberals not understand that if they would stop taxing Canadians to death, we would not need the programs?

After 10 years of the Liberal government's reckless spending, prices of groceries continue to rise. The Prime Minister said he would be judged by the costs at the grocery store. Well, among Saskatchewan children, 35% live in food insecure households.

When will the Liberals scrap their industrial carbon tax, scrap their second carbon tax and scrap their food packaging tax so Canadians could afford to feed their own kids?

**Hon. Buckley Belanger (Secretary of State (Rural Development), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to point out from a Saskatchewan perspective that people are celebrating the hundreds of thousands of homes we are building for families across the country. That celebration is in Saskatchewan as well.

We have the lunch program, as indicated, and all the supports of different types for families across this great country. Again, from the federal government perspective, we are going to be there for families, and that includes in Saskatchewan.

**Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this northern Saskatchewan member of Parliament has abandoned his constituents faster than any MP I have ever seen.

The member voted in favour of a gun buyback program, so his people could not hunt on their own land. There is the fact that he got up and voted in favour of a gun buyback program and supports that program, and then there is the fact that there is a 259% increase in food bank usage in Saskatchewan, despite them not having the ability to feed themselves.

He wants to stand and take credit for Liberal programs. He should support Saskatchewan people and not his Liberal lapdogs.

• (1500)

**Hon. Ruby Sahota (Secretary of State (Combatting Crime), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member references the compensation program for firearms.

These firearms have been prohibited for the last several years. I want to thank the responsible gun owners who have stored these guns safely and now are waiting for a plan. In this plan, they will be compensated for those firearms that are now prohibited.

I believe this plan will get assault-style firearms out of our communities, which is essential and important. There is no place for these types of weapons in Canada.

*Oral Questions*

**Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is breaking news in a bombshell report from Canada's independent fiscal watchdog: the Liberal government deficits are exploding.

This means an even bigger pile of debt for Canadians and also means higher prices on everything. Grocery prices are already up 70% over target, but the Liberal plan is just to add more fuel to the fire. Our debt is exploding, our economy is shrinking, and the government's cupboards are bare.

Why is the Prime Minister going ahead with his crazy budget to double the deficit and send even more Canadians to food banks?

**Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the Conservatives have been for the last four months, but we are laser focused on delivering affordability for Canadians. We have cut taxes for 22 million Canadians. We cut the GST for first-time homebuyers. Interest rates are down. Through “build Canada homes”, we are going to build homes at a scale not seen since the Second World War.

It is time for the Conservatives to cut the rhetoric, get on board and join us.

**Ned Kuruc (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, every dollar the Liberal Prime Minister spends comes out of the pockets of hard-working Canadians. Never has the government spent so much to achieve so little. The Liberals lit a pile of money on fire to give us record food bank usages and grocery store prices that are 40% higher than before. The budget watchdog says the Liberal deficits will now be twice the size of Justin Trudeau's.

Will the Liberals change course and vote for our Conservative motion to stop the Liberal taxes on food?

**Hon. Maninder Sidhu (Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is building bridges internationally, and I have good news for Canadians. We just signed a generational trade agreement with Indonesia, the fourth-largest country in the world, with over 275 million potential consumers and the fastest-growing middle class that is looking to buy Canadian products.

This is another concrete example of how our international efforts are opening new doors for Canadian workers and businesses in communities across Canada.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Tim Watchorn (Les Pays-d'en-Haut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at the Standing Committee on National Defence, I heard about the remarkable work done by the Canadian Armed Forces across Canada and in Europe. I had the opportunity to witness this in person in Petawawa yesterday.

At a time when Canada is making a generational investment in national defence, can the minister tell us about how we will enhance our military presence in Canada and around the world?

**Hon. David McGuinty (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know that our partners want to see Canada play a much bigger role on the international stage.

Yesterday, we signed a new agreement with Indonesia to enhance the participation of the Canadian Armed Forces in military exercises in the Indo-Pacific region. This agreement will also benefit Canadian industry and create jobs. Thanks to this new agreement, we will see more of the Canadian Armed Forces at their best in the Indo-Pacific region.

\* \* \*

[English]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Tako Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says to judge him by the cost of groceries. Well, the data is in, and it is not looking so good for him. The parliamentary budget office says the Prime Minister's spending is going to outpace even Trudeau's reckless inflationary spending, driving up the cost of groceries for seniors.

Myra from Langley says, “I worked and planned for my retirement my entire life and now it's taking everything I have to live.” Myra and many seniors want to know if the Prime Minister is going to stop eating their lunch with this never-ending cycle of inflationary spending and deficits.

● (1505)

**Hon. Stephanie McLean (Secretary of State (Seniors), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, seniors who built this country should never have to choose between paying for groceries or heating their homes. I speak to seniors in my home riding of Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke in British Columbia all the time, and they are proud of what this government is doing, that we have taken action that actually helps seniors in this country to age with dignity. We are cutting red tape. We are building homes faster. We are providing dental care for seniors that more than two million have already signed up for.

On this side of the House, we have a great record. On that side of the House, they have a record of pushing the retirement age higher, cutting benefits and leaving seniors behind. Over here, seniors can trust this government.

**Kelly DeRidder (Kitchener Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said Canadians would judge him by the cost of the food at the grocery store. Because of Liberal spending, the average two bags of groceries now cost \$150. We used to be able to fill two carts for that. According to the Waterloo regional food bank, in the first half of September alone, over 15,000 people accessed its services.

When will the Prime Minister show some understanding and urgency instead of constant deflection and delay, while increasing deficits?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Rebecca Chartrand (Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about our success stories on this side of the stage. Our new government has focused on empowering northern and Arctic communities with indigenous-led solutions that work in the north. For example, an Inuvialuit country food plant is distributing harvested musk ox, reindeer, fish and berries so families can count on country food year-round. Also, the harvesters support program has backed over 5,500 harvesters with freezers, fuel and gear, keeping local food flowing and shared.

These stories will keep growing because we are—

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix.

**Gabriel Hardy (Montmorency—Charlevoix, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, grocery prices in Montmorency—Charlevoix are skyrocketing.

To understand this phenomenon more clearly, I called Simon Plante of Polyculture Plante, on the Île d'Orléans, the 2024 winner of Quebec's award for outstanding young farmers. This young man knows his stuff. He told me that the red tape is overwhelming. New regulations come out every year. Transportation costs are exploding. The carbon tax is pushing up costs. As a result, farmers and families are paying the price.

Will the Liberals support our plan to cut taxes and cut red tape to make food affordable?

[English]

**Hon. Heath MacDonald (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to tour the Strathcona Imperial Oil complex in Alberta. I can tell members that what it is doing out there to transform canola seed into biofuel is unprecedented. It is one company in Canada working toward reducing GHG emissions and utilizing our own canola seed to present something back to Canada, to our citizens, that is really effective in reducing GHG emissions in this country. Kudos to Imperial Oil.

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**WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY**

**Alana Hirtle (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week we mark Gender Equality Week, a time meant to recognize the progress we have made and the work that still lies ahead.

Will the Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State for Small Business and Tourism please speak to what our new government is doing to advance equality and create a more equitable and safe Canada for everyone?

**Hon. Rechie Valdez (Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Secretary of State (Small Business and Tourism), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week is a time to reflect on our accomplishments, and also the progress we have yet to make. Our government has implemented initiatives to help support women entrepreneurs, we implemented the national action plan to end gender-based violence, and we implemented pay equity legislation to level the playing field for women.

We recognize there is more work to do, and that is why our government will introduce, this fall, legislation that would ensure the safety of women so they participate equally in society.

We understand, on this side of the House, that we cannot build the strongest economy in the G7 without the full and equal participation of women.

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● (1510)

**THE ECONOMY**

**Jagsharan Singh Mahal (Edmonton Southeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said Canadians would judge him by the cost at the grocery store, but after 10 years of the same Liberal government, Canadians cannot afford to eat because of taxes on food.

Edmonton's food bank use has doubled in the last five years. The price of sugar is up by 20%, coffee is up by 22%, and grapes are up by 24%. This is because of Liberal taxes on food packaging and carbon taxes on fertilizers.

Will the Liberals adopt the Conservatives' motion and stop taxing our food?

**Hon. Wayne Long (Secretary of State (Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on November 4, we are going to table a plan that is going to spend less in government operations so we can invest in our country. We are going to build and invest in nation-building projects. We are going to create and build the strongest economy in the G7. We believe in affordability; the party opposite does not. I ask its members to cut the rhetoric, get on board and join with us.

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[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, things were already bad, but now they are getting worse. In July, we lost 41,000 jobs. In August, we lost 66,000 jobs. The unemployment rate among young people is close to 15%. This summer, the unemployment rate among students was 18%. With the housing crisis and the climate crisis, it is not surprising that young people have lost hope for the future.

When will the Liberals finally invest in renewable energy, and when will the government wake up and create good green, unionized jobs?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is quite the list my colleague shared.

With regard to youth unemployment, we will be introducing a generational budget. The member will have the opportunity to support this budget, which will create opportunities, job prospects, affordable housing and so much more for our young people.

Support for renewable energy and technology is obviously a hallmark of this government. We will continue to invest in this area. Canada will lead the world by investing in renewable energy.

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#### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, not a single young person will feel reassured by those answers.

The home retrofit program is extremely popular, and rightly so. It lowers heating bills for families and it is good for the environment. People upgrade their insulation, doors and windows, install solar panels and so on. However, next week on October 1, funding for the program will dry up completely.

What are the Liberals doing? Nothing. They will not renew the funding. Too bad for the environment and too bad for families who wanted to renovate. They are on their own.

Will the Liberals invest in this program that helps families?

**Hon. Julie Dabrusin (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to talk about how well we are working with the provinces to give resources to Canadians who want to renovate their homes and reduce their carbon footprint. A week or two ago, I was in Manitoba, where we are working to help lower-income individuals do these renovations without paying a cent. In Ontario, we are helping people do these renovations in collaboration with the province. We will work to help Canadians every day.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Micheál Martin, Taoiseach of Ireland.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** I invite all hon. members to join the Taoiseach and me in the Speaker's salon in room 233-S immediately following question period for a reception in his honour.

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● (1515)

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know the government House leader would not want to evade the Thursday question. It is probably the highlight of his

#### Business of Supply

week. As we work toward the end of every week, Thursday is the day when the opposition gets to ask the government House leader what the business will be for the rest of this week and next week.

I am hoping the minister will tell us when his government will end the obstruction and finally bring in legislation to undo the Liberal bail system problems that have caused the crime and chaos that is terrorizing Canadians in their communities. We have been here now for two weeks. It is almost as if the Liberals did not do anything this summer. They certainly were not listening to police associations that are demanding these changes. They certainly were not listening to opposition MPs who have tabled common-sense legislation that would do that for them.

In the interest of non-partisanship, I wonder if the hon. government House leader will tell us if he will work with us to quickly fast-track Conservative laws. If the Liberals will not bring legislation to the House themselves, will they at least get out of the way so that Conservative bills can pass to make Canadians safe?

**Hon. Steven MacKinnon (Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my hon. colleague of my great affection for the Thursday question and our weekly rendezvous. I appreciate that.

As the member well knows, we have made a strong and firm commitment to bring in legislation this session to reform bail. The member opposite might be careful of what he asks for, because he will have the opportunity to vote for strong, crime-fighting Liberal legislation in the House. We will be absolutely and earnestly seeking his support and that of his colleagues.

[Translation]

This afternoon, we will continue the debate on the Conservative Party's opposition motion.

Tomorrow, we will begin the debate at second reading on Bill C-8, the critical cyber systems protection act.

[English]

As all hon. members are aware, the House will stand adjourned on Monday and Tuesday of next week to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Upon our return on Wednesday, we will resume debate at second reading of Bill C-9, the combatting hate act. Finally, I would like to inform the House that Thursday of next week shall be an allotted day.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—FOOD TAXATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that we are resuming this debate.

### *Business of Supply*

When I left off, I was sharing about the size of my riding of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan and that it is five square kilometres larger than Switzerland.

It is truly blessed with an abundance of potash, which is fertilizer; railway lines that take goods to market; and a first-class military base that trains the next generation of pilots. As well, it is the home of the world-famous Snowbirds air demonstration team.

It is also home to the fertile lands that are considered the breadbasket of Canada. We cannot have a breadbasket without farming. Agriculture is very important in our riding. The challenges and extra costs facing agriculture producers have been piled on by the Liberal government. Costs are then passed on to consumers.

I would like to share a broad overview of what Canada's agriculture sector is facing. Statistics Canada reported that the net income for Canadian farmers fell by 25.9% in 2024. This was the largest percentage decrease realized in net income since 2018. Total farm operating expenses rose 2.4% in 2024. For the second consecutive year, interest expenses led the gain in total farming operating expenses, which are up 28.6% in 2024 from the previous year.

In mid-2024, the Bank of Canada began cutting its key interest rate after over two years of hikes. This means producers took on more debt, driving up interest expenses. Farm debt rose 14.1% in 2024, the largest annual increase since 1981. In Saskatchewan, the total farm net income was down over 36%.

I am sure everyone here is aware of the crisis facing our canola sector. My riding of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan is one of the largest canola-producing areas in Canada. Therefore, members can understand the frustration I heard when China announced massive tariffs over the summer. Beijing's tariffs of over 75% on canola seed are yet another unjustified attack on our farmers. The latest moves by China, which comes on top of the 100% tariffs on canola meal and oil, peas, pork and seafood products, effectively locked our producers out of its market. These punitive measures will disrupt Canada's canola exports to China, which totalled \$5 billion in 2024. This, on top of yet another year of low rainfall across Saskatchewan, hurts our farmers.

A constituent of mine, Dave Marzolf, said that he still needs to bring his canola and wheat in and that it will not be a bumper crop. As usual, he cannot control the weather and “and I can't control political incompetence”. This is in reference to the Liberal government and has been quoted in the media.

The producers I have spoken to are not happy with the government's response. The Liberals have simply offered more loans.

Rob Stone, another producer in my riding, said, “It doesn't match up. You're dealing with a long-term tariff issue with some short-term support.... It's a program that helps provide some cash flow to our farm, but I have larger concerns about: how do we pay this debt back.” Canola producers simply want to be able to sell their product.

Also, I said China imported nearly 5 billion dollars' worth of canola seed, oil and meal in 2024. The country the Prime Minister is visiting so regularly to sign fake agreements with represents a small fraction of that. I will never say that Canada should not sign

trade agreements, mostly because the Harper government did all the heavy lifting on the agreements that Justin Trudeau took credit for, but no new agreement is going to replace the Chinese canola market overnight.

I mentioned that Saskatchewan has endured another summer of low rainfall. I spoke to a rancher yesterday from the Lloydminster area. He grows corn as silage to feed his cattle. He is facing the prospect of producing a fraction of what he usually produces after receiving only a few inches of rain this year.

• (1520)

Our farmers are facing tariffs, and they are facing an unfair Liberal government that taxes them, increases their costs and makes it harder for them to produce. They are facing challenges from all sides. I am happy Canada has decided to invest in the port of Churchill. This is a big win for the region of Canada's north. However, the amount of agricultural food Canada exports to Asia through the port of Vancouver is irreplaceable.

I recently spoke with some producers of potash, another industry that is great in my riding and is a Canadian leader, who explained the significant work needed to be done on the rail corridor to the port of Vancouver. Too often, producers of all kinds who are trying to export their products to the market in Asia are faced with bottlenecks and other issues delaying their shipments. If Canada wants to be seen as a reliable trading partner, our rail and port infrastructure needs significant investment.

On top of that, the Liberal government has to realize that Canada is the breadbasket of the world, and in order to be that breadbasket, we need to help our farmers, not hinder them.

• (1525)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member and other members have made reference to canola, which is something that was actually developed through the University of Manitoba and the University of Saskatchewan. It was farmers in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan who ultimately got it off the ground, working with a lot of federal dollars to support it. I will not say which political party was in government at the time, but suffice it to say that it is important we recognize the true value farmers bring to the table of all Canadians. This is something the government continues to do by investing in and encouraging technological advancements, looking at ways we can enhance the farmers, in particular in the Prairies, where I grew up, in all three prairie provinces.

I am wondering if the member can provide his comments—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** The hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan has the floor.

**Fraser Tolmie:** Mr. Speaker, I did not really hear a question in there; all I heard was a bit of white noise. The challenge we are having with farmers in my area is that the Liberals just seem to throw another log on the inflation fire they have started. Farmers are getting tired of not being supported and recognized by the Liberal government.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He spoke about a community that is particularly important to me, since I come from the riding of Shefford, which is home to fantastic rural communities that support Quebec agriculture.

We have heard from people in the farming community about what is really causing prices to go up, which we have seen over the years. Input prices are up, with fertilizer prices quadrupling as a result of the conflict with Ukraine. Also, heat waves and droughts in California and Quebec have increased the price of lettuce by 30% to 50%. Every day, Quebec produce growers experience the impact of climate change in their fields.

