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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 31, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to seven petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

LIAISON

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 107(3), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the liaison committee, entitled “Committee Activities and Expenditures: April 1, 2021 - December 31, 2021”.

This report highlights the work and accomplishments of each committee, as well as detailing the budgets that fund the activities approved by the committee members.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, entitled “Questions of Conflict of Interest and Lobbying in Relation to Pandemic Spending”.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a supplementary opinion to the ethics report that was just filed. I want to thank the committee for all its hard work in making sure that we brought this forward. However, this is just another example, like with the WE scandal, of the litany of scandals that have taken place under the Prime Minister and the government.

The Prime Minister has also been found in conflict of interest a few times. We had the Aga Khan's Bahamas island vacation and the

SNC-Lavalin scandal, which was all about pressuring Jody Wilson-Raybould, the former attorney general, and really disregarded our judicial process.

This resulted in the resignation of Gerald Butts, the principal secretary to the Prime Minister, and Michael Wernick, the former clerk of Privy Council. We also have to remember the “clam scam” with the former minister of fisheries and oceans, as well as Bill Morneau, who was found guilty twice. The first time was for refusing to register the French villas he and his spouse owned, and then, relating to the WE scandal, he had family who worked for WE. His family had personally benefited from vacations provided by WE and the Kielburger brothers.

This really builds upon a government that does not know the difference between right and wrong.

* * *

NATIONAL PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-265, An Act respecting the development of a national perinatal mental health strategy.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce the national perinatal mental health strategy. I would like to thank the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona for seconding this legislation and for her tireless advocacy in support of perinatal mental health.

Perinatal mental illness is a critical issue affecting nearly one in four Canadian families. However, programs and policies across Canada have not kept up with best practices, research or the overarching science. The services currently available to people experiencing a perinatal mental illness are largely inadequate.

This legislation would require the Minister of Health to address this by developing a national strategy to support perinatal mental health across Canada. The strategy includes measures to provide universal access to perinatal mental health screening and effective treatment services, combat stigma, promote awareness, improve training, support research and address the social determinants of perinatal mental health.

I call on all parliamentarians to help women, parents and their families by supporting this vital and overdue initiative.

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

Routine Proceedings

• (1005)

EXCISE ACT

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-266, an Act to amend the Excise Act and the Excise Act, 2001 (adjusted duties - beer, malt liquor, spirits and wine).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce this bill in the House of Commons this morning. I thank the member for Kelowna—Lake Country for seconding my bill.

Tomorrow, the tax on beer, wine and spirits will go up automatically. This bill would repeal the automatic annual tax increase. This ever-increasing tax makes enjoying a beer with friends, or a bottle of wine with dinner, increasingly unaffordable for working Canadians during an inflation crisis, and it makes Canadian producers less able to compete internationally.

Perhaps worst of all is that the automatic escalator denies Parliament its most basic function. If the government wishes to raise taxes, it should be forced to ask Parliament, not just raise them automatically. Therefore, I hope members from all parties will support this bill and restore the power to raise taxes to Parliament, where it belongs.

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

* * *

EXCISE ACT

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-267, an act to amend the Excise Act (non-alcoholic beer).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise here today to introduce my private member's bill that would remove the excise tax on beer with less than 0.5% alcohol.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Windsor West for seconding this bill. Since it is National Indigenous Languages Day, I will say *lim'limpt* to him in the language of the Syilx people of the Okanagan nation.

This bill corrects a curious anomaly in the Excise Act where low-alcohol wine and spirits are not subject to the tax, but low-alcohol beer is. None of Canada's major trading partners have an excise tax on low-alcohol beer. Low-alcohol beer is a healthy and increasingly popular choice, and we should be encouraging rather than discouraging this, as the current tax does.

My hometown of Penticton, British Columbia has been dubbed by Lonely Planet as the craft beer capital of Canada, and I hope that, by fixing this anomaly in the Excise Act, we will help expand the domestic production of low-alcohol beer and give Canadians more choice.

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

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PETITIONS

VACCINE MANDATES

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the petitioners of the petition I am presenting

today call on the government to end the mandates on our public service and the military, and to lift the restrictions on people who want to cross the border.

The petition includes a signature from a soldier who has been in the military 24 years, has served in Kosovo and Bosnia, and completed three tours in Afghanistan, among others. In his 24th year of service, he was thrown out of the military because his cardiologist, after his first shot, recommended that he not take a second.

• (1010)

UKRAINE

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to table a petition on behalf of constituents in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country and surrounding area in response to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to provide additional anti-aircraft, anti-rocket and naval weapons systems to Ukraine immediately; impose a full trade embargo on Russia; continue the removal of Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system; impose further economic sanctions, as deemed feasible and desirable; recall Canadian embassy staff from Russia and Belarus; expel Russian diplomats from Canada; freeze Canadian assets of Russian oligarchs; expedite a program of resettlement for Ukrainian refugees; and support Russians who openly oppose the ongoing conflict, up to and including potential refugee status.

UKRAINE

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition, as my colleague did previously, on the issue of the terrible war that is happening in Ukraine.

This petition was signed by thousands of Canadians and recognizes that the Russian Federation has launched an unprovoked war against the people of Ukraine and that the Russian Federation has committed multiple war crimes against the people of Ukraine. The Russian invasion has triggered a human rights, humanitarian and displacement crisis, the worst such catastrophe in recent European history. As of March 10, 2022, the World Health Organization estimates that at least 18 hospitals have been attacked by Russian forces since the beginning of the invasion.

Given the fact that the Canada is home to 1.4 million citizens of Ukrainian descent and has a deep and unflinching commitment to the people of Ukraine, 80% of Canadians support or could accept the government's decision to allow Ukrainians to stay in Canada permanently.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, freedom of conscience is a fundamental right clearly articulated in section 2 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I have the honour to table petitions signed by hundreds of citizens across Canada calling on Parliament to protect the conscience rights of medical professionals from coercion or intimidation to provide or refer patients for assisted suicide or euthanasia. I thank these Canadians for their engagement on this important issue.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition on behalf of constituents in my riding of Fredericton.

This petition calls on the government to enact just transition legislation. Among other things, the petition calls for Canada to reduce emissions and assist the global south in reducing emissions. It calls for the wind down of the fossil fuel industry and the creation of good green jobs and an inclusive work force.

The petition also calls for the protection of indigenous rights, sovereignty and knowledge by including indigenous peoples in the creation and implementation of a just transition legislation. The petition calls for the transition to be paid for by increasing taxes on the wealthiest incorporations.

CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition on behalf of over 13,500 Canadians.

There was \$342 million spent on testing at our borders, yet the Public Health Agency could not verify 30% of them. Canadians want an end to testing and travel restrictions. I agree with them. It is time to end the COVID theatre and let Canadians travel freely.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 324, 326 to 328 and 330.

[Text]

Question No. 324—**Mr. Tom Kmiec:**

With regard to the government's promise to plant two billion trees by 2030: (a) what is the breakdown of the number of trees planted to date, by riding and by province or territory; (b) what is the total number of trees planted to date; and (c) what is the breakdown of where the two billion trees will be planted by 2030, by riding and by province or territory?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources, with support from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, was mandated to develop and implement a plan to plant two billion trees over 10 years as part of a broader commitment to natural climate solutions.

The program is on track to plant two billion trees over 10 years, resulting in a permanent increase in forest cover in Canada. The program provided funding to plant 30 million trees during the 2021

Routine Proceedings

season, and that number will increase as the government's partners ramp up their activities.

The 2 Billion Trees program is a proposal-based grants and contribution program. Interested and eligible organizations are required to submit project proposals. Expert evaluation panels assess projects to ensure they meet program objectives and co-benefits, including carbon sequestration, biodiversity, habitat restoration and human well-being. Projects must also pass risk and due diligence requirements before they are retained for funding via contribution agreements. As a result, specific tree planting locations will depend on the funding proposals put forward by provinces, territories, indigenous communities and organizations across Canada.

Following a call for expressions of interest in February 2021, the program received 120 applications for early tree planting in 2021. NRCan has finalized most of its funding agreements to support the planting of over 30 million trees across the country, in both urban and rural areas. Many of the projects began planting in spring 2021 and planting continued through the 2021 planting season. NRCan proactively discloses these grants and contributions on Open Canada at <https://search.open.canada.ca/en/gc/>.

These contribution agreements outline planned projects or activities. In the case of the 2 Billion Trees program, the exact number of trees planted are reported by the funding recipients on a quarterly basis and after all of their planting activities have been completed. Program recipients will have 60 days after the end of the fiscal year, March 31, 2022, to provide their final reporting. At that stage, NRCan will consolidate and validate the data and is expected to publicly disclose the results on the 2021 tree planting season in spring 2022.

Question No. 326—**Mr. Arnold Viersen:**

With regard to Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and Canadians detained or incarcerated abroad: (a) how many Canadians were arrested or detained in 2021, on charges GAC considered to be politically motivated, frivolous, or otherwise illegitimate; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by country of arrest or detention; (c) how many Canadians are currently detained or incarcerated on charges GAC considers to be politically motivated, frivolous, or otherwise illegitimate, broken down by country of detention or incarceration; and (d) what is GAC doing to free the Canadians in (c), including the specific actions that have been taken since January 1, 2021, broken down by the action taken related to each country listed in (c)?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following reflects a consolidated response approved on behalf of Global Affairs Canada ministers. On parts (a) to (d) of the question, Canadians travelling and residing abroad are subject to the laws of the country in which they are located, and laws and legal processes differ greatly between countries. Global Affairs Canada provides consular assistance to Canadians abroad and, in situations involving the arrest and detention of a Canadian in a foreign jurisdiction, is committed to advocating for fairness and due process under local law.

Routine Proceedings

Global Affairs Canada is not in a position to provide exact number of such cases and applies the provisions of the Privacy Act when preparing parliamentary returns. In cases where Canadian consular officials have suspicions or concerns regarding the legitimacy of allegations and due process, or the detained individual, or family member or advocate, raises concerns, Canadian officials closely monitor the situation, actively engage with relevant stakeholders and take strategic actions to advocate for the Canadian's rights and interests. Canadian officials could rely on a range of potential interventions which could include actively advocating for fair treatment with the host government, visiting the detained individual more frequently than service standards would require, liaising closely with the individual's legal representative, attending court proceedings and trials, or other actions to closely monitor developments and ensure that Canada's expectations for a fair legal process are well understood. Since each consular case is unique, a tailored approach is often required and consular officials must adapt their interventions to each local context and circumstance.

On February 15, 2021, Global Affairs Canada launched the "Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations" to demonstrate global opposition to the practice of arbitrarily arresting, detaining and sentencing foreign nationals for diplomatic leverage. The declaration aims to protect citizens of all countries who live, work and travel abroad through a concerted commitment to core principles of human rights, consular relations, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary.