People in the agricultural sector and the Bloc Québécois are calling for regulation of the major grocery chains' profit margins. Here is another idea: Protect farmers by investing in food sovereignty and rewarding them for their good environmental practices.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[English]

**Fraser Tolmie:** Mr. Speaker, I have never met a farmer who did not know how to recycle. I have never met a farmer who did not already implement best practices and care for the land they are tilling. Farmers rely on the weather. They rely on good crops that they produce. They put in seed at the beginning of the year, hedging their bets on something they are going to be selling at the end of the year, and the Liberal government has completely cut the legs out from underneath them.

**Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was intrigued by the comments the member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan made regarding supply chains and infrastructure.

I am wondering, in his time in elected office, and even before that, whether he has seen any major investment in railway infrastructure, or working with the private sector to see railway infrastructure improve. At a time when Canada needs to protect its supply chains, is the government really doing enough to get our goods to market, especially the Asian markets, where we are going to make money and see more Canadians prosper?

**Fraser Tolmie:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is aware that I was a city councillor in the city of Moose Jaw, and also the mayor, and that Moose Jaw prides itself on being a rail city and a transportation hub.

There have been challenges getting product out to ports because of the imbalance. One of the best things that could help our rail and

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help farmers get product out to market is having a pipeline across Canada, so that is a very good question. Saskatchewan is about food, fuel and fertilizer, and we are being hindered by the current Liberal government.

[Translation]

**Hon. Adam van Koeverden (Secretary of State (Sport), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to wish the entire Franco-Ontarian community a happy Franco-Ontarian Day. I also want to congratulate all francophones and francophiles, like me, from this province of Ontario on the 50th anniversary of their flag.

● (1530)

[English]

I would also like to thank my friend and neighbour from Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford for congratulating and encouraging our amazing women's rugby players. They are doing an amazing job. They defeated one of the world's best teams, New Zealand, the Black Ferns. It was a really shocking defeat, actually. I was proud of them, and I was certainly cheering for them and knew they could do it, but they are shocking the world. Our rugby 15s team is amazing. Our rugby 7s players, and many of the women play on both teams, are, a couple of times already, Olympic medallists. They are competing against the world's best team in England this weekend, and I wish them all the very best. I would ask everybody in the House to say, "Go, Canada, go", on three: one, two, three.

**Some hon. members:** Go, Canada, go.

**Hon. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, that was a good show from everybody.

We are here talking about the Conservative opposition motion. It is tough, because I disagree with the premise of the motion. The Conservatives are once again fabricating affordability. There are very real affordability challenges that Canadians are facing, but the Conservatives are blaming them on simply the wrong thing. If they ask any food scientist or any poverty reduction analyst, they will tell them that one of the number one drivers of food inflation these days is climate change, yet the text of the motion makes absolutely no reference to climate change and the impacts that extreme weather events are having on food prices or on the yields for Canadian farmers or farmers around the world.

In fact the motion just makes up a bunch of so-called taxes on food, taxes that do not exist. Canadians go to the grocery store. They know that their groceries and produce are not taxed at the grocery store, so it is really a false notion, a false flag, and it is something I am happy to talk about because our government is working very hard to address the affordability challenges that Canadians are facing these days, with real solutions, not the bluster and the made-up, fake notions the Conservatives have put forth.

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Not only are the Conservatives just making things up; they are also, once again, shamelessly working for the oil and gas and plastics lobby. There is nothing wrong with reducing plastics pollution. I have spent a lot of time on the water, and there is always water-borne plastic floating in our waterways. We can do a lot to reduce that, and we ought to. I do not agree with the Conservatives' "make plastic polluting free again" motions they bring forward in the House on behalf of the plastics and oil and gas lobby time and time again.

I also do not agree with their efforts to roll back the farmer-led and ag sector-led changes that are ensuring that our agriculture sector in Canada is competitive, clean, green and sustainable. Farmers in Canada are on the front lines of climate change. They know full well that the changing weather and extreme weather are having a negative impact on their yields and a negative impact on the price of food for Canadians. That is what we have been talking about today: real measures that Canadians are seeking, to address the affordability challenges at the grocery store.

I find it very hypocritical that probably 75% of the questions we received in question period today were about the rising use of food banks in Canada, which is a real concern. Food Banks Canada not only serves Canadians; it also makes recommendations to the Government of Canada and to governments across the country. The Conservatives are very happy to say that food bank use is on the rise, but then they ignore the first page of the report, which is their opportunity to lean in on some of the recommendations that poverty-reduction experts are making.

Namely, the experts want us to continue to bolster our social safety net. They want to make sure that services like child care, reduced-cost child care, reduced-cost dental care and \$10-a-day child care are more available for Canadian families. They know that the tax cut we made earlier this year supports families and affordability, and they also know that when we build more affordable housing, we make a direct impact on affordability for families.

My colleagues on this side of the House have been focusing on the government supports and commitments to the men and women who work very hard to put food on the table for their family. To our farm families right across this great nation, and particularly to those in Burlington North—Milton West, I want to say thank you for all the hard work and determination they put forth in order to produce the food we consume as Canadians. Our hard-working and skilled farmers right across the country form the foundation of Canada's food system. I love shopping local. I will be home on Saturday, so I hope I will see some Miltonians out at the world-renowned Milton Farmers' Market.

Our farmers are going to keep feeding Canadians and the world. We need to continue to partner with them in the face of the extreme weather we have been seeing in recent years, and that is why many of the changes we have been making to the ag sector are farmer-led and farmer-informed. We only have to look at the fires in western Canada and right across this country this summer to see how vulnerable our lands are to extreme weather.

It has been said before: Canadian farmers are on the front lines of climate change. They know full well the impacts of climate change and what they are on our food security, but it is also true that in re-

cent years their farms and farm operations have been devastated by a series of climate disasters, from floods to droughts and forest fires, and this past year was no exception, with severe droughts devastating farmers' crops in key production regions across the country. These are just a few examples of the challenges our producers are having with respect to production.

When my family settled in southwestern Ontario in the 1950s, they were Dutch, so they went straight to the farms and started working on them until they could afford some land of their own, and they farmed apples. The cost of apples is going up, and when the cost of apples is going up at this time of year, we know the apples are mostly not domestic, Canadian, ones, so with respect to a lot of the measures that the Conservatives put forth, such as bringing back plastic pollution for packaging on Canadian foods, and whether or not they would help, I would posit that they would not. They would only make plastic pollution more prevalent in our waterways, but that would not have an impact on Canadian apples. It would have an impact on pollution levels.

Provincial governments and other jurisdictions made changes to the rules and regulations on grocery bags. Everybody remembers how back in the day we all used to have hundreds of bags underneath our sink. Now we do not, and we have less plastic pollution as a result, because stores put a small price on a plastic bag and offered alternatives like reusable bags and paper bags, which are far more sustainable. We can do the same thing with our food packaging, but unfortunately and shamelessly, the Conservatives are here on behalf of the plastics industry to suggest that plastic is cheaper. It is far less sustainable to have plastic packaging, and the Conservatives' motion is actually quite ignorant in that regard.

Speaking of ignorance, we are talking about hunger and about food security. The number one way that poverty reduction analysts right across this country and right across the world want to address food insecurity, particularly in schools, is to have a well-funded national school food program. In my jurisdiction, there are lots of great providers. I know that they are doing a great job. I occasionally go to schools and hand out snacks, and school food programs are having a really positive impact on the health and well-being of students. They are certainly having a positive impact on learning outcomes. Teachers and educators across the country have indicated that they have a positive impact on students' reading, writing, math and science grades. They go up when the kids are not hungry. It is not a surprise.



I am also a huge advocate for physical activity in schools, as the secretary of state for sport. I know that when I was a kid, if I did not get a bit of physical activity at recess, if it was raining or there was other inclement weather outside, I was stir-crazy in class. It helps me a lot in my work to get out, even just for a three-kilometre or four-kilometre run with some of my friends who are right back here behind me. I thank my running pals for backing me up today.

Whether it is through physical activity in schools or healthy school foods, our government is here for kids, for educators and for parents, and that is a real affordability measure. Two hundred dollars a month can be saved when national school food programs are implemented in our spaces. They have a direct, positive impact on learning outcomes and on the health of kids. I just cannot imagine how the leader of the Conservative Party could stand up today and talk about how his parents were teachers, yet instruct all his caucus, the entire Conservative Party, to vote against a national school food program. It is just astonishing.

How can one be against healthy food for kids? If someone is going to stand up in the House every day and say that Canadians are having a tough time at the grocery store, which may be true, let us find a way to help. Conservatives stand up in the House and use the report from Food Banks Canada, saying it says this, that and the other, but the report also says that we should bolster our social safety net, build more affordable housing, focus on a northern food security program and support Canadians with things like \$10-a-day child care, dental care and a tax cut.

We are doing those things, and the Conservatives are voting against all of them, day in and day out, so I am urging the Conservatives to stop using the Food Banks Canada report as if it were in line with any of their policies or recommendations, because it is not. The Food Banks report does not say we should bring back plastic pollution. It does not say that we should roll back some of the ag-led and farmer-led measures that have reduced waste in farming.

• (1535)

**Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that my colleague across the floor indicated that it is wonderful that families can save \$200 on groceries because the government is spending their tax dollars on a national blanket food program for children in school. Parents are the ones who should be earning an income to feed their kids the way they want to. The issues in schools right now are due to the government's poor management of its money and basically making it impossible for parents to have the funds they need.

We have a problem with what the Prime Minister said. He has failed and is not doing what he said he would to make food affordable across Canada for families.

• (1540)

**Hon. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, it is astonishing that today, members of the Conservative party have stood up and very willingly said they are against healthy food in schools for kids. They are saying they do not agree with a nation school food program that is feeding kids, particularly those who need it.

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This is an evidence-based program. We used to be the only country in the world without a national school program. The Conservatives clearly do not understand economies of scale. They clearly have not been to a school lately to see how schools work, and they clearly have not talked to many parents or teachers, who know that when school food and healthy snacks are available in class, the learning outcomes are better, student health, mental health and attendance are better and outcomes are better for everybody.

This is an evidence-based program. I am not shocked that once again the Conservatives are rejecting it.

[*Translation*]

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a school food program is all well and good, but when we are talking about what we can do to help people in our ridings cope with this inflation, I find it somewhat unfortunate that the Liberals keep reminding us that they are helping students in schools. It is like when they told us that they were helping seniors because they were giving more money to food banks. The Liberal government is very short-sighted.

That being said, we know that food prices have risen, particularly since the end of the COVID pandemic. Prices have surged by 26%. Where has most of this money gone? It has gone into the pockets of the grocery giants. My colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé addressed this issue this morning. We really need to study the issue of the lack of competition and lack of players in the food industry. This affects food prices.

To help lower prices, we need to support our agricultural sector. What does my colleague think about the Bloc Québécois's ideas, such as encouraging local greenhouse production to reduce dependence on imports or protecting supply management? Yes, there is a law, but we must remain vigilant—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I must interrupt the member to allow enough time for the response.

The hon. secretary of state.

**Hon. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, Quebec is a leader among all the provinces when it comes to school food programs. Over the past decade, there have been many examples of schools in Quebec offering breakfast, snacks or other food, and there is overwhelming evidence showing that this type of program yields positive results for students.

I agree with my colleague. Corporate greed is a problem when it comes to housing or the cost of living.

[*English*]

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our new government was elected to take real action to make life more affordable for Canadians. This includes taking concrete steps to address issues like food insecurity, such as with a national school food program.

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We are committed to supporting children and families with access to healthy food. What positive impact has this program had on communities?

[Translation]

**Hon. Adam van Koeverden:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for asking the question in English. I am very pleased to offer him a response in English.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I have been visiting schools across my riding and assisting when I can with the school food programs. They have a very significant positive impact on learning, nutrition and health, but they also save families money. Some researchers indicate it is up to \$200 a month when school food programs are implemented really well across schools in our country. I am very proud that our government has done that.

**David Bexte (Bow River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time.

As we have heard today and repeatedly over the last little while, we know that Canadians are struggling desperately to put food on the table. This past August, food inflation managed to outpace overall inflation by 84%. The average family of four is now spending nearly \$17,000 a year just on groceries. That is over \$800 more than last year.

Abacus Data found that 61% of Canadians are not confident that they will be able to afford groceries six months from now. For households earning under \$50,000, that number rises to 73%. There is no question that younger Canadians are feeling the pinch more than most, as 81% of those aged 18 to 29 regularly worry about being able to cover essentials. These are our neighbours, our friends and our families, and they are suffering under these poor Liberal policies on harmful food inflation.

The Liberals want us to believe that this is a global issue. The Liberals want us to believe that this issue can be solved by more government programs and more bureaucracy. However, here is the truth. Food prices in Canada have risen 48% faster than in the United States, but what is the Prime Minister's excuse?

Food banks are being depleted from coast to coast, and the latest annual survey from Food Banks Canada suggests that food bank use in Alberta over the past five years has been one of the highest increases in food bank use in Canada, up by 92%. A third of the food bank usage in Alberta is now by children. In Toronto, the Daily Bread Food Bank recorded roughly 3.5 million visits in 2024, a 273% increase since before the pandemic. In Ontario, 25% of food bank users are employed full time. This is absolutely shocking. Canadians are working full-time jobs and they still cannot afford groceries.

To note a real experience, my family has been blessed enough to be able to donate a side of beef to the local food bank every year for many years. This beef used to last over a week, and now it just flies off the shelf. It is gone in less than a day. The demand is hard to fathom.

Grocery store shelves tell the same story. Since March, sirloin beef is up 33%, canned soup is up 26%, coffee is up 22% and sta-

ples like potatoes and onions are up 16% and 11%. Lots of this food is produced locally and the price is still rising; it does not matter.

Families earning \$75,000 or less now spend 57% of their income on essentials. Poverty and food insecurity have surged 40% in two years. Why is this happening? Inflation is a huge part of it. With their programs, the Liberals have spent money like drunken sailors, have increased the printing of money, have reduced our foreign exchange capacity dramatically and have made everything more expensive. All the inputs for farming, all the inputs for agriculture and all the imported foods we have are far more expensive than they used to be.

There is another failed Liberal policy that contributes to this. The industrial carbon tax is crushing Canadian farmers. It is also crushing Canadian truckers and food processors. Every step of the food chain, from growing crops to transporting goods to running grocery stores, gets hit with higher costs. Those costs do not disappear. They are passed directly to Canadian families, with higher prices at the till.

Fertilizer taxes and restrictions make it more expensive to grow and force farmers to change crops to something less productive. This is forcing a greater reliance on imports. Again, the foreign exchange problem makes that more expensive. Imports from countries that do not suffer from a massive industrial carbon tax make the competition and math untenable.

The Liberals' plastics ban and new packaging requirements make matters worse. Deloitte estimates the P2 ban could increase fresh produce costs by 34% due to waste and spoilage, reducing availability by over 50% and wasting half a million tonnes of food. Greenhouse gas emissions could rise by 50%, and health care costs related to food-borne illnesses could be over \$1 billion a year.

• (1545)

Rural Canadians will be hit the hardest. The industry is struggling with \$8 billion in front-of-pack labelling changes and compliance costs, and yet again, that will get passed on to families.

As I alluded to a minute ago, farmers are reeling. Net income for an average sized farm in my own province has decreased by nearly 41%, much higher than the national average. Farmers in my riding of Bow River have sounded the alarm that the industrial carbon tax balloons their costs to do business, costs such as power and fuel to run pivots and machinery, to heat their barns and shops and to dry their grains.

Stats Canada reports that the realized net income for Canadian farmers fell by \$3.3 billion, an almost 26% drop. Total farm net income has decreased by just over 40% since 2023. At the same time, farm debt increased 14%, the largest increase since 1981. Canadian farmers are being taxed, regulated and forced to operate under impossible conditions while families pay more for groceries.

The Prime Minister once said that he would be held to account by the prices that Canadians pay at the grocery store. Well, the bill has come due, and Canadians cannot afford it.

The Conservatives will act, and we will scrap the punitive industrial carbon tax on farmers and truckers and the rest of industry. We will eliminate the fertilizer restrictions that strangle Canadian agriculture. We will cancel the food packaging and plastics taxes that make fresh produce more expensive.

I want to note that the number one way for families to afford food is to afford it in their homes, to not suffer from high inflation and to not suffer from declining paycheques, yet the Liberal government believes in the nanny-state mentality, which leads to the fallacy that a bureaucracy of scale is a better solution. We believe that families are better equipped to take care of themselves as long as the government gets out of their way and stops making their lives less affordable.

Food affordability is not an abstract statistic. It is about whether parents skip meals so their children can eat. It is about whether seniors choose between groceries and medication. It is about families working full time and still having to go to the food bank.

The Liberals have failed. The Conservatives will make life more affordable again by standing up for farmers, standing up for families and standing up for Canada's right to put food back on the table.

• (1550)

**John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a little rich to hear Conservatives speak about affordability.

The Leader of the Opposition has never held a real job in his entire life, has never contributed to the Canadian economy, lives in taxpayer-funded housing and has collected a taxpayer-funded salary his entire working career. He was fired by the residents of his own riding and now is cosplaying as an Albertan.

Are members opposite not embarrassed to be speaking about affordability and food prices? Why do they still support the Leader of the Opposition, who is an embarrassment to hard-working Canadian families?

**David Bexte:** Mr. Speaker, that is awfully rich coming from those across the aisle. They had a past prime minister with drama school experience and have a current Prime Minister—

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**An hon. member:** Teaching is a job, actually.

**David Bexte:** Mr. Speaker, teaching is a job, but is a drama school job a real job? The current Prime Minister has an elitist attitude and does not buy his own strawberries.

It does not change the attack from the across the aisle on food affordability. Canadians are suffering. That is related to inflation, and the inflation, by and large, is from all the policies of the previous decade of Liberal governments. That is just not acceptable.

[Translation]

**Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech.

The House has heard all kinds of solutions for tackling rising prices, including the one proposed by my colleague from Shefford. One solution we must not forget is increasing seniors' buying power. Nowadays, seniors who receive only their old age security pension are very vulnerable. They cannot afford rent and groceries. They often have to make compromises when it comes to their medication.

Does my colleague agree that it is time for the Liberals to stop discriminating against one of the two classes of seniors and increase old age security for seniors aged 65 and up?

• (1555)

[English]

**David Bexte:** Mr. Speaker, seniors are probably some of the most vulnerable members of the population, especially low-income seniors.

That still does not change the fact of the decline of the value of the Canadian dollar due to inflation, the overspending of the government over the last decade and the continued projection to double the deficit and thus increase the printing of money. That is what is further reducing the value of the Canadian dollar and its purchasing power. This is going to continue to make everything about life more unaffordable. We need to fix those policies and spend within our means, so the Canadian dollar will mean something again and so it can buy the food that all of the people of the country, children, the middle class, seniors, everyone, need to survive.

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**Ellis Ross (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals now want to change the story. They want to deflect. They want to talk about grocery prices by looking at what analysts say, what farm yields are and what the weather is doing. That was not what the Prime Minister promised. The Prime Minister did not say he would follow the analysts, the yields or the weather patterns. He said to judge him by the prices at the grocery store.

Would the member agree that the Prime Minister is failing not only on that measure but also on a number of different measures, including trade, the economy and jobs?

**David Bexte:** Mr. Speaker, I would absolutely agree.

The Prime Minister has failed. The Prime Minister is quotable and quoted. It is indelible. He made it absolutely clear how he would be measured by the prices at the till. He failed. Prices are increasing by every measure and in every category across the country. For every demographic and for every person in remote communities and in urban centres, life has continued to get worse. There is no projection that it is going to get better. By any reasonable measure, the Prime Minister has failed on that commitment miserably.

[Translation]

**Hon. Kody Blois (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in this afternoon's debate.

Today is an opposition day, and I am always pleased to have the opportunity to discuss issues with my Conservative colleagues and address some of the points in their motion. Today's opposition motion focuses on food and the cost of living, which includes the issue of agriculture.

Kings—Hants has a very rich agricultural heritage. I believe the Speaker's riding of Perth—Wellington has the largest number of supply-managed farms in Ontario. Something similar can be said of my riding, because it has the highest concentration of supply-managed farms east of Quebec.

The vegetable sector is also very important. We produce a lot of apples, potatoes and wine, among other things. I am very proud of our farmers, everyone who grows and produces things across the country. I know that the other members of the House of Commons feel the same way.

[English]

The question of agriculture is an important piece for us to talk about. I had the opportunity to be in the House debating an opposition day motion on Monday. I reminded Canadians at home and parliamentarians that, notwithstanding that sometimes we will hear questions from the Conservatives about food, agriculture and farmers, we saw very little in the Conservative platform in April 2025 related to farmers.

When the member for Battle River—Crowfoot was up on his feet, I looked through the Conservative platform. There were four mentions of farmers, but nothing concrete about what the Conservative Party would actually do for farmers in that platform. We hear a lot of bluster in the House and a lot of conversations, but not a whole lot on public policy that matters.

I would objectively say that the Liberal Party of Canada, in the last election, had a more comprehensive program about what the elected Liberal government was going to do for agriculture. We see some of that work bearing fruit. We see some of the work that we are doing to help support farmers. There is an opportunity to talk about that here today. There have been a lot of conversations about support for social programs and food banks, but let us talk about farmers, what we are doing and, frankly, what I would like to see a little more of from the Conservatives.

When Conservatives have the opportunity to engage in questions after debate, I would like for them to point out to me more than one vague reference to a capital gains piece. This government removed the capital gains inclusion that the last government had. This government removed it.

What else was there for agriculture? There was nothing about CFIA or PMRA. There was nothing about the regulatory reform that is needed to drive the industry forward. There was no mention of additional funding to support international trade missions.

The Minister of International Trade has been deeply focused on this question. He and I had the opportunity to engage with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture this week about the work the Minister of International Trade is doing and the agricultural lens that is on it. We want to talk about bringing down food prices in this country. It is a dynamic question that requires a thoughtful response about what we are doing at the farm-gate level, and we are not seeing that from the Conservative opposition. We do not see it in the text of today's motion. There are a few passing glances, but nothing concrete about what Conservatives would do for farmers in this country. That is extremely important.

I know with the Speaker's leadership, and maybe some leadership from others on the opposition benches, that can be raised with the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot now that he represents a riding that is inherently more agriculturally based than Carleton.

● (1600)

[Translation]

We also need to talk about the clean fuel regulations. These regulations give big companies various options for reducing their greenhouse gas, or GHG, emissions. There are many opportunities and ways to fulfill this obligation, which is important in the context of climate change.

It is also important for rural prosperity. Here is an example. For western Canadian farmers who produce canola and other products, access to the Chinese market and other international markets is certainly very important. Again, the government is focused on these issues, but domestic policies for the biofuel sector are also crucial.

[English]

I asked that question, and the Conservatives have not been able to square this circle. They suggest that farmers do not care about these policies; I would argue the opposite. When I have been in Saskatchewan and Alberta, in prairie provinces, farmers understand that the policies we put in place drive an important price signal for the cost of their product.

I hope the Conservatives are going to give some thoughtful reflections about why they are against a policy that reduces emissions, drives clean fuel and supports rural prosperity across this country, including in rural areas of western Canada, at a time when those farmers could really use additional price signals and policies that matter in this country. Conservatives are against those.

I asked the member for Winnipeg North this week where Conservatives had any policy that matched economic prosperity, regional prosperity, with the reduction of emissions. I have not heard of any in six years.

The government is walking the careful line between driving economic prosperity and being mindful of the emission reduction goals we have as a government. Even on the things that actually support their backyards and their communities, the Conservatives have nothing to say. On the policy we put in place that would help improve home energy efficiency, the Conservatives were against it. These are things that improve the affordability of energy costs across this country and reduce emissions at the same time. It is a great double win, but no, Conservatives are against it.

I ask my hon. colleagues who sit on the opposition benches, and there are good ideas all across the House, for an example of where they are pairing those two important priorities to be able to make a difference. At a time when we want to talk about price point and support for farmers that would ultimately lead all the way through to the grocery level, we need to be supporting our farmers. These are the policies that do both, and we need to be thoughtful about them.

Our government has also introduced a grocery code of conduct. These are things I think there is support for across the House. There is no mention today about what those look like.

• (1605)

[Translation]

No discussion of affordability in Canada would be complete without also discussing the national child care program. I think it is worth taking a moment to examine the different approaches that the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and the other parties take to national social programs.

The Conservatives oppose social programs like the pharmacare program, the national child care program and, of course, the national school food program. The Conservatives oppose all of these measures.

In fact, my hon. colleague from Battle River—Crowfoot said in the last Parliament that the national school food program had not yet delivered a single meal. I have good news for the Leader of the Opposition: This program plays now a crucial role across the coun-

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try in improving access to healthy food, and it is delivering healthy meals to students in Nova Scotia and across the country.

[English]

Conservatives are against those things. How can they talk about the price of food and affordability but be against the programs that are being delivered, such as the national school food program, which is helping support Canadian produce and farmers and driving local outcomes at schools?

I really think we need to have a deeper conversation about the fact that the Conservatives had nothing to say about farmers in their last platform, and this is their official position. If it has changed, please, someone let me know. On the programs that matter for affordability in this country, we need to have a further conversation.

**Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity this past summer to visit Nova Scotia, and it is a beautiful province. I was in Acadie—Annapolis, where I met with a group that assists seniors. One of the stories I heard was very troubling to me, because this particular senior had to choose between heating her home and buying food. She could not afford both. Let us be honest. There has been a 68% increase in people accessing food banks in Nova Scotia, with 169,000 people doing so in the first half of 2024.

How does the member explain to this senior, who cannot afford to pay all her bills, that she needs to choose whether she stays warm in the winter to survive or eat?

**Hon. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to agree with my hon. colleague that Nova Scotia is a beautiful province. The hon. member for Acadie—Annapolis is an honourable gentleman, and we are great neighbours in Nova Scotia.

There are challenges across the country. No one stands here in Parliament and suggests that everything is perfect. We have a government that is trying to tackle the situation that is before us.

When the member opposite engaged with seniors in Nova Scotia, did she explain that she actually voted against programs that would have helped that senior to transition off a particular fossil fuel, like heating oil, to reduce her energy bill and to help make her life affordable? Did she explain to that senior why she thought it was a bad policy and why she voted against those affordability measures that matter for seniors across this country?

That would be my question back to the hon. member.

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[Translation]

**Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we are able to talk about the cost of living, because it is true that there is a lot of financial insecurity. I may have said this before, but before I was a member of Parliament, I was a legal aid lawyer. I served the most vulnerable people. I am thinking of one of my clients, who was between 65 and 75, lived alone and was having a hard time paying her mortgage. I fought alongside her to make sure she did not lose her home and end up homeless. The problem was not that she did not want to pay her mortgage; it was that she did not have enough income. With the rising cost of living wreaking havoc on grocery prices, she did not have enough money left over.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of our proposal to increase old age security for people aged 65 to 74.

• (1610)

**Hon. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, issues related to our seniors are, of course, very important in my riding. I imagine it is the same thing in my colleague's riding.

When it comes to seniors between the ages of 65 and 74, we promised to increase the guaranteed income supplement. We understand the importance of this program, particularly for low-income seniors in this category.

I agree it is important that we support our seniors. This government will deliver on that.

**Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleague, I have a keen interest in agriculture. I have had the privilege of going with him to meet with farmers in his constituency, one of those visits being after hurricane Fiona struck Nova Scotia in 2022.

I would like my colleague to tell us more about the impact climate change is having on farmers, the measures our government is taking and the effect this is having on food prices.

**Hon. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is truly a champion for farmers and producers, both in the House of Commons and in her riding.

The government has put a concrete measure in place by enhancing risk management programs. The compensation rate for the AgriStability program has been increased from 80% to 90%. Other reference margin limits have also been eliminated.

We have a concrete plan and we have implemented concrete programs for our farmers because this issue is of the utmost importance. I should also point out that during the last election, the Liberal Party had a more concrete plan than the Conservatives with regard to agriculture.

**Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in today's debate. I will be sharing my time with the member for Pickering—Brooklin.

My colleagues across the aisle and I share the same concern about the cost of living. This is something I hear about regularly in my riding of Compton—Stanstead. During the election campaign and over the summer, I visited all 36 municipalities in my riding. I

covered 5,000 square kilometres. I met people who told me about their challenges and difficulties. I listened to several representatives of the organizations that support those folks. I can say that there are significant challenges. These encounters, the stories I heard and the hope of the people are why I got into politics in the first place and are what encourage me to continue the work begun by my predecessor.

I want our institutions to be there to support my constituents when they need it most, but also in the way they need it. As I travelled throughout my riding, I heard people there talk about how much they trust the Liberal Party's commitments and the leadership of the man who has become our Prime Minister. Last spring, my constituents clearly had two opposite choices: a serious party with responsible leadership and a solid plan to get through what we recognize and consider to be tough times, or a party that relies on division and partisan slogans. I want to sincerely thank the folks back home who gave me the largest majority ever seen in the riding of Compton—Stanstead. It is a vote of confidence on their part that I take very seriously, and I am committed to living up to their expectations.

Quite frankly, I think our government is giving Canadians the ambitious plan that they deserve and that will make life more affordable. We promised this plan during the election campaign, and we are following through. Our new government took office 151 days ago. Already, many concrete measures have been announced that will have a direct impact on my constituents and on all Canadians. We will continue to present new measures. For example, one of the major challenges we are facing is the cost of housing. We are clearly in the middle of a housing crisis. That is why we are implementing an ambitious new approach to increase the housing supply across the country, including outside major urban centres, in communities like the ones in my riding.

The Prime Minister recently announced a new federal agency with the mandate to build affordable housing at scale. That agency is called “build Canada homes”. With “build Canada homes”, we will fight against homelessness by building both supportive and transitional housing in partnership with the provinces, territories, municipalities and indigenous communities. Just last week, someone in Sherbrooke was telling me about how modular homes and modular housing could help unhoused individuals transition to other types of housing. That is the kind of project that “build Canada homes” could support. Meeting the needs of the people in our ridings is our goal.

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This agency will also build community housing and very affordable housing for households with very low incomes and will partner with private developers to build affordable housing for the middle class. As I was saying, I am from a region that is located outside large urban centres. Something that we hear often is that programs do not reflect the reality of the regions. Sometimes too many units are built or the red tape is overwhelming for the municipalities. It is too much of a burden. Our new approach takes this reality into account. It considers the needs of smaller communities that have limited resources but that also need fewer units and that are just as important. There is no need to build hundreds of units or to complete endless paperwork. We have \$13 billion that could be used to build housing both in Montreal and in Stanstead.

• (1615)

We also know that one of the key challenges in building more housing is having infrastructure that can support these homes. Municipalities have significant needs in terms of water and sewer systems. That is why we have committed an additional \$1 billion to help them meet these challenges so that they can finally build housing for the people in our ridings.

I am confident that we will reach an agreement with the Government of Quebec so we can meet these commitments quickly and truly give our constituents some relief so that they can access affordable housing more quickly.

I would also like to mention that there are young people in our communities who dream of settling down and buying a new home, but who are having difficulty accessing these new properties. That is why we proposed eliminating the GST for first-time home buyers on new homes valued at less than \$1 million. This applies to many homes in my region. We will also reduce the GST for first-time home buyers on new homes between \$1 million and \$1.5 million.

In addition, as requested by Canadians, we have put money back in their pockets by reducing taxes. Since July 1, all the people back home and across Canada who pay taxes have benefited from a 1% reduction on the lowest tax bracket. In concrete terms, this represents savings of up to \$840 per year for a dual-income family. This tax relief benefits 22 million Canadians, who can now keep more of their paycheck and use it as they see fit.

One of the biggest concerns in my riding, which borders Vermont and New Hampshire, is trade tensions with the United States and the impact this may have on our local population. Businesses in my region are particularly concerned. They are afraid of losing contracts, having to cut shifts and experiencing the impact on jobs. It is therefore essential to continue to support these businesses in order to maintain jobs. We want exporters to be able to continue exporting and workers to be supported.

I have not heard about a lot of people losing their jobs since the dispute began. I find that reassuring. We rolled out a suite of economic support programs starting on day one. For example, we temporarily eliminated the one-week waiting period for EI benefits. We also temporarily suspended the rules governing severance pay so workers would not have to use up their severance pay before collecting their EI benefits.

We made it easier to access employment insurance by raising the regional unemployment rate for six months. We made it easier for employers and workers affected by tariffs to access the work-sharing program.

Our new government has also announced a series of targeted measures to support Canada's steel, aluminum and softwood lumber industries. For example, we are investing \$70 million in labour market development agreements to provide training and income support to the nearly 10,000 steelworkers affected by the dispute.

The softwood lumber industry is very important in Quebec, and we are helping it transform and compete. We are providing up to \$700 million in loan guarantees to address the immediate pressures facing the softwood lumber sector. We are building an economy that prioritizes the use of Canadian materials in construction. We changed the federal procurement process to require companies contracting with the federal government to source Canadian lumber. That is how our government is ensuring that Canadian workers benefit from our investments in these frankly turbulent times.

I hear my colleagues on the other side of the House denouncing the price of food. Yes, there is food inflation, but they seem to be forgetting that farmers are the first to be affected by climate challenges. Droughts and torrential rains take their toll on crops. When we want to help farmers become more resilient, the Conservatives are nowhere to be found.

When we table our ambitious budget on November 4, I hope that our colleagues on the other side of the House will support us in building the strongest economy in the G7, in keeping jobs in Canada, in helping this country become more independent and resilient, and in strengthening our economy.

• (1620)

[English]

**Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton—Bkejwanong, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite mentioned farmers, so I wanted to remind her of the record of the Liberal government. She was not here to see it impose two levels of carbon tax, hundreds of thousands of dollars on farms, and the clean fuel standards still remaining without giving them any credit for the emissions reduction of the CO<sub>2</sub> absorbed by their crops; the tariff on fertilizer; the restriction on fertilizers, so they cannot get the food yield they need; and all the tariffs China has put on pork, beef and canola, which the government has taken no action on.

*Business of Supply*

That is the record of the Liberal government. What is the member going to do to actually help to bring the cost of food down?