The declaration is now endorsed by more than one-third of the world's countries, 67 countries and the EU, and many UN bodies have supported the initiative. Global solidarity works and the impact of the declaration is tangible. International advocacy and the collective efforts of this coalition were instrumental in facilitating the release and return to Canada of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor after 1,020 days in arbitrary detention. It is now clear to countries that practise arbitrary arrest, detention and sentencing that this behaviour will lead to sustained and serious condemnation by the international community. Global Affairs Canada is actively working to expand the broad coalition of states, organizations and civil society supporting this initiative.

Turning words into action, Global Affairs Canada developed an associated partnership action plan to coordinate further action. The partnership action plan sets out a range of voluntary activities that states, organizations and civil society can support to sustain momentum and deter future cases. Together, the declaration and partnership action plan remain essential tools to raise the political and reputational costs for states that engage in this practice contrary to international law.

Efforts to resolve active cases and deter new cases worldwide is strongly referenced in the foreign minister's mandate letter as follows: "Work with G7, NATO and like-minded partners to develop and expand collective responses to arbitrary detention...including through the use of sanctions, support for international institutions and coordinated action" and "Continuing to expand the broad coalition of states supporting Canada's initiative to condemn and eradicate the practice of arbitrary detention and advancing an action plan to coordinate collective international responses to specific incidents of arbitrary detention."

Global Affairs Canada is actively working towards achieving these commitments and will continue to raise the declaration's objectives and principles in regional and multilateral organizations, advance research and international law in this area and engage with civil society, think tanks and academics.

Question No. 327—Ms. Michelle Ferreri:

With regard to the government's requirement for vaccinated Canadians who travel to the United States to have a negative PCR or molecular COVID-19 test before returning to Canada: did the government do any analysis related to how the policy discriminates against low-income Canadians who have family members living in the United States, and, if so, what are the details, including results of the analysis?

Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the cost to obtain a predeparture test is the responsibility of the traveller, while the cost of arrival testing has been covered by the Government of Canada. It is recognized that the cost of a predeparture test can be prohibitive for some individual travellers; however, this requirement is in place to protect Canada's health care system and Canada's most vulnerable populations.

The objective of Canada's COVID 19 border measures has been to protect all Canadians, and border measures have applied to all travellers to Canada, unless explicitly exempt. While border measures authorized by emergency orders issued under section 58 of the Quarantine Act are not subject to the section 5.2.3 of the cabinet directive on regulation, which requires a gender-based analysis plus, GBA+, PHAC nevertheless considered a number of identity factors in its assessment of border measures, including age, language, socio-economic status and digital literacy. Where actual or potential disparate impacts on vulnerable groups were identified, and to the extent feasible given public health objectives, corresponding mitigations were put in place.

Effective April 1, 2022, fully vaccinated travellers, arriving at land, air or marine ports of entry will no longer be required to complete a pre-entry test for entry to Canada. For partially or unvaccinated travellers, who are currently allowed to travel to Canada, pre-entry testing requirements are not changing.

This adjustment to Canada's border measures is made possible by a number of factors, including Canada's high vaccination rate, the increasing availability and use of rapid tests to detect infection, decreasing hospitalizations and growing domestic availability of treatments for COVID-19.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 328—Mr. Fraser Tolmie:**

With regard to the Chief Electoral Officer's Report on the 44th General Election of September 20, 2021, and voting by special ballots: (a) of the 90,274 ballots returned late and not counted, as mentioned in Table 3 - Categories of special ballot voters for the 44th general election, (i) what is the breakdown by electoral district, (ii) how many of the ballots were requested before the first day of advance polling; (b) of the 114,583 ballots not returned or cancelled, as mentioned in Table 3 - Categories of special ballot voters for the 44th general election, (i) what is the breakdown by electoral district, (ii) how many of the ballots were requested before the first day of advance polling, (iii) how many of these electors voted instead at their election day polling station; (c) in respect of the 1,589 special ballots in Mississauga—Streetsville which had accumulated in a commercial mail room and were not delivered to the returning officer until the day after the election, as mentioned on page 23 of the report, (i) who owned, occupied or controlled the commercial mail room, (ii) did the returning officer or the Chief Electoral Officer enter into a contract for the commercial mail room services, (iii) if the answer to (ii) is affirmative, how much was paid for these services and was a refund received, and, if so, what are the details of the refund, (iv) how long had the ballots been accumulating in the commercial mail room, (v) what arrangements were in place for the retrieval or delivery of the ballots from the commercial mail room, (vi) why were the ballots not retrieved or provided to the returning officer by election day; and (d) were there any instances, similar to the situation described in (c), in other electoral districts and, if so, how many ballots were involved and what are the answers in respect of the matters asked about in (c)(i) through (c)(vi)?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a) of the question, Elections Canada is currently conducting an administrative review of marked ballots received from electors after the deadlines prescribed by the Canada Elections Act. The information will be available in a report that will be published by the special voting rules administrator, required by subsection 267(4) of the act, in April 2022.

In response to part (b), Elections Canada is currently conducting an administrative review of marked ballots received from electors after the deadlines prescribed by the act. The information will be available in a report that will be published by the special voting rules administrator, required by subsection 267(4) of the act, in April 2022.

In response to part (c), the circumstances surrounding the handling of special ballots in Mississauga—Streetsville are currently the subject of a review by Election Canada's internal audit division. At this time, we are not in a position to provide the answers requested. The outcomes of this review will be made public once it is concluded.

In response to part (d), Elections Canada is not aware of any other instances similar to the situation described in the response to part (c).

Question No. 330—Mr. Fraser Tolmie:

With regard to the Chief Electoral Officer's Report on the 44th General Election of September 20, 2021, and the reference on page 27 to incorrectly printed ballots in Vaughan—Woodbridge and Beauséjour: (a) what was the nature of the errors on the "incorrect list of candidates"; (b) what are the details surrounding any contracts related to the incorrectly printed ballots including (i) which printing company or companies produced the incorrectly printed ballots, (ii) the value of the contract, (iii) whether a refund was requested, (iv) whether a refund was received, (v) the amount of the refund, if applicable; and (c) in respect of the incorrectly printed ballots which were used for voting and subsequently rejected during the count, were election officials at polling stations instructed to verify the correct list of candidates on each ballot before handing it to an elector?

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Infrastructure and

Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a), in the electoral district, or ED, of Beauséjour, election workers located a total of two ballot booklets, each containing a single misprinted ballot. The misprinted ballots were found in advance polls 607 and 608, and both contained candidates for the neighboring ED of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, with one candidate from that ED listed twice. Both EDs used the same printing company. One misprinted ballot was discovered during the count in advance poll 608 and was rejected.

In the ED of Vaughan—Woodbridge, three ballot booklets were located, containing a combined total of 33 misprinted ballots. The central poll supervisor from advance poll 600 reported that while the back of the ballots stated the correct ED, the front listed candidates in the ED of Mississauga—Lakeshore. Six misprinted ballots were discovered during the count in advance poll 600 and each was rejected.

In response to part (b), the ballot printer for Beauséjour was Imprimerie A. Dupuis Printing. In Beauséjour, the ballots were printed as part of a larger series of arrangements that also included other documents, such as the lists of electors.

The total value of the arrangements was \$13,783.42 before tax, and \$15,850.93 including tax. The amount was paid in full. This adhered to the rate in Elections Canada's directive on certain field acquired goods and services in conduct of electoral events. Please note that in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and certain information has been withheld on the grounds that the information constitutes third party information.

The printer with whom Elections Canada contracted for the printing of the ballots in Vaughan—Woodbridge was Sherwood Design and Print. However, Sherwood Design and Print arranges for this production of the ballots to be done at a facility operated by Sherwood Printers, a separate company.

The value of the contract for the printing of ballots for Vaughan—Woodbridge was \$9,020.59 before tax, and \$10,193.27, including tax. The amount was paid in full. This adhered to the rate in Elections Canada's directive on certain field acquired goods and services in conduct of electoral events. Please note that in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and certain information has been withheld on the grounds that the information constitutes third party information.

A refund was not requested or received.

In response to part (c), the deputy returning officer guidebook contains instructions for election officers to prepare the night before voting. These include inspecting each ballot to make sure it shows every candidate's name and is not stained or badly printed. If a ballot does not pass inspection, election officers are instructed to fold its corners, leave it in the booklet and not use it when serving electors, and place it in the "spoiled ballots" envelope.

Routine Proceedings

Elections officers are not normally instructed to verify the list of candidates on the ballots again at the polls, since they were inspected the night before the polls. However, following the discovery of misprinted ballots, election officers in these two EDs were instructed to perform additional verifications of their ballots.

In both EDs, Elections Canada headquarters instructed the returning officer, or RO, to verify all remaining, unused, ballots in the ED to ensure there were no other misprinted ballots.

The field liaison officer responsible for Beauséjour and Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe also contacted the assistant RO and interim RO for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe and instructed them to ask election officials to check all remaining ballots for misprints.

In addition, Elections Canada headquarters instructed eight other ROs, whose EDs used the same printing facility as the RO in Vaughan—Woodbridge, to conduct a complete sweep of all ballots.

* * *

[English]

STARRED QUESTIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in addition we ask that the government's response to starred Question No. 332 be printed in Hansard as if read.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

*Question No. 332—**Mr. Dave Epp:**

With regard to the government's broadband internet strategy: (a) what is the timeline for providing complete broadband internet availability to Pelee Island; (b) will the deadline be adjusted for lost time due to slow rollout after the announcement; (c) what is the total amount of funding to date to complete broadband internet availability on Pelee Island; and (d) what are the details of how the funding in (c) will be provided?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the universal broadband fund, or UBF, is the single largest federal investment in broadband in Canada's history. With budget 2021, the government has brought the total funding for the UBF to \$2.75 billion to help ensure that 98% of Canadians will be connected by 2026, and all Canadians by 2030, including those living on Pelee Island.

The UBF launched in November 2020, and received more than 1,900 applications. The first announcement under the rapid response stream of the UBF was made in December 2021. Since then, the Government of Canada has announced projects and partnerships that will connect over 900,000 households with \$2 billion in funding. More announcements under the UBF are made regularly.

The Government of Ontario is making significant efforts to expand high-speed Internet and mobile wireless infrastructure under Ontario Connects, with the goal of connecting all Ontarians by the end of 2025. On July 29, 2021, a federal-provincial co-funding agreement was announced to bring high-speed Internet to nearly 280,000 rural Ontario households in hundreds of communities across the province. This agreement is made possible by an equal federal-provincial investment totalling more than \$1.2 billion.

In the coming months, additional project details will be announced about funding recipients, communities served and the number of households that will benefit from each of the projects under the Canada-Ontario broadband partnership. Negotiations are well under way with all selected project recipients and will be made public when finalized.