[Translation]

**Marianne Dandurand:** Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that my colleague is talking this way about the Liberal record when the Liberals took office after a Conservative government that had made deep cuts to science, which helps our farmers have access to better technologies. The Conservative government had also made cuts to risk management programs and to the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership. Our government rebuilt in the aftermath of these cuts and is now trying to help farmers become more resilient in dealing with climate change so that we can reduce the cost of food.

**Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear my colleague talk about climate change. I am pleased to hear her make the connection between the cost of food and extreme weather events such as heat waves and droughts, which have a major influence on inflation and the price of food. We in the Bloc Québécois are offering solutions. The government once pledged to abolish some of the oil and gas subsidies, but that did not happen.

In 2024, the oil and gas companies were given a total of \$28.5 billion in subsidies. That money could be used to help people combat the rising cost of living. Does my hon. colleague think would be a good solution?

• (1625)

**Marianne Dandurand:** Mr. Speaker, I always feel great pride when I talk about agriculture and how our farmers in Quebec are leaders in sustainable agriculture. They do a lot, and they get help from both the federal and provincial governments. They are facing great difficulties because of climate change. I believe that with the help of both levels of government, the determination of farmers, and numerous scientific initiatives such as living laboratories, which is an exceptional project, we can build a resilient agricultural sector. I hope this will continue in the years to come.

[English]

**Matt Strauss (Kitchener South—Hespeler, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I come to the House as a physician. In medicine, if we refuse to treat the underlying cause of a problem, I promise it will get worse. It sounds to me, in the House, that the Liberals want to forever invent new and more complicated programs to treat the symptoms of this problem. The cause of this problem is a matter of first-year economics. To quote a first-year economics textbook, “Prices rise when the government prints too much money.”

Do the Liberals not acknowledge that their massive deficits are the cause of the affordability crisis? If they acknowledge this truth from a first-year economics textbook, why do they refuse to treat it or even talk about it?

[Translation]

**Marianne Dandurand:** Mr. Speaker, one of the major causes of food inflation is climate change. My colleagues across the way seem unwilling to admit that. Climate change is having an incredibly significant impact on agriculture. I am anxious for my colleagues across the House to recognize that and to support our efforts to help farmers become increasingly resilient.

**Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I share the same passion for agriculture. As she so aptly puts it, climate change is changing farming.

Is it not time to tailor the support programs to individual farmers and stop implementing one-size-fits-all programs, given that each province is experiencing the effects of climate change differently?

**Marianne Dandurand:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. One of the major challenges facing the agricultural sector is ensuring that the provinces, the federal government and the territories agree on implementing programs that are important for Canada as a whole. I believe that everyone must come to an agreement so that the programs are tailored to the reality of each region.

[English]

**Juanita Nathan (Pickering—Brooklin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to participate in the debate on the Conservative motion in relation to the action the government is taking to address food affordability and ensure that all Canadians have access to affordable food and other daily essential goods.

Our government believes that food affordability is a serious issue facing all Canadians today. Canadians are not experiencing inflation as a statistic; they are experiencing it in their grocery stores. This is the reason our focus has been to deliver on our commitment to improving affordability, with a strong focus on relieving the financial pressure Canadians are experiencing.

Our government has been actively engaged in and is committed to improving affordability for all Canadians, with a view to alleviating the financial stress they are experiencing. We introduced in Parliament Bill C-4, the making life more affordable for Canadians act, which would legislate a middle-class tax cut so dual-income households can save approximately \$800 a year. Bringing down costs for Canadians is central to our plan outlined in the Speech from the Throne. This tax relief would benefit nearly 22 million Canadians and would help them keep more of their hard-earned paycheques to spend wherever it matters most to them.



We are also very mindful that addressing the growing cost of essential goods, including groceries, requires a strong consumer advocacy sector as well as timely and independent research on consumer issues. That is why our government has taken measures to invest in consumer advocacy work. The Canadian consumer protection initiative has enabled independent research in order to gain insights on retail pricing practices such as shrinkflation and skimpflation in the grocery sector. In a recent call focused on food, priority topics included affordability, sustainable consumption, barriers to competition in the grocery sector and consumer protection against junk fees and price gouging. In addition to independent research, this program supports the creation of resources to raise awareness about food, especially when it comes to sustainability issues.

In providing further funding for consumer advocacy, we are ensuring that consumer interest organizations are supported to meaningfully advocate for Canadians. Priority topics such as affordability, sustainable consumption, barriers to competition in the grocery sector and consumer protection against junk fees and price gouging were all identified as key priorities in its latest open call for proposals. With these priorities top of mind, a funded project from a previous call supported a national consumer movement that reached Canadians from coast to coast to coast, offering practical tools to decode grocery pricing strategies and empowering consumers to make informed choices at the checkout.

Our government has continued to reiterate its commitments to providing Canadians with the tools and data they need to make informed choices in the marketplace. Our government has made it a priority to maintain the food price data hub to give Canadians up-to-date and detailed information on food prices to help them make informed decisions about their grocery options. Additionally, the government's grocery affordability web page aims to create greater transparency around pricing to foster competition and help consumers increase their confidence in participating in marketplaces.

Most recently, the food price data hub published the latest consumer price index, CPI, data for August 2025, which indicates that inflation for groceries has fallen from a peak of 11.4% in January 2023 to 3.5% in August 2025. This means Canadians have seen a decline in food inflation since January 2023. While this is an encouraging trend, the Government of Canada continues to work hard to address affordability issues and take action to improve food affordability for all Canadians.

We have made headway in attaining the food price stability Canadians need and deserve. To ensure they continue to pay fair prices for groceries, we will maintain our efforts in funding the work of the organizations that advocate for their rights and the protection of their interests. We will continue to make sure that Canadians have the information they need to make informed choices at the grocery store. We will take action to improve competition and will hold companies accountable in the process.

• (1630)

That is why, in recent years, the Government of Canada has modernized the Competition Act, making amendments that affect how the Competition Bureau can investigate anti-competitive conduct and deceptive marketing. For example, making changes to the act requires that vendors be more truthful in their advertising, rec-

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ognizing that displaying prices without additional fees included is a form of dishonesty. This practice of drip pricing makes it more difficult for consumers to make price comparisons and find the best value and punishes vendors that are more up front with the actual cost of goods.

In addition, amendments to the Competition Act through Bill C-56, the Affordable Housing and Groceries Act, will affect how the Competition Bureau can examine potentially anti-competitive arguments such as controls on the use of commercial real estate. The widespread use of competitive property controls can make it more difficult for firms to enter new markets or expand, reducing the choices available to Canadians consumers. Since these amendments passed, we have seen a number of concessions by major grocers, such as willingly removing some of the controls they had in place and opening up those markets. These are clear wins for both Canadian consumers and prospective new entrants in the grocery retail market.

We are aware, however, that food price stabilization can occur only when there is co-operation. This requires the complete engagement of the entire supply chain. Our engagement with industry has been focused on ensuring the continuous improvement of food affordability.

Through continued collaboration with provincial and territorial ministers of agriculture and widespread industry engagement, we were pleased to announce that in July 2024, all the large grocery retailers committed to the grocery sector code of conduct. The code is a positive step toward uniting supply chain partners under a set of ground rules and bringing more fairness, transparency and predictability to Canada's grocery supply chain and to consumers.

We recognize that global and external pressures like tariffs imposed by the United States are also contributing to cost and pricing increases that affect consumers, workers and businesses in Canada. These pressures reinforce the importance of a coordinated, long-term approach to food affordability and economic resilience. We will continue to work to develop a strong consumer advocacy culture and ensure that Canadians are equipped with the tools they need to navigate food prices and make sound purchasing decisions.

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Our government remains dedicated to investigating harmful practices impacting Canadians, ensuring continued collaboration in areas of joint jurisdiction with provincial and territorial colleagues responsible for consumer protection, working to strengthen competition in Canada's grocery sector and continuing to provide Canadians with accurate and timely information on food pricing in Canada.

• (1635)

**Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I heard the member talk in her speech about how the Liberals are working alongside industry. What we have seen from the government, as a result of the policy direction it has taken us in over the last 10 years, is that \$63 billion in investment has left Canada so far this year.

I am just wondering what the member's plan is to try to bring that \$63 billion back. I am wondering which bad Liberal policies from the last 10 years she is willing to scrap to get that money back.

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, Canadians provided the government with a clear mandate to provide a stronger and more resilient economy. While the opposition keeps talking about the Prime Minister's globe-trotting, he is going around the world trying to get more investment into the country.

**An hon. member:** It does not seem to be working.

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, we need to wait and see.

We have gotten about \$60 billion in investments so far. Budget 2025 will build on these actions by seizing a generational opportunity to transform the Canadian economy through ambitious—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Shefford.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member, who is a new colleague of mine at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. I welcome her to the committee.

Right now, I am genuinely deeply concerned about the federal government's attempts to interfere in Quebec's jurisdiction once again, instead of taking concrete action to lift women out of poverty. Here is an example. Some women stay in violent situations because they are afraid of ending up on the street, but funding for shelters was blocked this summer.

I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, because he is the one who told me that Ottawa was withholding money for shelters where he is in Abitibi, in Rouyn-Noranda, and elsewhere in Quebec. The government was slow to get that money out the door. As a result, women and children were forced to return to their abusers.

Instead of trying to interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions, the government should transfer the money because we need it for our shelters. Health and social services are within Quebec's purview.

[English]

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with what my colleague opposite is saying about women who are in abusive

situations. As a former abuse counsellor, I completely understood what she is talking about.

I am, as is the government, determined to protect, in the upcoming budget, funding for women, women's sectors and organizations that are supporting women. We will wait to see that in the budget coming up in November.

**Marianne Dandurand (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member's speech was very interesting. She is very active in her region, and she is very committed.

What are the initiatives from our government that the member thinks will have the biggest impact on affordability for her community?

• (1640)

**Juanita Nathan:** Mr. Speaker, I feel that food security and the role of the agriculture sector will have the biggest impact on my neighbourhood in Pickering—Brooklin. Half of my community is rural.

In the coming days and months, I am waiting to see what the government will do to strengthen Canada's food security by investing in greenhouses, hydroponics and controlled-environment agriculture that would allow us to grow more types of food here at home, which would definitely alleviate a lot of the lineups at food banks.

We must work to increase the resilience of food supply chains, support innovation and amend the mandate of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency with respect to security and cost of food in its regulatory decisions, without compromising health and safety.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** 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 Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, Public Safety; the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Public Safety; the hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, Public Services and Procurement.

**Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before I get started, I would like to say I will be splitting my time with the member for Acadie—Annapolis.

It is always an honour to speak on behalf of the great people in southwest and west central Saskatchewan. I would like to take a quick moment here to acknowledge that this is an exceptional week, because on Monday, the 22nd, it was my daughter Jada's 13th birthday. We had a great celebration this weekend with her before I left.

I would also like to note that Saskatchewan is celebrating 120 years in Confederation. As a province, we built ourselves up rapidly and continue to grow through generations of hard work underneath the wide open prairie sky. People in Saskatchewan are tough enough to overcome the coldest winters and the longest droughts. Prairie resilience is a thing. We have a lot of common sense and common decency. We are surrounded by natural beauty and take good care of the land. We are the breadbasket of the world.

It is an especially good year for the Roughriders. They are having a great season, being at the top of the league at this point in the CFL.

As we give thanks for our history, we are looking ahead to accomplish more in the future. I will proudly defend the best interests of my home province of Saskatchewan, the west and all of Canada. That is what our Conservative motion today is all about.

In Saskatchewan, we are known for many things, whether it is producing the vast majority of Canada's pulse exports, leading in canola growth or weathering life in the Palliser Triangle. On that last one, I cannot express enough how much of a feat that is. In my neck of the woods, the original pioneers and settlers thought the area was uninhabitable because of the unforgiving landscape, the volatile weather and the lack of surface water. At the time, John Palliser reported that the region is a desert "which can never be expected to be occupied by settlers."

There are two main waterways in western Saskatchewan: the Frenchman River, close to where I grew up, and the South Saskatchewan River, which is just to the north of where I live now. This is where things get interesting.

The Frenchman River flows south through southwest Saskatchewan and eventually ties into the Missouri River, then the Mississippi River and down to the Gulf of Mexico. The South Saskatchewan River, which is not even a two-hour drive north from the Frenchman River, flows north. It ties into the North Saskatchewan River up by Prince Albert, and from there it proceeds to Hudson Bay. This phenomenon is known as the Laurentian continental divide, the irony of which is not lost on me, but from our perspective out west, it is always an interesting name any time the word "Laurentian" gets mixed in there.

I talk a lot about farming because my riding is predominantly rural and heavily agricultural. My riding alone has a huge geographical area, and most of it is covered by the Palliser Triangle, which John Palliser described as more or less an arid desert and unsuitable for crops. Southwest to west central Saskatchewan falls right in the middle of the Palliser Triangle, yet for a long time now we have had farmers working everywhere with unbelievably successful crops. What happened? Ultimately, farmers settled the area and started to build their farms based on two criteria: proximity not only to the bit of water that was there but also to the rail line.

I am sure members are wondering why I am giving them a brief history lesson on Saskatchewan. It took great vision and incredibly unbreakable will to be able to build our province, our towns and our communities. Somehow the farmers managed to make it work even in the Palliser Triangle. They had a strong work ethic, combined with creativity and resourcefulness, which did the impossible.

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Through innovation and improved techniques, agriculture expanded and overcame major challenges against all the odds. All of this happened without any intervention from the government trying to impose its radical vision on society.

Farmers have always understood how important it is to take care of their land and respect nature, because it goes hand in hand with their success in business. They do not need to reinvent the wheel or listen to any lectures from the government. The success story of the Palliser Triangle has been happening for over a century. Over time, each new generation has built on that foundation.

There were, of course, some setbacks over time, and one in particular was the Great Depression. We saw great droughts. We saw tremendous topsoil loss because of drought, blowing winds and some of the agricultural practices of the time. It was on the recovery side of World War I, but also at the onset of World War II.

In more recent years, there has actually been less rainfall in Saskatchewan than even in the dirty thirties. We are seeing a modern miracle of higher yields. These farms are producing more with less. Soil conservation, technology and best practices have improved over time in response to the dry climate.

● (1645)

In the past, this happened without government intervention. Now it is happening in spite of a Liberal government that has made it more difficult for the ag industry as a whole.

The Liberals should let farmers do what they do best while they focus on resolving China's tariffs against Canadian canola products and yellow peas. It has been tragic for the farmers to do more with less and have a better harvest this year, only to watch their profits get wasted away and wiped out by tariffs. Instead of being preachy with farmers, the Liberals can learn a lot from the way farmers were able to balance the economy and the environment, and they should follow the farmers' lead. There are some other things they could learn as well.

The amount of work that went into building major projects, such as the national railway or Gardiner Dam, was done without the need of, for example, the Major Projects Office. It was a different time back then. These days, those projects that support my region of the country would probably have been built with obstacles for industry, such as the Liberals' carbon tax and other policies devastating for the west.

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Today, while debating this motion, I am going to focus on the industrial carbon tax on steel, manufacturing and heavy industry. It is causing destruction among many of our once great companies. Previous and current Liberal policies are having devastating impacts on companies. For example, Evraz steel in Regina had to cut its labour force in half, largely thanks to bad Liberal policy, which has made sure that no projects can proceed in Canada. While these industries already have to deal with tariffs, the Canadian government is still taxing them more at the same time.

The Liberals across the way should ask themselves whether it makes sense to put another tariff, basically, on top of the tariff already hitting Canadian companies. If they would start to think of it that way, maybe they would finally support Canadian jobs and drop their industrial carbon tax. If there are no major projects to build in Canada, then no Canadian steel is needed, which means fewer jobs. We then add on the industrial carbon tax, which has an impact on these companies up front.

There is also a trickle-down impact for other parts of the economy and for the great farm machinery manufacturers on the Prairies as well. I spoke with a general manager of one of these great companies the other day, and he talked about how the industrial tax is devastating for many reasons.

However, it is not just Canada that has one. I recognize that other countries around the world have them, but those are countries that have to import products in order to build the products they make. The industrial carbon tax is largely a hidden cost for them. It is one that they have to bear. It is also one that they then have to pass along to the consumer, so the consumer has to pay higher prices.

The costs of producing food and taking care of cattle are borne by the producers. Eventually, the people in the grocery store will then have to pay higher prices. What it takes to build key infrastructure in this country shows an impact of bad policies like the industrial carbon tax.

The problem begins with the Liberal government, which has an attitude that says, "For everything else in life, there is a taxpayer," or "Tax first, ask questions later". That sets the tone from the beginning, but there is always a cost in doing that, and it eventually gets passed down to the consumer. The difference is that, unlike a greedy government, Canadian businesses are forced to charge more while trying to survive. At the end of the day, the consumer gets hit from all directions. We are talking about ordinary Canadians, who have to pay higher prices through inflation and then turn around and pay higher taxes on everything else. At every stage, the government benefits, but everyone else is worse off.

I know the Liberals are going to stand up and say they scrapped the carbon tax, and they sort of did. They scrapped the consumer tax that people paid on their home heating and fuel to fill up their vehicles, but as I explained, the industrial carbon tax is truly a consumer carbon tax by another name. Not only did the Liberals keep it, but they are raising the rate for this industrial carbon tax.

Here is something else to think about: The industrial carbon tax was matching the consumer carbon tax, which added 17¢ per litre before it was removed. If the consumer carbon tax continued to go up, it would have been adding 21¢ per litre. Even though that is not

happening right now, the industrial carbon tax went up, and it is spreading those increased costs throughout the economy in place of the consumer tax. However, it is a hidden cost because we are dealing with food inflation, a cost of living crisis that is being borne by our manufacturers, by the consumer, by our farmers and by people who are the ones to create jobs in this economy. It is devastating.

It is time for the Liberals to vote for our motion, which would get rid of the industrial carbon tax.

● (1650)

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, having grown up on the prairies, the very first farm I ever visited was Stoin farm around the Moose Jaw area.

I concur with many of the statements the members put on the record here this afternoon in regard to how important the role is that our farmers play in providing food, not only for the people in the Prairies but for all of Canada. In fact, we feed the world in many different ways.

We have a national government, particularly a minister of agriculture, that is very aggressively working with the farming communities in terms of what we can do to ensure that we capture a larger percentage of the world market. This includes canola, which is so important to Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Could I have the member's thoughts on that?

**Jeremy Patzer:** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, agriculture is very much a trade-exposed, global market-driven industry. To resolve the tariffs, the Prime Minister has to get involved.

Beyond that, as I was alluding to in my speech, the cost of everything at the farm gate has gone up, and it is innovations by farmers that have largely driven progress in agriculture, whether it is on the manufacturing side or in best farm practices. The issue with the industrial carbon tax is that it is a hidden cost for producers when they have to buy their next piece of machinery. It is also a cost on transportation because road equipment and the production of pavement and concrete, things like that, are exposed to the industrial carbon tax. It creates a problematic scenario for them.

[Translation]

**Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada, the undisputed authority on inflation, estimated that the planned increase in the carbon tax this year would have raised prices by 0.1% in Canada in the provinces where the tax applied. I would remind the House that it did not apply in Quebec.

In Quebec, the projected increase was 0.01%, which is marginal. That is one-hundredth of 1%, or one cent per \$100 purchase. We are talking about groceries here.

I would like to know if my hon. colleague has the same figures, since the Bank of Canada had been very clear that this was not a big deal.

[English]

**Jeremy Patzer:** Mr. Speaker, the problem the member is ignoring is that Quebec does not produce every single thing it needs within the province. Quebec, like Canada, has to import goods. If goods coming from European countries have an industrial carbon tax or if things coming from elsewhere in Canada are impacted by the industrial carbon tax, people are going to pay it. It may not show on the invoice, but it is baked into the price, as I said in my speech.

That has been long noted by many people. Because it is a hidden cost, we cannot fully quantify what it is doing because the number is not immediately available, but we can see how the costs keep going up. As the manufacturers have to pay their bills, they can see it, but they do not show that number when they have to increase the cost of products they are sending out the door for consumers.

• (1655)

**Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and next-door neighbour from Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley. He is a great representative not only of his riding but of the province of Saskatchewan and Canada.

My colleague brought up the carbon tax, and the Liberals seem to think it has gone away. What I have witnessed is that the carbon tax has been downloaded to other levels of government. It was downloaded to the provinces through school boards and hospitals, which had to collect and pay the carbon tax. It was also downloaded onto municipalities, where there were increased rates for municipal facilities.

What are the member's thoughts on that? Does he think the Liberal government is going to return that money to the taxpayer?

**Jeremy Patzer:** Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate this question from the most notorious member in the House of Commons. He is a great friend, and he is a terrific MP for his region.

We had a terrible problem of municipalities not being able to get that money back. We know the feds are not going to do it because they have a rabid ideology that is going to prevent that from happening. They want to see these municipalities punished, because that drove the need for them to implement the carbon tax in the first place.

It has made life way more unaffordable for people in rural Canada because we have greater distances to travel, whether for personal, business or industry reasons. It is a huge problem. The industrial carbon tax is a big problem for RMs as well, with the heavy equipment they use and the big projects they—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Acadie—Annapolis.

**Chris d'Entremont (Acadie—Annapolis, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley for sharing his time.

### *Business of Supply*

It has been three years since I have had the opportunity to speak to an opposition day motion in the House, because of my previous duties as a chair occupant. First, let me say how proud I am to stand here today to represent the magnificent riding of Acadie—Annapolis. I thank my constituents for their continued support.

My campaign team and volunteers are the best. It is thanks to them that we have succeeded three times since 2019. I thank my family: my wife, Anne, and my sons, André and Alec, for their unwavering support through my political career. Of course, I thank my mom and dad, who are probably watching tonight, for all their support. I thank my awesome staff in the Yarmouth office, Joellen and Krista; Agnes, who was in my Kingston office; Esther, who is there now; and my two staffers here on the Hill, Isabelle and Mikhail, who are phenomenal and make our office rock.

I want to thank volunteers. As members know, in southwest Nova Scotia, in my riding of Acadie—Annapolis, we have had a pretty bad fire season. We had the largest fire ever in Nova Scotia this year. I want to thank the volunteers, the municipality of Annapolis, the Province of Nova Scotia, the firefighters and the first responders for all their awesome work on the Long Lake wildfires complex; almost 8,500 hectares burned, 20 houses were lost and folks in West Dalhousie were out of their home for over 40 days. They got back just a few days ago.

Can anyone imagine losing their house or being out of their house for over 40 days? On behalf of everyone here in the House of Commons, I want to wish them well and let them know that we are thinking about them and hopefully helping them as time goes on as the province finally figures out exactly what it is going to be asking of the federal government when the time comes.

On another note, I want to thank everyone for their well wishes for a speedy recovery from my broken collar bone. I unfortunately relearned something very important from elementary school, the first law of inertia: that an object will continue in motion with the same speed and the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced external force. I was the object, and the bike path was the unbalanced external force.

[Translation]

I want to thank everyone who wished me a speedy recovery.

[English]

Now let us get into why we are here today. I want to speak in support of the Conservative motion, because Canadians are hurting. Families are being forced to cut deeply into their grocery budget just to get by, and frankly, that makes me a little bit angry and a little bit sad.

[Translation]

Canada is a wealthy country, but under the current Liberal government's mismanagement, taxpayers are feeling the pinch and their hard-earned money is being wasted.

*Business of Supply*

● (1700)

*[English]*

In southwest Nova Scotia, where I have lived my entire life, people work hard. They want to own a home, feed their children and provide a good education for them, and maybe take a vacation every once in a while. However, since 2015, everything has changed.

Since I was first elected here in 2019, the cost of living has skyrocketed. Even then, families in West Nova, as it was called at the time but is now Acadie—Annapolis, were struggling. We warned that the Liberals' out-of-control spending and massive deficits were irresponsible, but of course they did not listen. Now, after six months under a new Prime Minister, who promised financial discipline, Canadians are still waiting. He said that he would be judged by the costs at the grocery store. Well, Canadians are judging him, and they are not impressed.

Instead of delivering relief, the government delayed its budget. We are still waiting for a budget; we have not seen one in a year and a half because the Prime Minister is projecting a deficit of over \$92 billion. That is a monstrous, irresponsible burden on future generations. We will hear, I am sure, maybe in the questions, that they are talking about a “generational investment”, but really it is a generational debt that my kids, their kids and their kids' kids are going to have to try to pay in one way or another, one that causes inflation and extra costs to future generations.

While the government boasts about withdrawing the carbon tax, it left in place the industrial carbon price on fertilizers and farm equipment. That is not relief; that is just politics. The result is that food inflation is 70% higher than the Bank of Canada forecast. Since the Liberals came to power, food prices have risen by 40%. We have heard it many times here today. It is deliberate, and it is unacceptable. It is inhumane for a G7 country. We are a rich country. We are a food basket of a country. We can produce all the food for many people in the world, and we can barely feed ourselves, for some reason.

People find themselves pinched. They are having to make tough decisions on whether to feed their children, heat their homes or buy the things that school requires, and then get their kids into sports, if they are lucky. Unfortunately, the food basket is far too expensive. In my riding, food banks are overwhelmed, and I am sure food banks across Nova Scotia are experiencing the same thing. Food bank usage is up 142% across Canada. While the government claims to be putting money back into taxpayers' pockets, it continues to take it away through many other means. Low-income Canadians spend more of their income on essentials such as food and rent, yet these items are the fastest rising in price. Where is the relief?

In my province of Nova Scotia, the situation is dire. In 2023, 28.9% of the population faced food insecurity. In 2024, that rose to 29.3%. It did not get better; it got worse. There are 71,000 children living in food insecure households. Feed Nova Scotia, which supports many of the food banks across Nova Scotia, supports 23,000 people monthly. That is a 52% increase since 2022. These numbers are heartbreaking. They demand action. We must protect our food sovereignty.

It is difficult in Nova Scotia. Lots of things can be produced in the Annapolis Valley, up near Truro and into Cape Breton, but a fair amount of stuff has to be trucked in from other parts of the country. We need to support the farmers we have. We need to support farmers across Canada. We need to support our producers, and we need to support truckers so product gets to our grocery stores. Once again, it is the taxpayer who ends up paying. It is the people going to the store who are finding all of these things to be far more expensive and, most times, out of reach when they need them.

I would be remiss if I did not bring up the challenges that face the main economic driver in my riding. That is the fishery and, more specifically, the lobster fishery. Last season was a tough one. A number of new entrants did not make it because of the expense of everything. Some of it revolves around tariffs, but some of it revolves around input cost and taxes. I could spend a couple of hours on how fishers feel that the government is doing its best to make sure that the whole fishery fails. Rather than the fishery being treated like the safe and healthy food source that it is, it is being squeezed by competing federal initiatives that do not take into consideration coastal communities, which are a long way from a lot of the services in urban areas, but that are providing safe food products for consumption. When we add up all of those things, and it is not unlike what farmers are telling us, it is very difficult to make ends meet.

This Conservative motion calls on the government to eliminate the carbon tax on fertilizer and farm equipment. It is not just policy, it is survival. We need affordable food. We need responsible governance. We need to stop taxing the grocery basket. We need to do everything within our powers as legislators here in the House of Commons to ease the burden that Nova Scotians and Canadians are seeing at the grocery store. What has been happening is absolutely the opposite.

I urge members to vote with us. Let us work together. We hear a lot of that here in the House of Commons, especially from the government side, where members say that we should just work with them. A number of suggestions have come from the opposition side, whether from the Conservatives, the Bloc or other opposition members, for finding ways to work with the government, but the government continues to close its ears and not listen to the good ideas that come from opposition members. Let us work together for Canadians, our economy and our future.

*Business of Supply*

● (1705)

**Will Greaves (Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very encouraged to have heard both the hon. member and his Conservative colleague who spoke earlier refer to the impacts of climate change in their addresses before the House. It is a refreshing change. We hear a great deal of criticism from our Conservative colleagues about, more or less, every climate change and emissions reduction policy that the government has undertaken.

I would love to hear from the member what suggestions he would put forward for how, in his community, in his riding and in Atlantic Canada, we could implement policies that would address the root cause of climate change and improve adaptation to climate change in a way that the member would find acceptable.

**Chris d'Entremont:** Mr. Speaker, quite honestly, in the Annapolis Valley, we are having a tremendous drought problem, and we need to be resilient to those things, which will continue to happen over the next number of years. We need to have adaptation programs to be able to support farmers in growing the products that we need for our grocery shelves.

The second thing that I would suggest to the hon. member, as we put good ideas on the table, is climate resilience at our wharves. We know that food products coming from the sea are extremely important. We have wharves that are being abandoned because the boats cannot tie to them, so we need to have an infrastructure program that would recognize the impacts of climate change and make infrastructure stronger and more efficient for future use.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing my colleague and I agree on, it is the mismanagement of public finances. That is clear.

The government is being led by someone who presented himself as the great banker-in-chief during the last election campaign. He boasted about being able to control public finances. What we saw, however, was someone who deprived the government of revenue by lowering taxes and forgoing revenues from GAFAM. He turned down revenue while announcing investments. The upshot is that he is dragging his feet on tabling a budget, and the figures we are hearing make no sense. People are talking about a nearly \$100-billion deficit. Who knows what we are headed for on November 4.

How can the government ask people to tighten their belts or expect the middle class to struggle while neglecting public finances?

**Chris d'Entremont:** Mr. Speaker, the challenge that all governments face is to provide a bit of certainty when it comes to the economy, along with sensible budgets that are presented on time and respond to needs. However, they have to avoid spending all the money on all sorts of less important projects. The government cannot solve all the problems of all people.

I hope to see a balanced budget. That will not be the case this fall, but I would like to see a budget containing sound economic decisions in the spring.

● (1710)

[English]

**Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we are debating today is the fact that the Prime Minister made a promise that Canadians would judge him by the cost of food at the grocery stores. Instead of focusing on that, the Liberals have pivoted to this thing around affordability and a focus on food being available on a national blanket level through schools.

One of the members across the way made a comment, and I would like the member to respond to it. He basically said that parents should be thankful because they are saving \$200 a month on groceries because the Liberals are spending their tax dollars on a program that is basically blanketing the whole country, whether or not that is the best way for them to help parents be able to feed their children.

**Chris d'Entremont:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member asked that question because, while the school food program is needed in some communities, what has happened in Nova Scotia is a bit of a shame because, when the province takes a hold of things, it tries to standardize those things across the country.

I look to a nice elementary school in Cornwallis. There was a community group that was providing meals to students. The provincial program came in, kicked out all of those volunteers, who had been doing such a great job, and half the kids are putting it in the garbage. Providing that centralized system does not provide meals to all children. What we should be doing is helping their parents and helping our communities get fresh food into their bellies, because it is more important that children eat at home than all this crazy stuff that they are doing in the schools.

**Abdelhaq Sari (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Madawaska—Restigouche.

[Translation]

I thank all members of the House for their shared commitment to food security and to Canada's farmers and food processors.

Our new government is committed to ensuring that prices remain affordable for Canadians. It has made this a top priority. In the face of unprecedented and unfair trade threats, we are working hard to strengthen and grow Canada's economy and jobs, for the benefit of all.

As the Prime Minister said, we are working to build the strongest economy in the G7. Agriculture plays a very important role in this regard. It is time for our agriculture and agri-food sector to get the credit it deserves as an important driver of our economy. In fact, when we look at the agricultural and agri-food system as a whole, we see that it is an economic powerhouse. This sector employs 2.3 million people, creates one in nine jobs, generates more than \$100 billion in exports, and contributes \$150 billion to the GDP. A strong agriculture and food sector that puts Canada first is essential to Canadians' food security and the affordability of the prices they pay.

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This is the time of year when farmers are very busy. In fields and on farms across Canada, it is harvest time. Every day across our great country, nearly 200,000 farmers and their family members are out in their fields and barns well before sunrise, working hard to put fresh, nutritious food on our tables. Together, they have helped establish Canada as a global leader in sustainable food production.

In 2024, Canada was the world's fifth-largest exporter of agri-food and seafood products. Our food processors also play a vital role. They are our farmers' biggest customer, purchasing more than 40% of Canada's agricultural production for domestic processing, while creating more jobs than any other manufacturing sector in the country. There is incredible potential on the horizon for our world-class food and agricultural products, potential that could help support global food security.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food brings an economic and competitive perspective to agriculture and food. We want a food system that is strong, affordable and resilient for Canadians and that supports our world-class farmers and processors. All in all, we are working to expand and strengthen our trade relations with key markets; unlock Canada's potential by reducing red tape; and invest in technology, innovation, and artificial intelligence. We are strengthening trade with our existing customers, while opening up new opportunities in sectors with high potential. Our farmers and processors provide consumers around the world with the best agricultural and food products available, while supporting the Canadian economy.

A strong and prosperous agriculture and food sector means a more resilient food system for Canadians. A few weeks ago, the federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers met to discuss the next agricultural policy framework and advance collaborative efforts in support of a resilient, sustainable and competitive agricultural sector. Throughout the conference, discussions focused on ensuring that business risk management programs are sustainable and reflect the needs of producers.

We are actively seeking new international opportunities while working to resolve issues around access to other key markets. It is also important to note that we are building a united Canadian economy thanks to improved domestic trade. I would add that the Government of Canada made regulatory changes that ceased the application of the fuel charge in effect since April 1, 2023. Thanks to these changes, charges on fuel destined for the agricultural sector are now fully exempt from the federal price on pollution.

● (1715)

We also know that sustainable food packaging is a priority for consumers, along with affordable food. That is why Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is working closely with Environment and Climate Change Canada, in partnership with the food industry, to gain a better understanding of food packaging approaches that reduce the use of plastic while limiting the impact on the food industry or consumers.

I would like to take a moment to talk about the food policy for Canada and one of our flagship initiatives: the local food infrastructure fund.