Funding under the Canada-Ontario broadband partnership will be provided by both levels of government directly to the funding recipient.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if the government's responses to Question Nos. 323, 325, 329 and 331 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 323—**Mr. Tom Kmiec:**

With regard to losses of public money and property as listed in Volume III of the 2021 Public Account of Canada: what are the details of each instance where the loss involved an item with a value in excess of \$1,000, including for each (i) the item description, (ii) the item value, (iii) whether the item is considered lost, damaged, or stolen, (iv) the government department or agency which owned the item, (v) the incident description or summary?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 325—**Mrs. Laila Goodridge:**

With regard to the mandate letter of the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the commitment in the letter to create 3,300 new child care spaces for Indigenous children: (a) how many new child care spaces have been created for Indigenous children since the letter was received by the minister on December 16, 2021, broken down by province or territory; and (b) how many new spaces for Indigenous children will be created by the end of (i) 2022, (ii) 2023?

(Return tabled)

Business of Supply

Question No. 329—Mr. Fraser Tolmie:

With regard to the Chief Electoral Officer's Report on the 44th General Election of September 20, 2021, and the National Register of Electors: (a) in respect of the 92.3% accuracy of registered electors' addresses, as mentioned on page 41 of the report, (i) how many electors are represented by the remaining 7.7%, in total and broken down by electoral district, (ii) how many of the electors referred to in (i) were sent a voter information card; and (b) in respect of Elections Canada's registration letter campaign targeted to "select regions with lower youth coverage", which electoral districts were selected?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 331—Ms. Leslyn Lewis:

With regard to all federal COVID-19 related mandates and restrictions, and broken down by each measure: (a) what was the scientific justification or study for each mandate or restriction; (b) what is the specific website address where the study's details, including the findings, can be found; (c) on what date will each restriction end; and (d) for each mandate or restriction that does not have a set end-date, what criteria or metric has to be achieved in order for it to be rescinded?

(Return tabled)

• (1015)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL BUDGET

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC) moved:

That, given that,

- (i) excessive government spending has increased the deficit, the national debt, and fuelled inflation to its highest level in 31 years,
- (ii) taxes on Canadians continue to increase, from the carbon tax to escalator taxes to Canada Pension Plan premiums,
- (iii) the government refuses to provide relief to Canadians by temporarily reducing the Goods and Services Tax on gasoline and diesel,

the House call on the government to present a federal budget rooted in fiscal responsibility, with no new taxes, a path to balance, and a meaningful fiscal anchor.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to let you know that I am splitting my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

Excessive government spending; deficits as far as the eye can see; the largest national debt this country has ever seen, in fact doubled in a short six years; inflation running rampant; skyrocketing housing prices; seven years littered with broken promises: that is the record of the failed Liberal government.

The motion before us today is hoping to right the ship somewhat. As members know, next week on April 7, the Minister of Finance is going to be tabling in the House a budget that is intended to chart the pathway forward for this country when it comes to our finances and how we spend taxpayers' money. Given the fact that the last six years of the Liberal government has been such an unmitigated fi-

nancial disaster, we would like to make some suggestions for what it could do to actually restore some sanity and probity into our fiscal situation here in our country.

Let me begin by talking about what Canadians have come to expect. Over the last two and a half years we have been fighting the COVID pandemic. Rightfully Canadians have been concerned about their health and the health of their neighbours, so we were asked to be vaccinated. Remember that? We were told if we were vaccinated we would not pick up the COVID virus. Of course, now we find out that is not true. I am triple vaccinated and I have not had the COVID virus. My wife is triple vaccinated. After she was triple vaccinated, she got the COVID virus and we live together, so the health authorities had that wrong.

I support vaccination, but the Liberals told us if Canadians got vaccinated we will have life return to normal. Lockdowns will be gone, mandates will be lifted and life will be back to normal. What happened? It was quite the opposite. We are still under lockdowns. We are still under vaccine mandates at the federal level, which is the Prime Minister's responsibility. Now we are faced with an even greater challenge and that is inflation. Today, our inflation rate is somewhere in the order of 5.7%.

House prices are up a whopping 30% in just this year alone, so how does the government expect young Canadian families who have this dream of home ownership to ever fulfill that dream? Millions of Canadians have lost that dream of home ownership.

We have seen gas prices at the pump go up 32% since February of this past year, 2021. Of course, those gas prices continue to climb in my region of Abbotsford and the greater Vancouver area. Some gas stations were charging \$2.09 per litre of gas and right now there is no prospect of that going down at all. In fact, the prospect is that those prices will keep going up.

In order to address that issue, we as Conservatives, presented solutions. One of those solutions was tabled in the House a week ago, which was to, temporarily at least, lift the GST on gasoline purchases. Give Canadians a break. We had a debate in the House and guess what. Our NDP-Liberal friends voted against relief at the gas pumps. We brought forward another proposal, which was, why do we not lift the carbon tax? Let us get rid of the carbon tax and give motorists a break. We know the NDP-Liberal coalition is opposed to that. In fact, it is the government of high taxes.

• (1020)

Inflation is being driven by a number of factors. I have already mentioned taxes. Every time the current government raises taxes, whether it is carbon taxes or the rising GST revenues that it gets because of the rising gas prices, every time it imposes an escalator tax like it did for alcohol and every time it raises CPP premiums, that is a burden on Canadians and it is driving inflationary pressures in Canada.

Business of Supply

However, it gets worse. Less than a year ago, the Minister of Finance was given a mandate letter from the Prime Minister in which she was instructed to engage in no more new permanent spending. Do members remember that? It was a directive to the finance minister for no new permanent spending. Guess what happened. Today, we are looking at pharmacare. That is new permanent spending. We are looking at dental care. That is new permanent spending. We are looking at transit. We are looking at numerous new spending programs, including child care for example. It goes on and on with broken promises.

By the way, in the most recent mandate letter, less than a year after the original one that prohibited new permanent spending, suddenly the mandate letter had no reference at all to new permanent spending. It is a government that loves to virtue signal on finances, on deficits, on debt and on spending, but it never delivers.

It gets worse. April 1, tomorrow, is April Fool's Day, and of course the Liberals are going to treat Canadians like fools. What are the Liberals going to do? They are going to increase the carbon tax by another \$10 per tonne. Do members know what that means? For those provinces that have the carbon tax backstop it means another 11¢ at the pump. That is on the current Liberal government. They cannot blame that on anyone else.

It gets worse. Do people remember the last budget, a year ago, when the Minister of Finance talked about the stimulus that she was going to pump into the economy to get the economy going? The economy was already starting to grow and bounce back, but she insisted that she needed over \$100 billion of additional money to pump into the economy. Guess what happened. There was so much money pumped into the economy that it has caused inflation, especially in the housing market. As I already mentioned, in one year alone, there was a 30% increase in housing prices. How are Canadians supposed to cope with that? How are Canadians supposed to cope?

We are facing an inflation crisis. We are facing a tax crisis in this country. We are facing a spending crisis in this country. That is why today we are calling upon this finance minister, this Prime Minister and the NDP-Liberal government to do the right thing, which is to rein in spending. In this coming budget next week, we are calling on the government to make sure that there is a clear pathway toward balanced budgets, where we return to living within our means. That is what responsible governments do. We have not seen that for the last six years.

We are solution-oriented. We are asking the government to come up with a defensible, firm fiscal anchor that has a clear pathway to a balanced budget in the medium term. In the motion before them, members see that we are asking the government to address inflationary pressures, to address taxation that is going through the roof and to address the needs of Canadians.

Canadians are really struggling. They have lost their dream of home ownership. They cannot pay for gas for their cars to take their kids to hockey lessons, to school and to music lessons. They cannot afford life anymore. They cannot buy groceries. My goodness, we are living in one of the richest countries in the world and the current government has made it virtually impossible for many families to even afford groceries.

I am asking the government to do the right thing in its upcoming budget. I am asking it to find a pathway to balance, restrain spending and control the urge to spend. I know Liberal tax-and-spend is the way of this country whenever we have a Liberal government. However, I ask the Liberals to listen to us. We are solution-oriented.

• (1025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how quickly my friend has forgotten. It was not that long ago when we had a national election and the leader of the Conservative Party was going to actually keep a carbon tax. He supported a carbon tax. What the Conservative Party of Canada supported was a price on pollution. Not only did the Conservatives promise that, but in part of their platform they were actually going to spend more money than what we were proposing to spend.

Does my friend opposite not realize that, if we are saying one thing during a national campaign, there is a certain expectation that Canadians might believe what we are saying during the election? Now they are taking a flip-flop not on one or two issues but even on a basic understanding of COVID, as the member said regarding getting vaccinated once or twice and getting a booster. It does not mean that we cannot get infected, but what it does is it minimizes the effects. I am wondering if the member could maybe provide his thoughts on being consistent.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, we are entirely consistent. The Parliamentary Budget Officer recently issued a report that showed that the carbon tax revenues the Liberal government raises far exceed the rebates it sends back. Virtually every Canadian in this country pays more in carbon tax than they get back. Our plan in the last election was a carbon savings account, not a carbon tax. The member obviously did not read the platform document. We, of course, did, and it was a carbon savings account in which every single dollar Canadians paid would come back to them by way of a formal investment in their carbon savings account.

The least I would expect from our Liberal friends is the truth.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague began his speech by misinforming the public, when he implied that the vaccine is not effective because booster doses are required.

I would suspect that my colleague has been vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, influenza, hepatitis B, pneumococcus, meningitis, measles, rubella and mumps. All of these vaccines require booster doses.

Does my colleague understand what a booster dose is, and does he intend to stop pushing misinformation to Quebecers and Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I did not even mention boosters in my speech. What I did say was that I support vaccines. I am triple vaccinated. I have no problem being vaccinated, but I do respect those in Canada, unlike our NDP, Liberal and Bloc colleagues, who differ in their opinions on that. However, I believe vaccines can dramatically reduce mortality and serious illness, and I encourage Canadians to get vaccinated, but it is time to lift the vaccine mandates. We have had them for a long time. A lot of Canadians feel they have lost their freedom as a result, so on top of all of that, we now have the problem of inflationary pressures created by the Liberal government. It is time to get inflation under control. It is time to get spending under control.

• (1030)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I understand that is the Inuktitut word for “Speaker” on this National Indigenous Languages Day.

I wanted to go back to some remarks of the member. During his speech he talked about the Conservatives' previous motion to lift the GST at the pumps, and he would know, from listening to debate on that day, that New Democrats were prepared to entertain the idea of some temporary tax relief for Canadians. We moved an amendment to say that, instead of providing that relief at the pumps, we ought to provide it on home heating. I presented some arguments as to why we thought that was a good idea. It was an opportunity to build a broader consensus here in the House on their motion. Conservatives declined, but I did not hear in that debate the reasons why.

I wonder if the member might like to offer the reasons they declined to consider tax relief on home heating that day.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, we are the party of lower taxes; that is why we brought this forward. One of our colleagues today introduced a bill in the House to eliminate the escalator on excise taxes on alcohol. We are the party of lower taxes. I can tell the member that, when we had the debate on the GST, we were so disappointed that the NDP refused to support us on that. It was a simple measure that would have lifted the GST on gasoline purchases, because GST, unlike many other taxes, is a tax upon a tax. Can members imagine that? Canadians have to pay that. That is why life is getting more and more unaffordable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on April 7, the NDP-Liberal government will table its first budget. This is happening at a time when Canadians are facing the highest rate of inflation in the past 30 years and when groceries are going to cost Canadian families an average of \$1,000 more a year. As my colleague from Abbotsford mentioned in his excellent speech, the cost of gas is at \$2.09 a litre in the Victoria area. The cost of living is hitting record highs and families are having trouble making ends meet.