Over the past five years, the fund has committed \$71 million to nearly 1,200 projects to improve food security across Canada, including more than 250 projects in indigenous communities, or about 40% of total funding. These projects included community gardens, greenhouses, walk-in refrigerators and walk-in freezers, as well as refrigerated vehicles for transporting and distributing food. We have invested nearly \$63 million over three years in renewing and expanding this program to help community organizations across the country invest in local food infrastructure.

The food policy for Canada also recommended a national school food program. We are investing \$1 billion over five years, which should allow us to provide meals to some 400,000 children every year. The program is expected to save the average participating family with two children up to \$800 per year in grocery costs, with low-income families benefiting the most. The program connects schools to local food organizations, while creating opportunities for farmers, food processors and harvesters across Canada.

Most importantly, the program will allow kids to be kids and will relieve parents of some of the pressure they are under. Our \$1-billion investment includes over \$20 million for the first-ever school food infrastructure fund. Investments made through this fund help ensure that organizations have the equipment and infrastructure they need to produce, store and distribute safe and healthy food to school children across the country. It is truly a community-based approach. Funds will go directly to nonprofit organizations. They, in turn, will direct them to local organizations that know better than anyone else what their community needs, whether it be kitchen suppliers or delivery vans to transport food to schools. This funding will help cover some of the infrastructure costs.

Other measures have been taken since the beginning of this period of global economic fluctuation. At the end of last year, we passed the Affordable Housing and Groceries Act in the House. This legislation allows the Competition Bureau to move forward with its investigations into the use of anti-competitive restrictions, known as property controls, by large retailers. Ultimately, the Competition Bureau's work will lead to healthier competition in the food retail sector.



Statistics Canada, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada have also developed the food price data hub. This is a new all-in-one tool that consolidates existing data to make it easier for Canadians to get an overall snapshot of food prices and trends. It includes average retail prices, staple food items, a personal inflation rate calculator, and other tools that allow Canadians to verify the accuracy of prices at the checkout.

In conclusion, food security is a concern both globally and locally. We must continue to support and invest in farmers, hunters, gatherers and processors, as they are essential to Canada's economy and food security.

• (1720)

[English]

**Tako Van Popta (Langley Township—Fraser Heights, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all day today, we have been listening to Liberals talk about food affordability in response to our opposition day motion, but to me it is déjà vu all over again. I have been here for six years and have been hearing Liberals go on and on about how a program is finally going to solve the inflation problem and deal with, for example, housing, infrastructure, supply chain resilience and our lagging economic productivity measures. Today, we are hearing that the Liberals finally have a program to solve food affordability, yet food inflation is up twice the rate of the consumer price index, and demand at food banks is soaring.

Why should Canadians have any confidence at all that the Liberals are going to solve the food inflation problem?

[Translation]

**Abdelhaq Sari:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his pertinent question, which is relevant.

It is important to note that inflation has not only affected Canada. It has also affected many countries around the world. The issue of being proactive or reactive is very important in the response.

I spoke about programs, which are aspects that are much more reactive. However, when we work directly with organizations and when we dedicate funding to a particular matter, it is much more proactive. In my view, the current government led by this Prime Minister is a government that is much more proactive and that can deal with this type of situation.

**Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry—Soulanges—Huntingdon, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we have been debating inflation and rising food prices all day. As I said to a Conservative member earlier, this is an interesting and important topic because it is true that individuals and families are having trouble making ends meet.

One thing is bothering me, though. We are not talking about how seniors who receive only old age security and the guaranteed income supplement are losing their buying power.

I do not know if the member is aware, but that adds up to about \$1,700 a month. How can any senior survive on that? How can they cover rent, food—which has gone up so much because of inflation—and medication on \$1,700 a month? Many of these peo-

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ple were not blessed with private insurance plans or a collective agreement that included a private pension plan.

Does the member agree that it is time to increase old age security for—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (John Nater):** I have to give the hon. member a little time to answer.

The hon. member for Bourassa.

**Abdelhaq Sari:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that very relevant question.

Am I aware of the situation? Yes, I am. In my riding, Bourassa, between 25% and 30% of the population is seniors. I think that is a very important point. Inflation has had a much bigger impact on seniors. I am sure of that, and I could not agree more with my colleague.

Now, should we increase OAS or should we try to lower prices? I will let the Minister of Finance present his solid budget. I hope it will take seniors into consideration. I completely agree with my colleague.

• (1725)

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear my colleague talk about the importance of agriculture in his speech.

In my riding, Madawaska—Restigouche, there are vegetable farms, as well as farmers who grow potatoes in the Grand Falls area, and poultry farms in Upper Madawaska.

I would like my colleague to talk about the importance of the measures we have taken to save agriculture, not only in rural ridings like mine, but across the entire country.

**Abdelhaq Sari:** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, many programs have been mentioned.

I would like to thank my colleague for giving me another opportunity to talk about the programs we want to implement. While we do need to help farmers and recognize the importance of farmers and agri-food, I think it is very important to look at the end of the supply chain. We must ensure that food produced in Canada reaches Canadian tables at an affordable price.

I think this government has a much more systemic overall view, which is very important and will enable us to address this issue seriously. This will allow us to help our farmers and, at the same time, ensure that Canadians have access to food at truly affordable prices.

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**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today we are debating a motion that, under the guise of legitimate concerns about the cost of living and food security, unfortunately proposes a vision that I would describe as simplistic and disconnected from Canada's economic and social reality.

This motion ignores the global economic context. It also ignores the tangible, meaningful and responsible efforts our new government is making to make life more affordable, protect families, support workers and build a sustainable future. This is not an abstract debate, but one about the well-being of millions of Canadians who rely on smart, thoughtful, balanced and forward-looking public policies.

In the last election, Canadians chose to elect a Liberal government that has a clear, responsible and ambitious plan to protect and grow our economy. They gave us a clear mandate: to build a stronger, more resilient economy.

In response to concerns about the cost of living, our government has taken decisive action by implementing concrete measures to ease the tax burden on Canadians. We have lowered taxes for nearly 22 million people. This means that millions of families now have more money in their pockets, a measure that has a direct impact on their daily lives.

We removed the GST for first-time home buyers. Purchasing a home is one of the most important investments a family will make. By removing the goods and services tax on homes worth up to \$1 million purchased by first-time buyers, we are making it easier for many families to buy a home and helping them build their future. We also got rid of the consumer carbon tax, again demonstrating our commitment to reducing its direct cost to households.

These concrete, practical measures clearly demonstrate that our government is paying attention to Canadian families and taking action to improve their daily lives. The Conservatives, on the other hand, have consistently voted against measures designed to make life more affordable, whether in terms of expanding dental care, pharmacare or historic child care funding agreements.

The Liberals introduced affordable child care. Since 2021, more than 900,000 children have benefited from quality child care services. On average, this saves families thousands of dollars a year. By protecting and strengthening this program, we are enabling many parents, especially mothers, to balance work and family life, thereby strengthening the workforce and the national economy. Our Conservative colleagues voted against that. We know that when families are strong, the economy is strong, and we are making Canada strong.

The Liberals also introduced the Canada child benefit, which helps families provide for their children. Since its introduction in 2016, nearly 650,000 children have been lifted out of poverty. For example, more than \$40 million per year is paid out to families in my riding of Madawaska—Restigouche.

In addition, we have expanded eligibility for the Canadian dental care plan to all age groups in order to help families cope with the cost of living. Now, approximately 8 million Canadians can benefit from affordable dental care, saving them an average of more

than \$800 per year. This is another meaningful step forward in improving the health and well-being of our constituents.

We cannot talk about affordability without talking about food security. Our government has implemented concrete programs to combat food insecurity. For example, we invested \$1 billion over five years in a national school food program that will help another 400,000 children get nutritious meals at school. This program ensures that children do not have to get through their school day on an empty stomach.

We have reached agreements with every province and territory. For example, in my home province of New Brunswick, we will invest over \$11 million to expand access to school meal programs, which will help more than 57,000 additional children.

The official opposition leader has been against school meals since day one, just like he is against affordable child care. Cynically, he says that the school food program is being used to feed bureaucracy instead of children, but we can confidently say that hundreds of thousands of children are benefiting from healthy meals at school.

Because we recognize the critical importance of food security, we will also be introducing more measures in the coming months. We are going to invest in greenhouses. Hydroponics and other agricultural activities in a controlled environment enable us to grow more types of food here in Canada.

● (1730)

We are going to improve the resilience of food supply chains and support innovation. We are going to change the mandates of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency to ensure that food safety and the cost of food factor into all of their regulatory decisions, without compromising health and safety.

We are also determined to maintain Canada's commitment to supply management and the sectors it covers, including dairy, poultry and eggs. This system protects Canadian jobs and ensures the stability of our food supply in the face of fluctuating production costs, while guaranteeing farmers a minimum price for their products. The supply management system is especially important in my riding, where poultry farms play a critical role in Upper Madawaska's economy. As a matter of fact, I represent Saint-François-de-Madawaska in the House; it is known as the chicken capital.

Contrary to what the motion suggests, our government takes its fiscal responsibility very seriously. We have been very clear that our new government is focused on fiscal discipline. Over the next three years, we will balance operating expenses while reducing the debt-to-GDP ratio. Canada maintains a AAA credit rating, an international rating that reflects investor confidence in our economy. This confidence is crucial to attracting the investments needed for our growth.

Our approach is based on a comprehensive review of departmental spending to eliminate inefficiencies and duplication, while maintaining transfers to provinces and individuals. This responsible management aims to reduce day-to-day operating expenses, while investing more in the priorities that will build the economy of tomorrow.

Budget 2025, which we will present on November 4, embodies this clear vision. Our aim is to transform our economy through ambitious investments, but also through rigorous discipline. This budget will support affordable housing, modern infrastructure, government modernization and public-private partnerships to catalyze significant investments.

With this budget, we will address the real concerns of Canadians. For example, this summer, many citizens and municipal officials from across my riding told me about the housing needs in their communities. We have heard that message. Thanks to our new government's ambitious housing plan, which will be delivered through "build Canada homes", housing starts will accelerate across the country, leveraging Canadian technology, Canadian workers and Canadian softwood lumber.

Our objective is clear: to build the strongest economy in the G7, to ensure the prosperity of Canadians and to protect our planet. On that note, I would also like to remind my opposition colleagues that fighting climate change is not only a moral imperative, but also an economic imperative. Global demand for low-carbon technologies, sustainable resources and climate-resilient infrastructure is growing rapidly. Canadian businesses are already leading the way on implementing these solutions. By incorporating climate considerations into our economic planning, we drive innovation, open new markets and position Canadian businesses as global leaders. This is how we secure a sustainable future for our children while seizing new economic opportunities.

Our government has made courageous and responsible decisions that balance the urgency of making life more affordable against the need to prepare for a sustainable future. We have lowered taxes for the middle class, supported families, strengthened food security, and we are investing in innovation. I am proud of our new government. It understands the importance of a strong economy to make life more affordable and it is guided by the principle that the economy can only be strong if it works for everyone.

Canada elected us to build a stronger country, and that is exactly what we will do.

• (1735)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès):** Questions and comments.

### *Business of Supply*

I will do the member the honour of attempting to pronounce the name of his constituency correctly. The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk.

**Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent—Akiawenhrahk, CPC):** Madam Speaker, Akiawenhrahk is the Wendat word for "river". It represents Wendake and the Wendats who live in Wendake. This river flows through the entire constituency. The Wendats live not only on what was once known as the reserve; they live throughout the Quebec City region, throughout Quebec, throughout Canada and throughout America. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share that.

I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. I will remember the fact that he lives in the chicken capital. Now I know. My colleague praised what he considers to be the merits of the current government. The reality is that over the past 10 years, under the Liberals, food prices have risen by 40%. However, since the Prime Minister took office six months ago, prices in Canada have risen 50% faster than in the United States.

How does he explain that Canadians are paying more than Americans, when, according to him, everything is going great in Canada?

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that I do not live in Saint-François-de-Madawaska, but I do represent Saint-François-de-Madawaska in the House; it is known as the chicken capital because of its large poultry industry.

To come back to my colleague's question, we were elected with a clear mandate: to make life more affordable for Canadians and to strengthen our economy. These two things go hand in hand, because a strong economy allows us to fund measures to make life more affordable.

Unfortunately, these are measures that the Conservatives have often opposed. I am thinking of the votes against the Canada dental care plan, affordable child care, and against the national school food program, which ensures that children have food in their belly in the classroom. For our part, we understand the importance of these measures. We support them, and we are working to build a strong economy so that we can maintain these measures and keep life affordable for the entire population.

**Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Lis-tuguj, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I salute my colleague, who represents a neighbouring riding. Between us lies the magnificent Chaleur Bay.

We have something else in common. Our ridings have aging populations. Seniors are particularly vulnerable to financial insecurity. Many of them cannot increase their income, so the rising cost of living is hitting them hard. They are having to make virtually impossible choices.

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The Bloc Québécois wants to increase old age security for seniors aged 65 to 74. Doing so would cost \$3 billion a year. It is a meaningful way to help seniors. What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Madam Speaker, I am glad my colleague mentioned Chaleur Bay, which is hosting the Most Beautiful Bays in the World conference this week. I am so excited to attend the conference when I get back to my riding tomorrow.

Getting back to the question, we understand the importance of maintaining an affordable cost of living and helping our seniors. That is why, a few years ago, we increased old age security for seniors aged 75 and over. We have also implemented other measures to make life more affordable, such as expanding access to the Canadian dental care plan, a measure that saves people hundreds of dollars a year.

[English]

**Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, welcome back.

According to CBC, 33% of food bank users in my colleague's province are children. There were over two million visits to food banks in March 2024. This is due to the high cost of living. The Liberals can talk about their wonderful plans. They can talk about how they are supporting children at schools, and their dental plans.

Why is this number so ridiculously high with all the plans they have in place, which have not helped the population of New Brunswick?

• (1740)

[Translation]

**Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault:** Madam Speaker, I would like to point out how interesting it is that my colleague mentioned the CBC, our national broadcaster, which provides high-quality information.

Food security is a priority for us. That is why we are taking real action. The national school food program comes to mind. If this is such an important issue for my colleague, why did her party vote against this program?

I hope the opposition parties will also work with us to implement the various other measures we plan to take on food security, such as our investments in greenhouses, hydroponics and other food crops in Canada.

[English]

**Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon South, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford.

I was pleased to second this Conservative opposition day motion, because six months ago, the Prime Minister told Canadians to judge him by the costs at the grocery store. In the last six months, Canadians have looked at the price of grocery store items. We will go through that in just a moment.

I rise to speak out today on behalf of all the Canadians we represent. They are experiencing extreme hardship as a result of the failed Liberal policies of the last 10 years. The Liberals say they are

a new government, but they are not. It is the same government that came in in 2015. The Liberal government is not hearing the general public. The Liberals are telling Canadians, as we have heard all day, that they have never had it so good.

Poverty and food insecurity in this country have risen almost 40% in the last two years. The reality is very grim. If members have ever had the opportunity to visit a local grocery store to put food on the table for their family, it is a road show. I watch families when I am there. They stop, and the first thing they look for is specials, the second thing they look for is 50%-off items and the third thing they look for is expired items because they have been reduced. I sit and watch people in our grocery stores in Saskatoon, where I am from. It is amazing to watch them. I am really worried, and I fear for parents. Do they have enough money at the end of the month to put a decent meal on the table?

Food inflation, as we all know, is 70% above the Bank of Canada's target. Food prices are up 40% since the Liberals took office 10 years ago. The Prime Minister told Canadians that they could measure his performance by the prices at the grocery store. That is why we have this opposition day motion.

The horror show at the grocery store is the meat department. When people go through the meat department, they stop and ask whether they can afford a roast. They open the freezer and then shut the freezer. Why? It is because they cannot afford the price of beef. It is up 33%. I have seen it in grocery stores from coast to coast.

We have heard the numbers, but just let them sink in. If someone puts a stew in their crockpot today, they will have to pay between 11% and 33% more just for the ingredients in that crockpot. Normally, it would be a lesser grade of beef going into the crockpot, but that still makes it 11% to 33% more.

I have watched shoppers all over at our grocery stores. I just mentioned the meat, and they obviously cannot afford it. The items we put in our cart at the grocery store are up across the board, from 9% to 33%.

Saskatchewan, the province I am honoured to call home, has long been called the world's food basket. Saskatchewan feeds not only this country but the world. I am going to give a shout-out. The harvest in my province is 68% complete right now, so many families are still in the fields. We wish them a very safe and prosperous harvest season. We still have over 30% to be put into the bin. We wish them all the best.

Farmers are struggling more than ever just to produce the food we need not only in this country but around the world. The total net farm income decreased by \$5.2 billion in 2024. That is over 40% from the year before. In Saskatchewan, it is down 36.1%. How can we expect farmers to survive and then thrive with a third of their income gone in the last two years? Stats Canada reports that the realized net income for Canadian farmers fell by \$3.3 billion, or 25%, to \$9.4 billion just in 2024. There are many reasons for that, and we will get into them.

● (1745)

My wife, Ann, and I were honoured this August when we were asked to come to a Hutterite colony in Saskatchewan. I will not name it, but it was in southern Saskatchewan. I have many friends in the Hutterite community, and I see them a lot in Saskatoon, but this is the first time I have ever stepped foot in a Hutterite colony. We went for a long period, for a whole day. It was really interesting, and we enjoyed the experience. I certainly learned a lot.