Business of Supply

Today, the Conservatives are going to ask the NDP-Liberal government to present a fiscally responsible budget, a concept that the Liberals may have forgotten about. The Conservatives are asking the government not to impose new taxes and to propose meaningful fiscal anchors to return to a balanced budget.

That is what Canadians need right now. They need solutions, a serious plan from the NDP-Liberal government, in order to fight against the inflation that is affecting families, young people, seniors and workers. Everyone knows that Canadians are tired of paying and that 60% of them are worried about not having enough money to feed their families. Seven out of 10 Canadians say that their finances are a source of stress and frustration, but this government has not yet presented any real solutions to address the inflation crisis.

In fact, the NDP-Liberal Prime Minister is only making the crisis worse. I remember the 2015 election campaign very well. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government likes to bring up the Conservatives' election promises. Well, I would like to remind him of the election promise that the current Prime Minister made in 2015 in order to get elected.

He said that his government would run only small deficits of merely \$10 billion and then return to a balanced budget when the 2019 election rolled around. That was the first big promise that was broken. Who would have believed that Canada's deficit in 2015 would surpass the trillion-dollar mark? One trillion dollars, that is 1,000 billion dollars.

As my colleague from Abbotsford so aptly said in his speech, not even a year ago, the mandate letter for the Minister of Finance indicated that no new permanent spending would be introduced in the budgets. Perhaps it became clear to the Prime Minister that spending was going through the roof.

The Prime Minister changed that requirement in the minister's most recent mandate letter. There is nothing about introducing new permanent spending.

Since the last election, this government has held meetings behind closed doors to reach an agreement with the NDP. The meetings must have started very early on, most likely before the ministerial mandate letters were written, so we are worried that next week's budget will include many new spending categories and a record number of encroachments on areas under provincial jurisdiction. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Health announced as much during a press conference last week, when he talked about the five strings the federal government is attaching to higher provincial health transfers.

Business of Supply

That confirmed the fears of Quebec's premier, François Legault. In response to the NDP-Liberal coalition announcement, he said: "The federal government has no jurisdiction over how much money we should be spending on long-term care, how much we should spend on mental health, how much we should spend on hiring more nurses.... They have no jurisdiction over health care management.... We have two very centralist parties—the Liberal Party of Canada and the NDP—that want to impose their vision on all the provinces. I think they will run into a wall".

The provinces said where they stood beforehand, and the government was aware of their position. Even so, on Friday, the government set out five conditions for talks with the provinces about provincial health transfers.

• (1035)

That is not surprising from an NDP-Liberal government. That is why we have concerns about the upcoming budget. Canadians need real solutions.

The Prime Minister is only making the crisis worse. He has racked up debt and increased the tax burden on Canadians. He is going ahead with a new tax on alcohol. On top of that, the government is coming at us again with a 25% increase in the carbon tax, effective tomorrow. This means that gas will cost more. If gas costs more, then everything that is transported by gas-powered trucks will cost more. If everything costs more, then the government will collect even more taxes. Yes, if things cost more, Canadians will pay more taxes.

The government has created an inflationary spiral in order to have additional revenues to supposedly cope with the looming crisis. What is it going to do with the additional revenues? It is not going to relieve any of the pressure on Canadians' wallets. The government's alliance with the NDP means that it will further increase spending. It will spend even more using money belonging to Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet. Putting any money back in the pockets of Canadians will therefore be impossible. This is unbelievable.

How many young professionals have given up their dreams of owning a home, as their parents and grandparents did? The cost of inflation has driven housing prices up by more than 32%. This makes owning a home almost impossible. The dream of young families to become homeowners has turned into a nightmare. Rather than addressing Canadians' concerns, the agreement between the Prime Minister and his NDP deputy prime minister has had the opposite effect.

While businesses and consumers expect inflation to continue to rise, some experts have said that the new coalition could further undermine Ottawa's credibility in its commitment to fight inflation. That is a fact.

The Liberals are tied to the NDP. What is more, if I may say so, the days of financially responsible prime ministers, the days of Jean Chrétien or Paul Martin, are over. Today's Liberals are not the same. For years, Liberals made it their duty to do everything they could to return to a balanced budget and responsible management—we can give them that—but that is no longer the case now.

How many Liberals were consulted on drafting the next budget or on the agreement with the NDP? Not a lot of them were. I am sure that there are a lot more financially responsible Liberal MPs than we might think, than the Prime Minister might think. It is not for nothing that he had to find some new backers through his government coalition with the NDP. He needed support. Indeed, given the budgets he wants to table, he would have surely lost the support of many of his backbenchers.

Ultimately, Canadians are the ones who will foot the bill for this alliance. After years of deficits and fiscal imbalances, the Prime Minister will have to resort to taxes to fund his excessive spending. The perfect example is that he is refusing to remove the carbon tax, which will go into effect tomorrow.

The motion moved today is calling on the government to present a federal budget with a meaningful fiscal anchor and to limit government spending. Instead of spending money on partisan projects, it is time for the Prime Minister to invest in important sectors such as broadband connectivity in the regions. This will make it possible to accelerate the arrival of foreign workers and help our economy.

I am asking all my colleagues to vote for the motion moved by my colleague from Abbotsford.

• (1040)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, consistently over the last number of years in its budget presentations, the government has been there to support Canadians in very real and tangible ways. Just the other day, we had an announcement here in Ontario that the Province of Ontario was going to join the child care plan. The day care plan is now a truly national program that will enable more people to get into the work force. We have seen very progressive programs implemented.

The concern I have with the Conservatives today is that they say we should reduce the deficit and give tax breaks. In order to accomplish what they suggest, there have to be serious, severe cuts. Will the member opposite be sincere with Canadians and tell us exactly what it is that the Conservative Party of Canada is proposing to cut? We cannot have it all ways.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I never thought I would say this in the House, but I miss the Liberals of old. I miss them a lot, it is true.

I have two quotes that will directly address what the parliamentary secretary just said.

I will first quote Paul Martin when he presented his budget in 1995:

[*English*]

For years governments have been promising more than they can deliver and delivering more than they can afford.

[*Translation*]

That is exactly what they are doing.

Business of Supply

My second quote is from a former Liberal prime minister:

[*English*]

He said, “Good intentions are not an excuse for maladministration”.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is mind-boggling. We do agree that the inflation issue is an important and fundamental problem and that we need to do something about it. However, the Conservatives have proposed a simplistic, I would even say populist, solution to reduce all taxes.

Do our colleagues in the Conservative Party know that in June 2021, the G7 countries agreed to start imposing a 15% minimum tax on tax evasion? This could bring in billions of dollars for us. In 2020, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that a special tax on the massive profits that corporations, like the infamous oil companies that the other side is always defending, bring in, could add \$7.9 billion to the federal treasury.

Those are the kinds of things we need to do. We agree on the substance of the issue, namely that we need to help people. However, the Conservatives' messages are frankly twisted and full of misinformation, and they want to stop taxing major corporations that are earning a profit. That does not make sense, and they are trying to serve their own political interests here.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on this. Does he realize that if we adopt the Conservative Party's motion we are giving up on taxing the corporations earning massive profits, which could help our people?

• (1045)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, we are the party that wants to lower taxes for all Canadians. I am proud of that. I am proud to say that I stood up in the House to vote in favour of a motion calling for the GST to be temporarily suspended to provide immediate relief to all Canadians. Now is when the crisis is happening, and now is when families are having a hard time making ends meet.

The hon. member can claim that there is disinformation out there, but the only fact I can give right now is that the Bloc Québécois voted against reducing the GST. That is the truth.

[*English*]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been some cockamamie economics coming from the recent Conservative-PPC coalition. They are clearly summarized in this motion, which erroneously seeks to establish government spending as the sole cause of inflation. It would like to pretend that the only other cost pressures faced by Canadians are taxes and not stagnant wages.

I want to zero in on one particular problematic element of this motion. The text of this motion mis-characterizes CPP as a tax, when in fact it is a deferred wage and a meaningful way for Canadians to plan for retirement. Could the hon. member, whom I have known to be previously a very reasonable man, please clarify whether he believes that pensions and planning for retirement are indeed a tax?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I am still a reasonable man, and I thank my colleague for his comments.

Why am I reasonable? What we are asking the government to do is to give Canadian taxpayers some relief today, because now is when they are having to make tough choices in the grocery aisles, wondering whether to buy a piece of meat this week or do without and feed their children baloney. That is what we are asking for.

All of the price hikes happening right now due to inflation are taking a toll on Canadian families and our economy. The government can act now to help families a little. I am therefore asking it to do that, and I think that is very reasonable.

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to take part in today's debate. It is also great to see you in the chair. I appreciated our time together on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

I also want to thank the member for Abbotsford for presenting today's opposition motion, which gives us this opportunity to further exchange ideas on important issues such as making life more affordable for Canadians, combatting climate change, prudent fiscal management and strong fiscal anchors.

I have always believed the quality of any decision is directly proportional to the quality of the debate. It is my hope that through the robust exchange of ideas we perhaps can find common ground and pursue policies that will benefit Canadians today as well as in future generations.

I understand that much of the time the role of the opposition is to oppose the government of the day. However, there is also the opportunity for the opposition to propose workable solutions or even work collaboratively with government to move our country forward.

In that spirit, I will start my speech today by addressing some key points on this motion I think we can agree on. I would like to start with our government's commitment to strong fiscal anchors.

In 2015, we inherited a significant deficit. This was not just financial; this was a social deficit as well as an environmental deficit. There was also a deficit in hard infrastructure. We promised to invest in the future of Canada by incurring further small deficits while targeting investments in economic growth.

Business of Supply

In our first four years, we made significant investments in housing, transportation and indigenous reconciliation. We grew the economy while reducing poverty and unemployment to all-time historic lows. We lifted 1.3 million Canadians out of poverty and began to tackle climate change in a serious and meaningful way. We grew the size of the economy while reducing our debt-to-GDP ratio every single year.

This was an enviable financial position that was built on fiscal prudence. This position would allow us to invest further in the growth of our nation or prepare us for any economic shocks that might come in the future. While we could not foresee a global pandemic or a war in Europe, when it comes to the finances of our country, if members will allow me to lean on my previous experience in Boy Scouts, it is always prudent to be prepared.

The fact is that not only did we enter the pandemic with the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, but we also increased our relative financial advantage throughout the crisis. Our focus on keeping Canadians healthy has translated to better economic outcomes. Even though our economy lost three million jobs at the depth of the crisis, we have successfully recovered 112% of these jobs, while the United States has only recovered 90%.

The truth is that we remain committed to the fiscal anchors we outlined in our 2021 budget. This means reducing our debt-to-GDP ratio and unwinding the COVID-19-related deficits.