Farming is changing. It is undergoing huge changes. The colony has to diversify now. It raises chicks and exports them to Lilydale in Wynyard, Saskatchewan. Every 37 days, the chickens are exported to Wynyard, the barns are cleaned and then this process starts all over again. I should add that everything in that facility is automated, from the water to the feed. By the way, the colony in Saskatchewan even produces its own feed because it is a lot cheaper. It is a great way to farm and produce food for all those in Saskatchewan. Also, Costco takes all the colony's chickens in western Canada.

However, the colony has had to diversify. It is now into steel because the prices of grain and canola have come down. When I sat to eat with the colony members, they told me that they felt farming is simply too risky today. There is the price of land and rent prices, as well as the weather and insurance costs. Right now, the colony is renting nine combines, which are changed out every two years. They cannot afford to buy the nine combines, but they can afford the lease every two years.

Liberal policies have had a major effect on this colony in Saskatchewan. I thought I would mention that, because we often drive by these colonies in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. They look big and nice and are this and that, but they too are under pressure because of the Liberal policies.

Let us now talk about the food bank in Saskatoon, which is the city I live in. I just told the House that my province is world-leading when it comes to food production, yet we saw a staggering 25% usage in 2024. We feed the world, yet the food bank in Saskatoon saw a staggering 25% increase because of these policies, with 43% of the people relying on the food bank being children. This reflects Saskatoon's high child poverty rate.

The executive director, Laurie O'Connor, said that they are seeing 23,000 visits to the food bank monthly in Saskatoon, for about 8,000 hampers. More middle-class-income families are making their way to the food bank in Saskatoon, which is causing more demand. It is also being used by seniors and students. Students are back at the university, at Saskatchewan Polytechnic, and they too are making their way to the food bank now. They simply cannot afford everyday living costs.

### *Business of Supply*

Almost all grocery stores in our province have a bin at the door for food donations, which are given back to each community's food bank. The 23,000 visitors per month is an all-time high. I have volunteered for the food bank in the city I live in, and I never would have expected in my life for 23,000 people to come through the door of the Saskatoon food bank.

I hope that the Prime Minister is listening to this today. Michael Kincade is the Food Banks of Saskatchewan executive director. He summed things up beautifully when he said, "By the time somebody goes to use a food bank [in my province], they've already starved." We should think about that.

● (1750)

**John-Paul Danko (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is fascinating to listen to speech after speech of regurgitated ChatGPT prompts and a list of recycled catchphrases.

It is time to cut the crap. The Leader of the Opposition is now a pretend westerner. I suppose he is now a pretend farmer. How was the Leader of the Opposition measured by the voters in his own riding? He was fired by his own constituents.

Would the opposition not be better served by a leader who has actually worked in a real job? Would the opposition not be better served by a leader who actually supports real solutions for Canadians?

**Kevin Waugh:** Madam Speaker, is that not disgusting? The gentleman comes from Hamilton, the home of steel in this country. Unemployment is running rampant in his community. I mentioned in the first line of my speech that I was rising today to talk about the extreme hardship in this country. The member bowled ahead and asked a question about my leader's running in Alberta. That does not matter. He has been elected. He represents the Conservative Party in Canada. He is the Leader of the Opposition. He makes many speeches in the House of Commons.

The member should be ashamed tonight with respect to the people of Hamilton, because many of them have been laid off in the last month. We ask him and the Liberal Party what they have done for the steel industry.

[Translation]

**Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I too come from a rural riding. Shefford has many rural areas.

One economic factor that has not been discussed much here today, but which may have an impact on inflation, is labour.

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This summer, in July, business owners from the Eastern Townships invited me to lunch to talk about their situation and the financial pressure caused by the issue of foreign workers and its impact. They need this labour force for their production, so it will ultimately have an effect on inflation.

In August, I met Marie-Ève from Mont-Rouge farms. I tip my hat to her. She also told me about the importance of foreign workers and how essential they are to the workforce. Labour shortages are bound to have an impact on prices.

I would like my colleague's thoughts on this topic we have not discussed much today, namely the impact of labour on inflation and rising prices.

[English]

**Kevin Waugh:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member from the Bloc brought up a very good point. On this side of the House, we have already talked about temporary foreign workers. We have excluded them from agriculture. We know that food is valuable in this country. We need workers. We have only 68% of the harvest in the bin in my province.

Let me say one thing, though. An MP from Ontario came to Saskatchewan this summer. He peeked out the window as the plane was landing in Saskatchewan, and he asked, "What's all that yellow thing over there? All the fields are yellow." Can members guess what it was? It was canola. Who invented canola? Who researched canola? It was the province of Saskatchewan, and we will even drag Manitoba in as well.

Today, when the tariffs are high and the price is going down, we have had little or no support from the Liberal government over the tariffs caused by China and the EVs in this country.

• (1755)

**Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I just want to share with my colleague that he did a great job of describing the amazing work that happens in Saskatchewan, where we value our land and the environment.

However, across the floor, the previous speaker made a comment. I wrote it down, as I could not believe it. He said that the Liberals are pleased to be able to relieve parents of the pressure to feed their children by having the national food program in our schools. To suggest in any way that it will relieve the pressure on parents who cannot afford to feed their children because of the policies of the government is beyond the pale.

I would like to know what my colleague has to say about that.

**Kevin Waugh:** Madam Speaker, that is interesting. I was a school board trustee for 10 years in Saskatchewan, as well as a member of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. In our city we have a program called CHEP, which feeds inner-city kids. It has been going for decades.

Then the federal government came along and said it wanted to start a national food program. Can members guess what has happened? Bureaucracy comes first. When we started the food program, it was because there was a need in the inner city. As a result of the government's programs and bad policies over the last 10

years, now the food program has to come to the suburban city of Saskatoon because nobody can afford to eat.

**Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford, CPC):** Madam Speaker, at some point, the government has to give. Canadians simply cannot continue at this pace. The Prime Minister himself said Canadians should judge him by the cost of groceries. By that standard, he is already failing. Food prices are up 40% since the Liberals took power, and food inflation is now 70% above the Bank of Canada's targets.

Thinking about the debate today, and what I have heard from both sides, at the outset of my speech I want to recognize a lot of the people who work at food banks, in social services, the volunteers at churches and gurdwaras in my riding, who do so much to make up for our poor economy. They do so much selfless service to help new immigrant families, struggling single mothers, and children who need support above and beyond what their parents can give them, in many cases through no fault of their own.

Despite our partisanship here, I do not think we should lose sight of the key fact that something has to change. The government has to do something different because the statistics that I am going to share, that many other people have shared, are moving in the wrong direction right now. Across Canada, families are being crushed by the cost of living crisis. Families are spending \$800 more on groceries in 2025 than they were in 2024. That is like, for many, an entire month of the Canada child benefit that they had the previous year that is now just being used for groceries.

It is a real hit to the pocketbooks of so many people. That is why Canadians are turning to food banks in record numbers. There are over two million visits every single month, up 90% across Canada since 2019 and up 81% in British Columbia on average since that time. Daily Bread projects four million visits in 2025, and 25% of Canadian households are food insecure. That is up from 18% in 2023.

The federal election was not too long ago, and we all had those experiences on the doorstep when we met with struggling parents and struggling families who are simply doing everything they can to get by, but things do not seem to be working in their favour. That is, in fact, why the hon. leader of the official opposition wanted us to talk about food today, because it is out of reach for more people than it should be.

In my own riding, the situation is overwhelming. Abbotsford's Archway food bank serves 6,000 clients a month, nearly double from three years ago. In Mission, a survey found 26% of households rely on assistance monthly or for most months. At St. Joseph's Food Bank in Mission, volunteers are stretched thin as new needs grow every single week.

I will say that I am part of St. Joseph's church, where the food bank is, and the lines are horrible. We see the lineups on the days they allot food, and it is sad to see. It is really sad to see in a country as rich and prosperous as Canada that my church, the gurdwaras and many other churches in Mission—Matsqui—Abbotsford have to do so much when people were able to take care of themselves before, no matter their background, where they came from or how long they had been in Canada; it was just easier. To the government members on the opposite bench, please recognize that. It was not like this before, and it does not have to be like this again.

The government must make those hard choices to lower taxes and make a measurable difference in the lives of Canadians. We want to support policies that will reduce the overall tax burden to give more purchasing power to Canadian families. Those members heard the same stories I heard on the doorstep.

The budget is upcoming. We need to be very careful with this budget. Yes, we are facing international pressures, but we all need to eat and to be able to afford a nutritious meal, and our children deserve those nutritious meals. The budget needs to reflect that in the coming weeks.

● (1800)

We did not speak enough about farmers today. When we talk about food taxation, it can come in many different forms, from all levels of government. I live in British Columbia, and we have the Agricultural Land Reserve. It is something I support a lot. It was put in place over 50 years ago to ensure that our key agricultural lands are protected for food production. However, when we take municipal government, the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission, different federal regulations on emissions, such as those on the natural gas that heats our greenhouses, and provincial rules as well, it is very hard to build the facilities we need to increase food production.

I went to Windset Farms in Delta, a company that started in Abbotsford. I spoke to the president of Windset Farms, one of the largest conglomerate marketers of hothouse tomatoes in British Columbia, and he said that it took almost a decade to get a new facility expanded. This facility is creating a world-class suite of tomatoes and other vegetable products, which fly off the shelves in our grocery stores and that Canadians all across western Canada rely on, yet the government allowed almost a decade for a facility to be expanded, simply through red tape and various administrative and taxation burdens at all levels of government. If we want to build a stronger, more resilient and autonomous Canada, it needs to start with giving people the ability to buy Canadian goods. Right now, we do not do a good enough job of that.

Just last week, Bimbo Canada, Canadian food grains, is a Mexican company that is one of the largest bakers of bread in Canada. It has a great socially responsible story to tell. One of the great stories of Canada's free trade agreement with Mexico is seeing Bimbo's

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presence in Canada and it making investments. A representative talked to me about the plastics registry and the undue burden that the plastics registry has put on businesses like theirs. What does that lead to? It leads to more administrative costs. That leads to higher overall costs for Canada. If the company did not have the economies of scale that it does, it would be hard to even make further investments in Canada. Today, I met with another representative of a company that is not in the food industry but who talked about how burdensome the plastics registration policies of the government are.

In conclusion, Conservatives believe it does not have to be this way. The motion before us calls upon the government to remove some of the biggest barriers to more affordability and more ability for Canadians to take care of themselves and live their very best lives. We need to continue speaking about the cost of food in this chamber and we need to, in good faith, put forward policies that would give Canadians the ability to take care of themselves once again. The school food program will not do that. No government program will do that. It has to be done by broad economic policies that impact everyone equally, and that involves reducing the overall tax burden, the regulatory burden and the infrastructure burden to build the facilities and farm the land that we need to make sure that we can live our very best lives.

● (1805)

**Tom Osborne (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, first of all, let me commend the member opposite. I actually enjoyed his comments. There are fewer than 350 of us here. When I was in the provincial legislature in Newfoundland and Labrador, I always said, as minister, if somebody asked me a real question, they would get a real answer, and if they asked me a political question, they would get a political answer. The member's speech was a real speech. The member talked about the issues. We may agree or not agree regarding the issues, but the member spoke to the issues and he spoke with heart. I wanted to commend the member on his speech.

In fairness to the Prime Minister, we have to give him time. We have been here as a government for under six months. The motion of the wave of what is happening is not only happening in Canada. It is happening in other countries as well. We see inflation and the cost of living going up in several countries around the world. I have not been there since last year, but last year I was in Florida, and the price of groceries in Florida, for example, has gone up exponentially.

I say to give the Prime Minister a chance. The budget is coming on November 4. Let us see what is in there.

**Brad Vis:** Madam Speaker, this is the first time the member from Newfoundland and I are debating in this parliamentary session. I appreciate his comments in good faith.

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The Prime Minister set the stage for urgency, and I believe that urgency needs to be applied to food production and food sovereignty in Canada. There are many things available for the federal government to do right now that I do hope, in good faith, are included in the budget, because Canadians need relief. Canadians are suffering, and I do not think the member understands that any less than I do. I hope we see policies in place to reduce the overall tax burden on Canadian families to give them more purchasing power first and foremost.

[Translation]

**Patrick Bonin (Repentigny, BQ):** Madam Speaker, it is simple. If we really want to tackle high food prices, we need to tackle the real causes. The main cause in North America, the main factor driving up prices, is climate disruption, droughts, floods and crop losses. We are having problems again this year.

We are now witnessing a competition between the Conservatives and the Liberals over which one is the more pro-oil and pro-gas. I have heard not one single proposal or measure about fighting climate change and adapting to it.

Can my colleague tell me a single measure that the Conservatives support?

[English]

**Brad Vis:** Madam Speaker, as a member of Parliament, I have experienced more disasters and more impacts from climate change than any other member. In 2021, my community of Abbotsford was hit with a 33-day flood that wiped out the most productive agricultural land in all of Canada.

One measure to combat climate change that I was advocating with government ministers today is to give British Columbia the infrastructure to adapt to a changing climate so we can continue to produce high-quality food in the Fraser Valley and not be fearful of the effects of climate change and other natural disasters. That is the number one thing we need to do. Canada is a big country. We have the largest boreal forest in the world. We sequester a lot of carbon, but we need the infrastructure in place because the climate is changing, in Abbotsford probably more than anywhere else in the country right now.

• (1810)

**Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC):** Madam Speaker, growing up, my mother had to use the food bank, and that was when Trudeau senior was in power. Her fortunes did not change until we had a Mulroney government.

Any time we ask the question about food bank usage, the members opposite always come up with what they are doing in schools. What is more important: that parents are able to feed their children or that schools are able to feed our children?

**Brad Vis:** Madam Speaker, my number one responsibility as a parent is to feed my kids. It is not the responsibility of the government nor of anybody else but me right here.

We have to take care of our family, and it is sad in Canada today that some parents cannot do that. The school food program, though, will not address that. It has to come through economic policies that

give everyone a level chance to live their best life and to take care of their children.

**Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am really pleased to have this time today to respond to our question about why the Prime Minister would say that we are to judge him by the cost of food in grocery stores. We heard nothing tonight about why he has failed to impact that cost for Canadians.

I want to focus on agriculture. Agriculture is huge in my area, and I had a call yesterday from a farmer. We played phone tag all day because there is a two-hour difference. He was out on the field and I was doing my thing. Finally, later in the evening we connected, and he said he was out in the combine; he was still combining. His crop is canola, and he said things were pretty good and that he could make it, but there is a thing called Chinese tariffs on canola, peas, fish, seafood and pork in Canada, and they have caused the price of his product to drop to where it is not what he needs to cover the cost to move forward with his farming into the next season.

The farmer said that he needed to buy his fall fertilizer, but the government has made buying fertilizer more difficult. There are tariffs on the fertilizer he needs for the next season, and he said that he was sitting there wondering whether he should purchase it knowing that he will probably not have the amount of money he needs for inputs and knowing that, if he did, he would have no guarantees. He was sitting there wondering what he is supposed to do.

As a farmer, I can tell members that what they heard tonight about farmers is true. They are resilient. They are creative. They are innovative. They are the reason we have zero tillage and have had it for over three decades while the rest of the world is just figuring it out. That farmer's circumstances are bad, and what did the government say it would do to help in light of the tariffs from our own nation and from China? It is going to give him a loan.

More debt is not what our farmers need. What farmers need is for the government to not continue to penalize them in every way possible, whether it is with increased tariffs or telling them they have to use less fertilizer. By the way, the government wants farmers to have higher yields so they can feed the world and help out with additives to gasoline. We have departments challenging each other's purposes, and our farmers are stuck in the middle.



I really felt for that farmer. He is facing productivity challenges that he should never have to face, beyond the weather and all the other challenges our farmers face, from his own government. He is calling on the government to please stop interfering with his ability to grow his crops, feed his own family and feed the world. He does not want to face the stresses of a government that brings forward damaging policies.

• (1815)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès):** It being 6:15, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[Translation]

The question is as follows. May I dispense?

**Some hon. members:** No.

[Chair read text of motion to House]

[English]

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.

**Harb Gill:** Madam Speaker, I ask for a recorded division, please.

[Translation]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 1, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[English]

**Hon. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent at this point to call it 6:30 p.m. so that we can get to the late show.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Andrew Lawton (Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to rise in this chamber not long ago and ask the Minister of Public Safety about the scourge of crime on streets in my own community back home and across the country. So much of this problem of rampant criminality is a direct consequence of Liberal government catch-and-release bail policies. These policies put repeat, often violent, offenders back on the streets, sometimes hours after they were arrested and charged and then released.

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Police officers have been incredibly frustrated by this. We have been calling for action, as have provinces, municipalities, police agencies, victims' rights groups and businesses. Everyone has been calling for the government to act. The government has continued to allude to some sort of bail reform the members say is coming, but they have been shockingly scant on any of the details of what that bail reform will entail and, more importantly, whether it will involve repealing the principle of restraint. That is the section of the Criminal Code the Liberal bail law, Bill C-75, put in place compelling judges to release offenders under the least onerous conditions and at the earliest possible opportunity.