I remind all members of the House that despite the federal government taking on more than 80% of pandemic-related costs, we were able to maintain our debt servicing cost to less than 1% of the size of our economy, which is a number six times lower than where we stood as recently as the mid-1990s.

Our prudent fiscal management was noted when Moody's and S&P reaffirmed Canada's AAA credit rating. Perhaps on the issue of strong fiscal anchors, there is an opportunity for us to find some agreement.

It would also be prudent to address inflation and our government's commitment to affordability. Make no mistake: Our government cares about tackling global inflation and we care about making life more affordable. In fact, in two speeches I gave just last week, I outlined many of the very real solutions our government has put forward to make life more affordable.

With regard to the recent Conservative motion to temporarily cut the GST on gasoline and diesel, I argued that this was an elegant, simple but wrong solution. Gas taxes represent a small portion of the price consumers pay at the pump, so cutting them would be ineffective in protecting Canadians from these strong global market forces. In fact, daily changes in gas prices can be greater than the 5% tax cut previously proposed. In some regions, we have already seen that level of decline without having to sacrifice the revenue that funds programs like child care, OAS benefits and the national housing strategy.

Instead of continuing to find new ways to ignore climate change and subsidize the oil and gas sector, I would recommend that all members of the House focus on building a fair tax system that makes life more affordable for all Canadians.

The opposition motion charges our government of excessive spending during the pandemic. While it is true that the cost of the pandemic was significant, it was more than reasonable for the federal government to use our strong fiscal position to take on this burden. We did this so small businesses, Canadian workers and family household budgets did not have to.

While Conservatives may see these investments as frivolous or unnecessary, I would expect the nine million Canadians who were able to feed their families and the 450,000 employers who were able to keep 5.3 million employees on the payroll would disagree with their position.

• (1050)

The motion alleges that taxes on Canadians continue to rise, but this ignores the fact that we lowered taxes for the middle class multiple times. It ignores the fact that we reduced small business taxes from 11% to 9%. It ignores the fact that we increased support for families and low-income workers through programs such as the Canada child benefit and the Canada workers benefit, which have helped lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. It ignores our increased GIS and OAS supports for seniors and it certainly ignores the fact that our most important benefits increase with inflation.

To further offset the impact of inflation and make life more affordable for Canadians, we have increased the basic personal amount that Canadians can earn before paying federal income tax. When this measure is fully implemented next year, single individuals will pay \$300 less in tax and families will pay \$600 less every single year.

With respect to the price on carbon pollution, which is falsely characterized in today's motion and often in the House, the reality is that we will continue to return the direct proceeds from the federal carbon pollution pricing system to their province or territory of origin. Our climate action incentive gives payments directly to households, and these payments actually represent more than the increased costs households face from the federal price on pollution. Going forward, the federal carbon price will continue to be revenue-neutral for the Government of Canada. The Conservative plan would allow energy companies to line their pockets while offering no real guarantee of savings for Canadians at the pump.

Business of Supply

Climate change is real, and so are the costs. We are only starting to realize the staggering costs of doing nothing, not only with regard to floods and forest fires in B.C. but also right across Canada. The Conservatives choose to ignore these costs and they choose to ignore the benefits of being an environmental leader. Our climate plan is not just good for the planet; it is good for the economy. It will help Canadians create good-quality, high-paying jobs while producing clean technologies that we can export all over the world.

The demand for climate solutions is only going to increase, and our plan leverages this opportunity for all Canadians. A price on pollution is the most effective and fair way to protect Canadians from the very real costs associated with climate change while incentivizing Canadians and businesses to make sound ecological decisions.

This is in staggering contrast to the plan the Conservatives presented in the last election, when they suggested incentivizing Canadians to use more gas. That was the bank account program the member was talking about in his previous reply.

I would be very interested in having a more thorough discussion on contemporary Conservative climate policy, if one exists. At their last convention, they could not agree on a resolution that simply stated that climate change is real. Their last platform admitted that they would not pursue meeting targets of the IPCC, and their position has only regressed further since the last election.

Just this week, I heard Conservatives in the House doubt that carbon pricing is even effective. In B.C., one of the first jurisdictions in the world to implement carbon pricing, we know that in the first five years, carbon usage per capita decreased significantly in British Columbia, while it increased by more than 3% in the rest of Canada. British Columbians should be proud of their leadership on this issue.

British Columbians should also be suspicious of any federal Conservative promise to eliminate the tax. This is because the carbon price of British Columbia is administered by the province, so removing the federal backstop would not change anything. In fact, it would mean British Columbians would continue to put a price on pollution, while other, primarily Conservative, jurisdictions would not. A more thoughtful approach, in my humble opinion, would be to encourage the provincial government in B.C. to return the carbon price to revenue neutrality. This is a position that I would hope the member for Abbotsford and I could agree on.

The opposition motion suggests that there should be no new taxes in the upcoming budget. However, the opposition also knows that a main tenet of the federal backstop is to gradually and consistently raise the carbon price. To adopt this motion would mean abandoning a core piece of Canada's climate change strategy. This on its own should be reason enough to oppose this motion.

We also know that some businesses have done extremely well during the pandemic and that our government has committed to increasing taxes on profits of over a billion dollars by 3% for banks and insurance companies. This measure, which speaks directly to building a fair tax system, also runs counter to the motion that is being proposed today.

The motion also highlights the escalator tax and the Canada pension plan premiums. I want to assure Canadians that the escalator tax is reasonable, predictable and fair. We are talking about one-fifth of one penny on a can of beer. That means that if one purchases a can of beer today, one would have to wait almost five years before seeing a single penny of increased taxes.

● (1055)

With regard to the Canada pension plan, our government worked diligently with premiers to secure the financial security of our next generation of retirees. This agreement ensures that future pensioners will have access to more generous benefits. However, I think it is important for us to agree that the Canadian pension plan is not a tax, and it is unfortunate that the Conservatives have repeatedly chosen to characterize it in this way, a point that was raised by my NDP colleague in an earlier intervention.

The Canada pension plan is an essential part of Canada's social security framework, and it is critical to providing Canadians with a dignified retirement after a lifetime of work. Certainly the Conservatives cannot be suggesting that we should reduce the retirement security of future generations. Perhaps they are; after all, this is the same party that increased the retirement age of 65 to 67, robbing seniors of thousands of dollars right when they needed it most.

Of course, it is not just seniors who are more secure. Families now benefit from our \$10-a-day community-based early learning and child care system, which will make life more affordable for families, create new jobs, get parents back into the workforce and grow the middle class while giving every child a real and fair chance at success. Of course, the federal Conservatives oppose this plan as well.

While I have covered a lot of ground on fiscal policy today, I think the importance of a strong monetary framework would be worth mentioning as well.

A strong monetary policy framework is crucial for keeping prices stable and keeping inflationary pressures in check. This is why, last December, our government and the Bank of Canada announced the renewal of the policy targeting inflation at 2% for another five-year period. This renewed framework will keep the bank focused on delivering low, stable and predictable inflation in Canada.

Canadians and Conservatives are right to be concerned about inflation, but we have to make sure that we address it in a way that recognizes the underlying causes. While inflation in Canada is 5.7%, I would remind members that inflation is a global phenomenon and that Canada's rate of inflation continues to be lower than the United States, the OECD, the G20 and the G7.

Business of Supply

Supply chain challenges, climate change, energy prices and the war in Ukraine are all contributing to inflationary pressures, aside from the challenges of reopening the global economy in the ongoing global pandemic. These are indeed significant challenges, but I am truly optimistic that Canadians will endure to overcome them.

We know that there are more businesses open today than there were before the pandemic. We know that the GDP has fully recovered, and so has employment. We know that our trade surplus has hit 13-year highs. We also know that Canadians' health outcomes are among the best in the world. Of course this is good news for families that avoided unnecessary deaths, but it is also good news for our economy, which has performed remarkably well, given that we have recently faced the greatest economic shock since the Second World War.

I hope that I have thoroughly responded to today's opposition motion. We will continue to maintain strong fiscal anchors and exercise prudent fiscal management. We will maintain a strong, independent and stable monetary framework. We will continue to cut taxes for hard-working Canadians while ensuring that the wealthy pay their fair share, and we will continue investing in Canadians' highest priorities while growing our economy and making sure that all Canadians have a real and fair shot at success.

While we may not agree on everything in the motion before us, there are many things we do agree on. It is my hope that by working in good faith with our government's official opposition and with all members of this House, we will be able to continue to put forward legislation that will help Canadians today as well as help future generations. That is what I am expecting to see in the upcoming budget, and it is exactly what I expect from all members in this House.

● (1100)

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his comments, although I do find that they are exceedingly distressing.

Out in the lobby, I was just speaking to Joanne. Joanne is a Canadian who lives off \$881 a month. Joanne has to live in a room with her mother and her stepfather. Joanne does not have any dignity. She has no privacy; she has no way to get a job; she cannot afford gas; she cannot afford to live by herself; and she cannot afford food for herself.

I cannot believe the audacity of the member opposite in standing there and espousing these unbelievable promises and ineptitudes that do not ring true with any Canadian. I want him to answer for Joanne and I want to understand how he thinks that Joanne is going to live off \$881 a month.

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to inform Joanne and this member that in fact our government has introduced a strong anti-poverty strategy. That strategy actually reduced poverty rates before the pandemic to all-time historic lows. In fact, it lifted 1.3 million Canadians out of poverty through programs such as the Canada child benefit and through more generous investments in the OAS and the GIS, for example. These are all measures that are helping to make life more affordable for Canadians. They are also measures that Conservatives always voted against.

At the end of the day, Conservatives are poor fiscal managers. It took only two Conservative governments to rack up more than 70% of all of the debt that had accrued in the first 150 years of Canada. The fact is that when Conservatives are in power, they cut taxes for the wealthiest and they cut services for everyone else, with disastrous consequences for the economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about inflation, it is difficult to ignore the housing crisis.

A recent study by Scotiabank, which is not exactly an organization fighting for more social housing in Quebec, found that Canada would need 1.8 million housing units just to reach the G7 average.

A recent report by the National Housing Council, which oversees the big national housing strategy that was launched by the federal government five years ago, said that only 35,000 housing units had been built. We need 1.8 million housing units, but only 35,000 have been built.

In Quebec, 50,000 people are on a waiting list for low-income housing.

My colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques is fighting for housing in his riding. The vacancy rate is 0.2%. There is no housing to be had even in Rimouski. My colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot is also very involved in the housing issue. The housing market in Saint-Hyacinthe is extremely tight. In the budget that is coming on April 7, will the government actually be making major investments in housing?

The crisis is serious. It is affecting all of Quebec, but it is particularly hard on the most disadvantaged, women fleeing domestic violence, seniors, and people with mental health issues. This is one of the major crises of our time. On April 7, will the government take the crisis into account and make the necessary investments?

● (1105)

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate the question from the member opposite. I think the more time we can spend working together on solutions for solving the housing crisis, the better off Canadians will be.