For all the systematic issues that we have been flagging as a party, that Canadians have been flagging, such as violent offenders being released and people being arrested for serious offences while out on bail, the case has been made. We can draw a direct line between this and the principle of restraint in Bill C-75. This is important because I asked the Minister of Public Safety about it, using an example from St. Thomas, Ontario, of a repeat offender, a homeless man, who was released on bail with the condition that he be home by 10 p.m., despite not having a home. This is an impossible bail condition that the police have no ability to enforce.

That matters because the public safety minister's representative, the Secretary of State for Combatting Crime, had the audacity to say that the government is "tough on crime". She said that with a straight face, that the government is tough on crime, the government that has been the only stakeholder in the country not to acknowledge the bail crisis. When we have NDP leaders, Conservative leaders, provincial Liberal leaders who have broken ranks with their feckless, easy-on-crime and easy-on-criminals, hug-a-thug federal counterparts across the aisle here, they have all been in agreement that this is not a tough-on-crime government. This is instead a government that is tough on victims, a government that puts the rights of offenders above the rights of victims.

We get a strong sense of what the government has prioritized, despite claiming some bail legislation is coming at some point, maybe after the budget. Who knows? This is a government that has found it high enough on its agenda to propose a ban on large cash transactions. It has decided that banning people from buying a used car worth more than \$10,000 is more important than bail reform. It has decided that confiscating firearms from law-abiding gun owners is more important than bail. It has announced it is going full steam ahead on that despite the public safety minister, not knowing he was being recorded, actually defending our arguments about this program's uselessness.

My question for the government is, how dare it claim to be tough on crime when it has been ignoring the pleas from virtually everyone else in the country to get serious about bail reform, to do it urgently, to do it imminently and, once and for all, to put the rights of victims first?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

• (1820)

[Translation]

**Jacques Ramsay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the hon. member for Elgin—St. Thomas—London South, even though he is comparing apples to oranges. He is all over the map.

Let me begin by acknowledging the legitimate frustration many Canadians feel when they hear stories about repeat offenders being released on bail. These cases raise serious questions about the balance between public safety and individual rights, but we must be careful not to confuse symptoms with causes.

The example that was mentioned, of a homeless person released on bail with a curfew, does not demonstrate that a law was poorly drafted. Indeed, current law, as set out in the Criminal Code and confirmed by the Supreme Court, specifies that release conditions must be reasonable and appropriate. In this case, the court found that imposing a curfew on a homeless person was, at the very least, imprudent and unrealistic. When the law is clear, it is not up to Parliament to amend it; it is up to the courts to guide those who make the decisions on the ground.

To be clear, protecting the safety and security of Canadians demands collaboration from all levels of government. Our government is moving forward with ambitious reforms to the Criminal Code, but the provinces must also do their part. Too many of their courts and prisons are underfunded or overcrowded. The fact is, most bail determinations are made by justices of the peace, who are appointed by the provinces, not by Ottawa. Provincial prosecutors, who can and must challenge overly lenient decisions, are overwhelmed and under-resourced. Police and prosecutors need adequate support from the provinces to keep dangerous offenders behind bars.

At the federal level, our government has already taken action. In 2023, we introduced Bill C-48 to tighten the rules for violent repeat offenders and those who use weapons, while strengthening protection for victims of intimate partner violence. These reforms were unanimously supported by every province and territory, including those with Conservative governments. That is federal leadership in action: bringing Canadians together and finding solutions that work.

We will do more. This fall, we will introduce legislation to make bail and sentencing rules even stricter, especially for organized crime, auto theft and human trafficking.

Unlike the opposition, we do not believe in empty slogans, like the “three strikes and you’re out” rule. This rhetoric, aimed at scoring political points, solves nothing. It has failed everywhere it was put to the test in the United States. Even the Conservatives seem to have learned that lesson after losing the last election. In fact, despite campaigning on it, they did not even include the proposal in their bail legislation, Bill C-242. I offer the member the opportunity to rise and clearly tell Canadians that he was wrong and that this proposal was in fact absurd.

Our Liberal government is committed to building a system that protects communities and addresses the causes of recidivism. For

that, stronger laws are required. Investments in mental health, addiction treatment and community programs are also required. We will do our part, and we hope that the provinces will do theirs.

• (1825)

[English]

**Andrew Lawton:** Madam Speaker, it is very important to talk about the causes of recidivism, notably the largest cause, which is the Liberal government and the bail laws that have allowed this to run so rampant.

No more than two hours ago, I heard from a police witness at the justice committee who said Bill C-48 did nothing to improve public safety. The government likes to lean on its record while ignoring the consequences of its record, according to the experts tasked with enforcing and upholding the law.

I came with solutions. I am proud to support the bill from the hon. member for Oxford, the Conservatives' jail not bail bill, and I hope the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety will do so as well instead of obstructing the real solutions that are before the House right now.

It is disgraceful that when confronted with the evidence, the parliamentary secretary and his Liberal colleagues do the same thing every time, which is to say it is someone else's fault and point their fingers at the provinces instead of looking in the mirror. When will they stop doing that?

[Translation]

**Jacques Ramsay:** Madam Speaker, let me be clear. The federal government is committed to introducing legislation to strengthen the bail system in order to combat violent and organized crime. If someone is released on bail and has nowhere to go, that is not a failure of federal law. It is a failure of those who administer the justice system, and that is a provincial responsibility. It also means that provinces and territories must invest in mental health and addiction supports as well as supervision programs to make bail conditions enforceable and meaningful.

With regard to the Conservative proposal of a “three strikes” law, I note that the member did not take responsibility for the Conservatives' about-face. That said, Canadians will sleep better tonight knowing that the Conservatives, who had promised this approach, ultimately reneged on it by not including it in their Bill C-242—

[English]

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

PUBLIC SAFETY

**Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am here tonight to follow up on a question that I asked the Minister of Justice back in June:

...violent crime has risen 32% since the Liberals formed government in 2015.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

This is a fact across all of Canada, including in my riding where I am reading local headlines, titled “Arrested again” for “participation in a criminal organization”, “Failure to comply with a probation order”, “Eleven counts of knowledge of possession of a firearm while prohibited”, “Two counts of disobeying a court order” and “Two counts of breach of a weapons prohibition”.

...When will they repeal their soft-on-crime policies?

I am sorry. That was a question I asked the government in 2022.

Let me get to the right question. I asked this of the government:

...[the government] talked about and highlighted the need for our current bail system to be improved. Changes need to happen.

I have just two simple questions for [the government]. Does [the government] agree this is an urgent problem? How much time is realistic to address this urgent problem and make necessary changes to our bail system in Canada?

Here is the answer I got from the government:

No one piece of legislation is going to fix the issue of bail reform in our country. As I was trying to say, this is a multi-faceted problem. [The government needs] to engage the provincial, territorial and regional governments, and [it needs] to ensure they have the support they need to administer justice.

Over the past seven years...[the Liberal government has] been slowly putting in place legislation that is helping to improve the bail system and the bail regime in Canada....

My apologies. That was a question I asked in February 2023.

The actual question I asked in June was this:

...crime has been rising in my riding since the Liberals formed government, and justice is too often delayed for victims. According to the latest Owen Sound Police Service's annual report, violent crimes are up 14.6%. My communities are worried. To make matters worse, more than 10% of the cases are now exceeding the Jordan limit, delaying justice further.

When will the Liberal government reverse its soft-on-crime legislation and adopt a common-sense plan to keep violent offenders behind bars and ensure victims and their families get the justice they deserve?

The response I got from the Minister of Justice at the time is that he seemed to think it was all “good news”, that the Liberals were going to advance reform policies to “stiffen bail proceedings” and would “adopt more serious sentences for violent repeat offenders”. He said we could expect this later this calendar year. That answer was not good enough.

This has been an urgent problem, as I have highlighted. I am just one of many Conservative MPs who have been raising this question over the last four years. It is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed.

I followed up with the parliamentary secretary just last week and asked the same question about this “mythical bail reform bill that is going to come out this fall”. I asked whether fall is before December 12 and whether we could nail that down. The parliamentary secretary refused to answer the question. He just said it would be out this fall.

All I am looking for is clarity as to when this fall the government will table this urgently needed bail reform legislation. I just want a time frame, as it takes time to get legislation through the parliamentary system. The track record of the Liberal government is not great for getting legislation right the first time, so I am confident it is going to require amendments and improvements so that it works.

Can the House expect this bail reform tomorrow, next week or before the end of November, or will the government be tabling it on December 12, the last day of the fall session?

● (1830)

[Translation]

**Jacques Ramsay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss the bail system and criminal justice policy. Recent tragic events, marked by violent crimes committed by repeat offenders, are a painful reminder of the impact these acts have on our communities. These situations are unacceptable.

I want to begin by offering my deepest condolences to the families of the victims, including the loved ones of Bailey McCourt in Kelowna and Abdul Aleem Farooqi in Vaughan.

Let us be clear. Our Liberal government is committed to fighting crime and keeping Canadians safe. In our 2025 platform, we promised to tighten bail rules for serious and organized crime, and we will.

Canadians have given us a clear mandate to act, and we will do so, whether it be in relation to car theft, organized crime, home invasions, human trafficking and smuggling. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice have also reiterated this commitment. We will introduce legislation this fall for stricter bail and sentencing measures. I hope my hon. colleague will be satisfied.

As everyone knows, the criminal justice system is a shared jurisdiction with the provinces and territories, which are responsible for administering the criminal justice system across the country. The federal government is working closely with the provinces and territories, including representatives from law enforcement agencies, to address concerns about the bail system and develop effective solutions. These issues will also be central to discussions among ministers in October at the meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for justice and public safety.

Last year, with the former Bill C-48, we tightened the rules for violent repeat offenders and those who use weapons. This bill also strengthened protections for victims of domestic violence. All provinces and territories, including the Conservative ones, unanimously supported these reforms.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

However, we know that there is still work to be done, of course. Our government recognizes the need to continue strengthening the Criminal Code provisions relating to bail. I can say with great confidence that the government continues to listen and make the necessary changes to address the concerns that have been raised.

I do want to point out that it is curious, to say the least, to see the strategy the Conservatives have chosen when it comes to making recommendations for bail reform. The “three strikes and you’re out” motion they put forward last week was absurd. This policy has been a failure everywhere it has been tried. It is an idea that comes straight from the United States. I do not know if the official opposition remembers the last election, which it lost so decisively, but Canadians want made-in-Canada laws.

We agree that action is needed to keep repeat violent offenders off our streets, but this is Canada, not the United States, and the people of La Prairie—Atateken, whom I represent, want to keep it that way.

This fall, we will introduce a bill to improve our bail system, and I call on all parties to set partisanship aside and work with us to deliver the evidence-based solutions that Canadians expect and deserve.

• (1835)

[English]

**Alex Ruff:** Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary failed to answer my question. In fact, he responded with a very similar reply to what I laid out in my earlier speech, which is that we need to work on this and talk about it.

He did provide some greater clarity. He said that they are going to have a meeting with the FPT sometime in October. That tells me just that we are not likely to get an answer to this question or see this bail reform until at least the November time frame. He has given me a slight clarification.

My point is that this is urgent. It is same thing I brought up in 2022 and 2023. We need this bail reform now. I ask the government to please table it so we can work together to make it the best possible bail reform. We need it for Canada and to make Canadians safe.

[Translation]

**Jacques Ramsay:** Madam Speaker, I can hear the urgency in my hon. colleague’s voice. We share his expectations.

However, I would remind him that, in the meantime, Bill C-2 still needs support and has to be passed. Other bills will follow in order, as quickly as the House sees fit. I invite my colleagues on the other side of the House to participate in the work and to co-operate fully.

We have better data on bail releases. We are now in a position to propose measures that will ensure that we can safely keep repeat offenders inside our institutions.

[English]

## PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Madam Speaker, at the beginning of the current Parliament, I stood in this place to call upon the government to give an answer to Canadians

as to why they pay so much and get so little from the Liberal government.

Liberals gave away millions of dollars to GC Strategies, while federal departments could not prove whether there was any work done before authorizing payments. After investigating all of this, the Liberals have yet to get even a penny back from GC Strategies for stealing money from taxpayers, all while they increased their spending plans. The Liberals have spent millions of dollars trying to transform office space into housing, with little success.

In an audit conducted by the Auditor General, there were concerns with the government’s seeming to determine success by commitments rather than achieved outcomes. The government has spent more than \$1 billion on its promise to our allies that we would equip our pilots with a fleet capable of performing in combat, with the Auditor General noting that the increase in cost by 50%, from \$19 billion to \$27.7 billion, does not include at least another \$5.5 billion needed to finish equipping the fighters to be ready for operations. She also reported in her audit that after years of waiting for the contract to procure, the government approved construction on military bases without critical information, which has led to greater delays and cost overruns.

Canadian families know all too well the cost of Liberal inflationary spending. They know it because they pay for it at the grocery store, where prices have gone up 50% faster than in the United States. They know it because far too many people have been priced out of the housing market and are unable to pay their mortgage or afford rent. They see it in every news story that breaks about mismanaged money given to Liberal insiders and high-priced consultants.

There is one taxpayer, and it is hard-working Canadians who are left to pay for all the government’s failures. Canadians have kept up their end of the deal. There have been millions of taxpayer dollars given out to GC Strategies with little to no proof that work was done, millions of dollars spent on transforming office space with few results, and billions of dollars over budget to procure a fleet to arm our military with the tools it needs to keep Canadians safe.

I will reiterate my question from June: Why do Canadians who pay so much receive so little from the Liberal government?

[Translation]

**Jacques Ramsay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying that this new government firmly believes in fairness, openness, and transparency in all aspects of procurement management.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

We are fully aware of past problems with respect to contracts and payments, particularly those made to GC Strategies and its predecessors in connection with previous investigations.

The latest report reveals that many contracts and payments were in violation of the applicable policy framework and that these contracts did not offer good value for money, which is totally unacceptable.

All governments have a responsibility to spend taxpayers' money with a clear commitment to optimizing resources, and the new government will maintain this commitment. It is more important than ever as we embark, as the member so aptly put it, on a series of new, nation-building construction projects. These are projects that will bring us together and transform our economy.

That is why, under the current government, the Minister of Public Works and Procurement had "Government Transformation" added to his title.

We have been moving forward at an unprecedented pace for years as we implement major projects that will unlock Canada's full economic potential and build a strong country. To create the type of country we need today, we have to change the way we work for Canadians, and that means changing the way we procure goods and services to become faster and more efficient.

At the same time, we need to ensure that rules are followed. After numerous investigations and reports related to the development of ArriveCAN, Public Services and Procurement Canada continues to implement measures that strengthen federal procurement, particularly as it relates to the procurement of professional services.

Only this week, the Auditor General of Canada told the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates that she was satisfied with the measures put in place.

As a reminder, these measures include implementing a number of provisions designed to strengthen procurement oversight; beefing up evaluation requirements to ensure that resources are properly qualified for the duties they are expected to perform; requiring greater transparency from suppliers about their prices and the subcontractors they use; and improving our own documentation practices when awarding contracts and authorizing tasks.

I would add that, following a thorough assessment of GC Strategies by the new office of supplier integrity and compliance, the company has been barred from entering into contracts or real property agreements with the Government of Canada for seven years, the most severe penalty.

When it comes to recovering funds, whether it is a case of fraud or simple overcharging, we will take legal action or collaborate with law enforcement agencies.

As stewards of the public purse, we know that government spending must always meet the highest standards of accountability. That is the promise we made to Canadians. They deserve nothing less.

• (1840)

[English]

**Kelly Block:** Madam Speaker, the Auditor General appeared at committee just days ago to speak to the reports that were tabled this past June regarding the government's recent failures. The Auditor General found that, in its efforts to reduce the size of federal lands and transform them into affordable housing, the government is not only measuring success by agreements signed with the promise of completion but also not delivering on its own goal to provide affordable housing to those most in need.

In the case of GC Strategies, federal departments were found to have frequently disregarded policies meant to ensure that work was done and proper security clearances were issued.

These are not isolated incidences, and this is not a new government. We are going to get more of the same. It is a pattern repeated over and over again. Offering to follow the rules again is not going to cut it.

[Translation]

**Jacques Ramsay:** Madam Speaker, our new government is committed to ensuring that federal procurement is open, fair and transparent.

We thank the Auditor General of Canada for undertaking these important studies and for her findings and recommendations. I would remind the hon. member that, just last week, the Auditor General of Canada finally told the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates that she was satisfied with the measures put in place.

We are making great strides as we evaluate our processes and find ways to continue strengthening procurement integrity.

We know we still have a lot more to do, but I can assure the House that we are improving our procurement processes to ensure that rules and procedures are followed and properly documented, without exception.

This is more important than ever as we take decisive action to shift our economy from reliance to resilience and build the major projects that will unlock Canada's full economic potential and build a strong country.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

• (1845)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Alexandra Mendès):** The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopt-

ed. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:45 p.m.)

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