We believe that all Canadians deserve a place to call home. That is why after 30 years of the federal government being essentially absent from the housing file, we created an unprecedented \$72-billion national housing strategy. In the last election, we actually promised to do more, and while there were dozens of promises, they fell under three major tiers. The first was to create more supply. The second was to treat housing more like a place to live than as an investment vehicle. The third was to find new pathways for Canadians, especially first-time homebuyers, to find a way to secure affordable housing.

I expect that the budget will reflect some of those promises, and I am sure there will be plenty of opportunities for us to work together on this important issue.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, on National Indigenous Languages Day, I will call you *Uqaqtittiji*, which is the Inuit word for “Speaker”, as I understand.

I would like to thank my colleague for his intervention today. Yesterday, I had the honour of meeting with Dr. Nils Schmid, who is a member of the German Bundestag. We talked about the need for tax reform. We talked about how tax reform across the G7 needs to be undertaken because what we are seeing right now are massive loopholes where the wealthy can hide their wealth around the world and can avoid paying their fair share, in effect. The government has said that it will act on this but we have not seen the actions we need to see.

When will the government be taking the steps necessary to close those tax loopholes and seriously look at tax reform so that the middle class and low-income Canadians are not the ones bearing the burden of taxation?

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising the issue of tax fairness. Certainly, we want to make sure that we have a system of tax fairness where individuals can, of course, be entrepreneurial, succeed, grow companies, create value, hire employees and create jobs, but at the same provide a fair distribution of the tax base so we can provide the supports that other Canadians might need.

I think one of the biggest steps that our government has taken, other than investing in the CRA to go after the exact loopholes the member opposite is referring to, is signing on to support, alongside 137 other countries with the OECD, a minimum corporate tax. This prevents the race to the bottom that we have seen in many countries where countries compete against each other to have the lowest tax rate and to attract head offices and the employment that comes with that. This will generate billions of dollars of revenue for Canada and will ensure that we will continue to be economically competitive and that we are building a more fair tax system.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question for the parliamentary secretary relates to the budget overall. I largely agree with his comments on carbon pricing. I agree with him that the British Columbia government was wrong to make the carbon price in British Columbia less than revenue-neutral.

I meant to begin by saying that on Indigenous Languages Day, I wish to address the House in SENĆOŦEN, which is the language of

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the indigenous people of the territory I represent, the W̱SÁNEĆ people: *Hych'ka Siem*.

To the parliamentary secretary, how do the Liberals credibly claim that we are to forget their renunciation of the F-35 fighter jets? Why are we supposed to be spending \$19 billion on a plane that former Liberal leader Bob Rae, now doing us such honour as our ambassador to the United Nations, pointed out was completely operationally the wrong plane for Canada?

The former auditor general, the late Michael Ferguson, pointed out it was going to cost at least \$25 billion in 2012. It is now 2022. It is not credible that we are going to spend \$19 billion on a fighter jet that is wrong for Canada. How does the parliamentary secretary justify this betrayal?

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying hi to my friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I appreciate her indigenous acknowledgement. I also appreciate her agreement on revenue neutrality for carbon pricing.

With regard to military procurements, that is not necessarily the topic of debate that I prepared for this morning. When the budget is launched on Thursday next week, we will have four days of budget debate followed by a very diligent process of going line by line through the budget implementation act. I would be more than happy to engage in this topic and go into great detail at that time.

• (1110)

The Deputy Speaker: We have time for a quick question and answer.

The hon. member for King—Vaughan.

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I spoke today with a family that has two children with disabilities. The father is now working two jobs to make ends meet. The mother has to stay home to take care of her children. The cost of gas, the cost of groceries and the cost of heating their home has gotten out of control.

What is the government going to do to help individuals who have escalating costs and help their children live out a good life?

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I have similar circumstances in my riding, and all members deal with issues like this every single day.

Because the Speaker acknowledged that there would be a relatively short period for a question and answer, I will not list all the things we are doing for affordability. However, I will say that one of the biggest helps that will come to that particular family, depending on the age of the children of course, is access to affordable child care. In B.C., child care costs will decrease by 50% by the end of the year and will be \$10 a day by 2025. This represents thousands of dollars in savings for families, creates new jobs and allows parents to get back into the workforce and grow the economy. That is one of many ways.

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I have a report on affordability at terrybeechmp.ca. If the member's constituent would like to come to my website, read it and then offer feedback, I would be happy to reply.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today's motion is so incoherent that I do not know where to start. I will begin, however, by saying that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

I must admit that I had to check my calendar when I read the motion. The motion contained so many contradictions that I was sure it was April 1.

Let us start with point 1, concerning excessive government spending during the pandemic. Here is what I remember about the past two years. When the pandemic started and we needed to help our businesses, implement rent assistance policies for our SMEs, and create the CERB, there were discussions among the parties. Everyone around the table thought it was a good idea to take action. Everyone saw that there was a crisis and that it was urgent. It seems that the Conservatives forget things as often as they change leaders. Now, all of a sudden, they are talking about excessive spending. All of a sudden, there is absolutely no call for it.

The motion mentions inflation and the carbon tax. Last week, I went to gas up in Mirabel, in my riding. I paid about \$2 a litre, even though Canada is a net exporter and almost all of the oil refined in Quebec is from North America. Moreover, the "Alberta rebate" was not even displayed. Alberta benefits from increases in the price of a barrel of oil. I invite my colleagues to look at Alberta's budget, which went from a deficit to a surplus. Let us see who is benefiting. The motion contains nothing about supply chains, either. It only mentions excessive spending.

It also talks about premium hikes and tax increases. The Conservative amnesia is now affecting memories from 24 hours ago. I was in the House at 6 p.m. yesterday when the hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière proposed extending EI benefits to 52 weeks for people with a serious illness, which the Bloc Québécois supports. The Conservatives are saying they will do that, but at the same time, they are saying that we should not increase payroll taxes or employee and employer premiums. That is okay, they can be right wing. However, it bothers me as an economist when the numbers do not add up. This is absolutely incoherent.

The Conservatives say one thing in English and another in French. In question period yesterday, they said in English that the carbon tax should be axed. In French, they talked about scaling back the carbon tax increase in western Canadian provinces. That is crazy. It is almost enough to make me want to be a translator. They are totally inconsistent.

When I got to the motion's third point, I thought things might be looking up. The Conservatives were talking about giving Canadians breathing room, and I was glad about that because for once they were not talking about CO₂. However, there was nothing in there about the energy transition, nothing about reducing our dependence on oil even as they complain about rising prices. I personally like consistency, but the Conservatives are just as likely to say black as they are to say white.

Actually, I would like to make an announcement. Liberals, New Democratic Liberals and Conservatives are all about Paul Martin and his fiscal responsibility. They talked about Paul Martin during question period yesterday and again today in my colleague's speech.

Do members know what Paul Martin did? He merged the Canada health transfer with the Canada social transfer and then made cuts. He forced the provinces to deal with their deficits on their own.

Do members know what that cost Quebec? It cost us ambulatory care and home care, and we are still suffering as a result. That is what Paul Martin did.

It is all well and good for the Conservatives to say that they respect provincial jurisdictions, but they do not respect the underlying principle. To them, respecting provincial jurisdictions means that the money stays in Ottawa while the provinces shoulder all the responsibilities; it means starving the beast. The provinces can have their jurisdictions and starve, because they are not going to be given any transfers.

I congratulate the Conservatives. I congratulate them for liking Paul Martin. Personally, I find this disturbing. We are familiar with Paul Martin's approach. We are familiar with the approach to fiscal responsibility. It is the typical federal approach. We know that the important responsibilities fall to the provinces and that when citizens like me need services, they never turn to the federal government, unless they need a passport. They seek help from the health care system, the education system or the child care system. All of those areas fall under provincial jurisdiction. Like the Liberals, the Conservatives tell themselves that, in order to be popular and win elections, they need to get involved in a certain issue because it is important, even though they have no jurisdiction in that area.

● (1115)

Once in power, the Liberals got involved in mental health. They appointed a Minister of Mental Health. They have never run a hospital, but they appointed a minister.

In Quebec, we are in favour of the child care system; we have had one for more than 20 years. However, if the Bloc had not been there and there had not been an election, the federal government would have imposed its conditions on us and told us what to do in an area in which we have more than 20 years of expertise. That would be like taking driving lessons from someone who does not have a driver's licence. What could go wrong?

We are in favour of dental insurance, of course, but it is not in their jurisdiction.

As far as the property tax is concerned, the Liberals say it will generate \$700 million. In reality, it will generate just \$600 million, but that amount does not include the cost of implementing the new tax.

Universal medicare is an intrusion by the NDP into provincial jurisdictions. It does not bother the NDP one bit to meddle in our territory. There are all kinds of offices and commissioners for this and that, but in the end, there are always conditions that are imposed. The Liberals are so unfamiliar with provincial affairs that they need to create offices to fine out how to impose conditions.

Let us talk about microtransfers and programs for small conditional transfers. Quebec has come to realize that being accountable to a federal government that knows nothing about the issue is so costly that it is almost better to turn down the money. The federal government is interfering more and more in provincial jurisdictions.

Now our Conservative friends are talking about fiscal responsibility and the need to reduce taxes because there are too many.

I cannot wait to see a Conservative finance minister. The Conservatives can balance a budget without decreasing spending or increasing revenues. I do not know if any of them have ever taken any accounting courses, but I would be curious to see their résumés.

Let me get back to the cuts. What are they doing? They are taking the path of least resistance and cutting transfers, like Mr. Harper did. The Liberal government is more subtle. It is not indexing the transfers; it is letting the population age and the system costs increase by 4%, 5%, 6% or 7%, with no indexation. They are letting the water get up to our chins, and they think we will not notice. That is exactly what they are doing.

This is not fiscal responsibility, it is poor federalism. It is populism, and it shows a lack of respect for the provinces. We are still waiting for the Conservatives to support our request to increase health transfers to 35% of system costs.

What we are saying is that we need to offer solutions to the crisis and to inflation. Let us start with seniors' purchasing power. We need to help our seniors, who are waiting for a cheque. What did we do this week? We debated a motion to undertake a study on seniors' finances, among other things.

When I am at my riding office, I never get calls from seniors telling me that prices are going up, that they cannot afford groceries and that we should conduct a study. No one has ever said that to me, but the House decided to conduct a study anyway. What the government is doing is putting seniors' concerns on the back burner. It never puts forward any suggestions.

Farmers and truckers are facing increases in the price of gas. Alberta is not going to do them any favours. We need a program to help them, but there is nothing there. People buying groceries need direct financial support. It could come in the form of better indexation of the GST credit or more frequent cheques. That would cost the government peanuts, but there is absolutely nothing about that. We need to strengthen the weak links in the supply chain, but there is nothing about that, either. There is absolutely nothing about the housing crisis. As my colleague said earlier, there is a problem with the supply of housing, but there is nothing about that.

Now the Conservatives are talking about fiscal responsibility. They are saying that the spending is not their fault, because they

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were not in power during the pandemic, they were not at the table and they had nothing to do with it. I have news for them: We are in the sixth wave of the pandemic, and we are not out of the woods yet. What they call fiscal responsibility, I call magical thinking. Personally, I will listen to what the Conservatives have to say once the budget is balanced.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight what the member posed in the form of a question to the Conservative Party. It took many years, but with the change of government in 2015 we were finally able to build a consensus to have CPP contributions increased. As a result of doing that and getting agreement with the provinces, led by the leadership here in Ottawa, when the people who are paying into the CPP retire, they will have more money in their pockets.

The Conservatives consistently call that a tax. Could my friend provide his thoughts on how bizarre it is to call contributions toward a pension for future retirement benefits a tax? It is not fair or just.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention.

Yes, certainly, there has been a failure in that regard. The reality is that CPP premiums are a payroll tax shared between employers and employees. However, they also represent a kind of forced savings plan, which people need. For instance, the plan makes seniors less reliant on the guaranteed income supplement and other assistance measures once they retire.

I want to take this opportunity to highlight the excellence of the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec and the Quebec pension plan, as well as my great pride in the fact that we do not have to depend on the federal fund.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. I enjoyed his analysis of the incoherence of the Conservatives' motion today.

How can we talk about balance without talking about revenues? We know that tax havens exist and that billions of dollars are being diverted from the public coffers thanks to these tools of the wealthy. We also know that rich people in Canada are accumulating more and more of the wealth generated by Canadians and by Canadian workers.

Does my colleague have anything to say about that?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief.

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First, we also proposed getting revenues from the excess profits earned by the big banks during the pandemic. I addressed that several times here in the House, and we think it is a good idea.

Then there are expenditures, of course, revenues, but also growth. In addition, we need to start the energy transition. There is a new industrial revolution going on, and we are missing the boat because our Conservative friends keep talking about oil.

They should be talking about growth and innovation instead. The Conservatives only talk about innovation when they are talking about carbon capture, and then they tell us that oil is green.

We will need to talk more about the growth of the future, because we are totally missing the boat.

• (1125)

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague that the Conservatives' motion is incoherent, but I do not agree that the federal government has no need to intervene in a crisis like the one we are experiencing with mental health.

In every province, including Quebec, the conditions in the mental health sector are unacceptable. Does the hon. member think that Canadians should not have the right to expect national standards, regardless of where in Canada they live?

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Mr. Speaker, how astonishing. A Liberal who does not agree with the idea that the federal government should mind its own business? That is no surprise to me.

The federal government has no jurisdiction in the matter. It does not manage hospitals or health care systems. It is not good at it. Just the idea that the same government that runs the department of education could get involved in health care is enough to keep me up at night.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is always difficult to rise after a speech as eloquent as that of my colleague from Mirabel.

Today we are seized with a motion about what the Conservatives would like to see in the next budget, including budgetary balance or, at the very least, an agreement on the path and deadline for reaching it. People will not be surprised to learn that there are several ways to achieve this.

I can understand why they find it difficult to differentiate between different parties' measures. Let us say that since the NPD-Liberal agreement, it is harder to tell orange from red. However, one thing is possible: Between now and April 7, some reds will turn blue from anger or from realizing that they are further right than their party. It will be interesting to see that change happen within the party. In any event, I am glad I am not in the Liberal caucus. We shall see in due course, as they say.

There is one thing that continues to stand out for me as the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue. When the Liberals are in power, they see a partisan advantage to putting off things until later, always later, even if the measure is urgently needed.

The Conservatives are also so predictable. Last week, they proposed a solution to rising prices that did not address the real problems our constituents are facing. The Conservatives are using the

oil and gas industry and are loyal only to this industry. It will get increasingly hard for them to sell that to Quebeckers or even to Canadians in other parts of the country.

This morning, I want to start by talking about how the most vulnerable have been abandoned and promises to seniors have been broken. It is infuriating to see our seniors struggling to live on what little money they get from the government, while their savings melt like snow in the sun, as we are seeing these days. It is heartbreaking and shameful to know that seniors have never been worse off. I launched a petition in my riding and am pleasantly surprised by the response we have had. We have not yet counted all the signatures, but at least 2,000 people sent in their signed householders to express their dismay at the lack of health transfers. I hope that the government gets the message.

Being unable to respond quickly to emergencies is a big deal. Can we expect more and better services from this government?

Members know that, when it comes to problems related to federal bureaucracy, I frequently urge them to intervene on behalf of their constituents and meet their needs. People wait, and wait, and wait some more. Finally it is their turn and then they have to wait for their cheque.

The problem is that some people have bills to pay and obligations to meet. I have been told that people have been calling the EI office since November and have still not gotten an answer. That has disastrous consequences. The problem here is bureaucracy. People are having a hard time even finding out the status of their EI claims. The same goes for immigration and passport applications.

The government needs to change things and find solutions in that regard. This situation has a direct impact on people's problems and, in many cases, their wallets. I am not sure that the bank would agree to wait for a mortgage payment or that a landlord would be pleased to have to wait for their rent cheque.

People are victims because the money is sitting in Ottawa. I do not think that people can live off credit for very long, but that is the reality for many people. One day, this government will have to stop putting off effective, common-sense measures and look at fixing what is no longer working.

I am sure that, next week, the government will once again shower the oil industry with millions of dollars, which is a bad choice. When will the government realize that consumers have changed their habits?

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Businesses are having a hard time adjusting too. Demand has shifted noticeably, and we need to be able to meet that demand. I am quite discouraged. However, I do hold out hope that the House may one day agree on an economic recovery that includes solutions compatible with Quebec's goals. Financially it would be viable. It is called energy transition.

Will the Minister of Finance be a pioneer in the financial world by adopting green finance measures? My colleague from Mirabel might want to expand on that because it makes sense.

For example, there could be an announcement about prohibiting RRSPs and pension funds from investing in businesses tied to fossil fuels. Many countries have already adopted this approach, and it would be a great way to demonstrate support for the energy transition.

• (1130)

I would be curious to know how much money the government and banks have invested in oil and gas since the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015. They have invested far too much. What we do know is that Canada has never come close to meeting its targets, ever since the agreement was adopted.

There is a cost associated with this, and we are paying for it in areas like health, as people are getting sicker and sicker because of the effects of smog, for example.

Speaking of health, the Bloc Québécois supports the joint request of the provinces and Quebec to increase federal health transfers from 22% to 35%. This is a reasonable request, since we know that that contribution had been set at 50% in past agreements. This contribution would go from \$42 billion to \$60 billion, an increase of \$28 billion per year. There is a consensus in Quebec and Canada that health transfers need to be increased. Only the Liberals are standing in the way of solving the chronic underfunding of the health care system.

Let us get back to the energy transition. The many problems related to the environment justify staying the course on this necessary energy transition. We could demand that the government adequately support an electric vehicle supply chain for the electrification of transport to help individuals, businesses, governments and federal Crown corporations make this transition.

If we demand that electric vehicles be available in sufficient quantities, we can help ensure that our market meets its delivery deadlines now. Let us keep the incentive programs in place long enough for people currently waiting for a car to qualify. There is a problem with that right now.

Let us call on the federal government to table its national strategy on critical and strategic minerals and announce a strategy for the battery industry so that we can launch an industry cluster of electric and smart vehicles and enable the resource regions to prepare to manufacture near raw materials to supply these battery plants. Let us shift the paradigm where we send our critical and strategic minerals to the foreign battery industry.

Obviously, the issue of semi-conductors is just as important. How is it that we are unable to produce them in Canada and we are relying on foreign countries, such as Taiwan, whose production

have slowed? It seems to me that we have all the critical and strategic minerals we need to be able to manufacture semi-conductors.

Quebec and its heavy transports are the envy of many provinces. Let us support the transport economy and especially innovation. Let us support research into advanced materials that help keep our industries competitive. These are solutions that will help us to be more productive. Higher productivity means more money in the government's coffers. That will make it much easier to achieve a balanced budget in the long term.

We must tackle the labour shortage. The job situation is good and unemployment rates are relatively low, which is good news. However, there are not enough people to fill the jobs available in this economic recovery, and that is problematic.

Why not prioritize measures such as transferring money to the provinces so they can recognize the foreign credentials of many foreign workers? That way, these people could step into positions that are difficult to fill because of a shortage of workers with the required skills.

With regard to transferring the temporary foreign worker program to the provinces, you do not have to be as smart as the member for Berthier—Maskinongé to realize just how urgent that is, especially for agriculture. We have to ensure that master's and post-doctoral students obtain permanent residency before they finish their studies. It is a great incentive that will help attract and retain talent trained here in order to meet labour needs. This is an urgent issue in Abitibi—Témiscamingue. The Université du Québec en Abitibi—Témiscamingue and the CEGEP will readily explain that we must retain talented people whose knowledge will contribute to our ability to innovate.

The federal government is so slow on immigration. Companies are getting many contracts but are forced to turn them down because they do not have the staff. It was a huge help to our industries in Abitibi—Témiscamingue and in many regions when the cap was increased to 20% in designated sectors, in particular the tourism and food industries. When will the government start fast-tracking immigration applications in the sectors experiencing labour shortages? The situation right now is unacceptable.

One example is the steel sector back home. Wait times are seven to 10 months for Ontario, which is around 10 kilometres away from us, while wait times for Quebec are 27 to 30 months. That is unacceptable. Naturally, people are giving up and crossing to the other side.

I could talk about supports for businesses, Internet access, cell service, land use or regional autonomy, especially through the creation of a territorial innovation fund by and for the regions. I could also talk about local agriculture.

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● (1135)

We have the power to make decisions and to choose what we want to work on right now. If the government truly wants to make the green transition and balance the budget, it needs to set Quebec up for a real economic recovery that reflects the future we want to build.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member spent a great deal of his time on the issue of immigration. If we take a look at what we have seen over the last couple of years, I think that we can be fairly proud of the system while always looking for improvements, of course. For example, I believe it was in 2020, with all of the refugees who settled throughout the world, a third of them settled here in Canada. Last year, we had over a half million. That is over 500,000 immigrants who settled or were granted permanent residency here in Canada.

Yes, there is always room for us to do more. We have seen a very progressive approach to dealing, for example, with Ukraine and the refugees from there. There have been 12,000-plus since the beginning of the new year, and a streamlined system is now being put in place to enhance those numbers going forward.

Can the member provide his thoughts on my comments?

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, the key word in my colleague from Winnipeg North's remarks was "system". That is the problem right there. It is frustrating to be an MP in the regions because the system does not provide services in the regions.

According to a survey carried out across Quebec and Canada, the Université du Québec en Abitibi—Témiscamingue ranks among the top five universities with regard to living conditions. My colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques will be pleased to learn that UQAT has such a good ranking.

A person's time at university is a wonderful time in their life, and it is important for students to have a good quality of life. Young people want to stay in our regions for the long term, and we are training them with that in mind.

International students want to come to this country and settle in our regions, but they are being discriminated against and turned away, mainly because they come from countries where the standard of living and GDP per capita are not high enough. Africa is a victim of this discrimination. There is a problem with the system, and we need to fix it by addressing the matter of wait times.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech. I hate to interrupt members, so I did not do so, but I am a stickler for the rules in this place where we speak of matters that are relevant to the bill. I would like to bring his attention to the actual motion, which reads:

That given that,

(i) excessive government spending has increased the national debt, and fuelled inflation to its highest level in 31 years,

(ii) taxes on Canadians continue to increase, from the carbon tax to escalator taxes to Canada Pension Plan premiums,

(iii) the government refuses to provide relief to Canadians by temporarily reducing the Goods and Services Tax on gasoline and diesel, the House call on the government to present a federal budget rooted in fiscal responsibility, with no new taxes, a path to balance, and a meaningful fiscal anchor.

I invite the member to address those points as he failed to do so in his remarks.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, it is all part of an economic philosophy. We keep hearing about two options: budget cuts or spending increases. There is a third option, one that I have put forward before, and that is coming up with ways to increase productivity to bring in more money. It is a philosophical issue.

I am a firm believer in state intervention, which can increase budgets and really make the energy transition happen.

It will be interesting to see what emerges from the new NDP-Liberal coalition agreement. Perhaps we will see a new government philosophy that is keener on invoking closure, as we saw yesterday, thereby allowing the Liberal government to do whatever it wants. If that happens, it could end up being much harder to make that energy transition happen, and that is a problem.

I believe in the value system that enables a country to take advantage of times when huge amounts of money are coming in to better redistribute wealth and engage in long-term change strategies. We learned that from Keynes.

I am not at all in favour of the solutions put forward in the Conservatives' motion. I think we need long-term solutions, and I have made several such proposals, which the Bloc Québécois have championed and I am proud of.

● (1140)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats are worried about the Conservatives' approach to tackling the affordability crisis.

Does my colleague think the rich should pay their fair share through higher taxes? Does he think that would help tackle inequality?

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Mr. Speaker, all social progress must be paid for, of course, but the measures implemented need to be financially viable.

I liked the question from one of my colleagues, who suggested going after tax havens to find the money. Obviously, there is work to be done in that area.

In my view, it is important to create winning conditions for our SMEs. After two years of COVID-19, we really need to help our SMEs recover so as to ensure that Canada's productivity increases in a sustainable way.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to today's motion because it provides an opportunity to understand a little better some of the thinking of our Conservative colleagues in the House. It lays out quite nicely some of the deficiencies in their thinking about the current economic problems that we are facing in Canada. It is also an opportunity to highlight some of the ways in which New Democrats think differently about these things and the different kinds of solutions that we would propose to the problems of our day.

I thought I might proceed just by walking through the motion, as it were, beginning with its first premise, paragraph (i), which says:

excessive government spending has increased the deficit, the national debt, and fuelled inflation to its highest level in 31 years....

There is clearly a sense in which it is trivially true that government spending increases the deficit. It is hard to have a public deficit if the government is not spending money, so that is true. It is always important to ask what the government is getting for that expenditure or, perhaps more specifically and importantly, what the public and what Canadians are getting for that expenditure, because there are different kinds of expenditures.

There are expenditures that are simply passing expenditures, and then there is expenditure that represents investment. Of course, one of the important aspects of investment is return. When we talk about public spending, there are different ways that we can get return on investment. We can get return on investment on the public books themselves. Sometimes we see that when governments invest in things that increase government revenue, the government actually ends up getting more money coming back. That is reflected on its books.

When we talk about public investment, there is an important difference from investment in the private sector. We see this far less, because it is a different mandate. Having a mandate to increase private profit is very different from having a public interest mandate. Sometimes when we invest from the public purse, the return on investment is experienced not on the government books but by the public. Sometimes it is in their household books, and sometimes it is in the benefit of employment and other things that obviously affect household budgets.

For instance, when New Democrats talk about public expenditure on something such as pharmacare, that is not because we love larger government programs for their own sake or because we think that this spending will not benefit Canadians or that there will not be a return on investment. It is quite the contrary. We support, and have fought a long time for, and are looking forward to making further progress on, a national pharmacare plan because we understand that it is going to have a direct impact on the household budgets of Canadians, so many of whom we have heard from.

In fact, I have heard Conservatives raise the issue of Canadians who are struggling to afford their medication, having to cut pills, and having to raid other budgets, such as their food budgets and their rent budgets, in order to get the life-saving medication that they need. That is why New Democrats support public investment in something that will lower the cost of prescription drugs. That makes sense to us.

That is a philosophical difference, because it says that we should be sharing the cost of trying to provide the things that our families and communities all need. It says that it is wrong for a small cross-section, the top 1% or 10% depending on how we measure it or look at it, to get to walk away with an increasingly larger piece of the pie while so many in Canada continue to struggle.

When we say let us get it off the government books, it does not go away. The federal government could give itself a pat on the back, as Conservatives did in the Harper years, for having smaller deficits, but those deficits do not go away. They get transferred to the household budgets of Canadians who continue to struggle with the cost of prescription drugs. They continue to struggle in the context of a housing market that has gotten out of control, and they continue to struggle with the cost of dental care, for which very few Canadians have ever had any meaningful help. We are optimistic about children from low-income families and their parents being able to afford to get help with those real problems that can have a lasting impact on their lives. There are real financial costs of them being able to get access to that service.

• (1145)

Is it true that government spending contributes to deficits? Of course, in fact there are no deficits without government spending. However, is that spending addressing other real deficits in the household incomes of Canadians? I have just argued that in the case of pharmacare and dental care, and I could go on but I will not because I want to get to the other parts of the motion. Depending on the expenditure, that has an impact by reducing the household deficits of many Canadians while increasing their access to services. That is a deficit that exists. It is just that low-income Canadians are facing that deficit on their own. It is not measured and publicly reported somewhere.

By having a public program, we could increase access to those services that are so important for Canadians' lives, and that means we are actually going to be measuring and recording that deficit somewhere. Gladly for me and for New Democrats, it means somewhere we are sharing that cost collectively, including with the people who have the most ability to pay for those things. Unfortunately many Canadians are just not in a position to pay for those things, fewer and fewer Canadians, as inflation increases.

The other issue with this first clause is that it pretends, wrongly, that government spending is the only driver of inflation. I think it is pretty obvious to anyone with ears to hear and eyes to see that this is not the case. Certainly we heard at the finance committee that some are of the opinion that quantitative easing in the context of the pandemic has increased the access to capital and that has allowed, particularly investors, to drive up the cost of housing.

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There are actually ways to address this that do not involve any more public expenditure. For instance, having a higher down payment requirement for investors, as opposed to people who are trying to buy their own family home, is a way the government could cool the investment climate in the Canadian housing market without spending a dime. Having a differential rate on CMHC mortgage insurance for people who are buying investment properties as opposed to principal residences is another way to do that without spending a dime. In fact it would cause more revenue to come in. To the extent that the investment culture continued and to the extent that it did not, it would relieve demand in the housing market, which presumably should have a cooling effect on prices.

However, some pretend that quantitative easing is the only reason there has been incredible inflation in the housing market, which incidentally is not even really represented in the CPI figures, and that has been the subject of some debate at the finance committee. In fact, as housing prices cool in response to higher interest rates, it is likely that we will see inflation go up in the short term, because that is actually recorded. These are questions about how accountants and economists record inflation, and I think are less directly connected to what Canadians are actually experiencing. Even if the nominal inflation rate goes up, if housing prices are coming down, Canadians are going to benefit even in the context where apparently inflation is going up.

It makes no sense to talk about inflation in the current context without recognizing the production stoppages that have occurred as a result of the pandemic. There is still a lot of recovering happening, because we have a just-in-time economy. It is not like there were massive piles of inventory. Production capacity is pretty well attuned, in many industries, to demand.

Trying to make up for lost time is a difficult thing. That is going to take time. In the meantime, we have seen climate-induced natural disasters wreak havoc on the infrastructure required to deliver goods in a timely way in that just-in-time economy I was just talking about, and that drives up costs as well. There are a number of other causes of inflation that are well outside the control of government. That is why we think it is so important that the government act on the things it can act on and make a difference where it can.

The second bullet recognizes that there is a carbon tax increase coming. There is no question. It talks about escalator taxes, specifically referring to the escalator on the excise tax. It talks about Canada pension plan premiums as a tax.

• (1150)

Again, there is a kind of trivial sense in which that is true. As it happens, accountants, for convenience, have chosen to record Canada pension plan costs in their payroll tax ledger. That is fair enough. I am glad that is convenient for accountants, but we should not allow ourselves to be duped by a reasonable professional standard that allows them to talk about the cost per person on their payroll into thinking that the Canada pension plan is really a tax, because it is not. It is part of the wage package Canadians expect when they go in to work. They do not just look at their hourly wage. They look at their benefit package, if they are fortunate enough to be employed at a workplace that has one, and that is certainly something we want for more Canadians.

We also recognize that when we have universal programs, whether they are pharmacare or dental care, they help provide a competitive advantage to Canadian companies over their international competitors, because these are things that help them to attract workers, in the context of a labour shortage, without having to pay the costs of those plans. They might pay them through their taxes. If we have a fair tax system, they will pay for it. They will pay for it through their taxes, but the simplicity of being able to offer employees good benefits makes locating in Canada a more competitive and attractive option for international firms.

We know this to be true because that has been true of medicare over the years, and that is something many companies look favourably upon when they are considering where to locate their companies, but the Canada pension plan is not a tax. It is part of the wage package for which employees show up to work every day.

I have heard Conservatives get up in the House and talk about how difficult inflation is on seniors because their pensions are not keeping up with expenses. One of the ways we can do that is by building in a better pension for Canadian workers, and the only universal fully portable plan we have is the Canada pension plan. In fact, over 70% of Canadian workers right now do not have a workplace pension, which means the CPP is the only pension they have, apart from their own individual investments. We can be sure, when we talk about Canadians who are only \$200 a month away from bankruptcy every month, they are not able to put a lot into any kind of personal savings vehicle to have their personal plan for retirement. This means the CPP is what they will be left with. That is why it is important to have higher CPP premiums in order to build a public pension plan that can actually allow people to retire with dignity and to bear some of the additional costs that happen over time.

As we see prices increase, it has been a problem that pensions have not kept pace with the cost of inflation, and the way to do that is by building a stronger public pension plan. If we mislead Canadians by calling that a simple tax increase, then I think we are leading them down the garden path and we are perpetuating a problem of pension income that has already been the case for far too long.

Yes, there are some tax increases. I would also say there are some things being called tax increases in this motion that are not, in fact, tax increases, and it does a disservice to Canadians to pretend that these things are tax increases, when they are clearly not.

Business of Supply

The Conservatives say that the government refuses to provide relief to Canadians by temporarily reducing the goods and services tax on gasoline and diesel. That is true; it is not happening. For our part, I would remind the House that last week New Democrats proposed an amendment to the Conservative motion. We said we are willing to consider broad-based temporary tax relief as one way to try to help Canadians through a difficult time, but we proposed that this tax relief come on home heating instead of gas at the pump, and there were a number of reasons for that.

There are more people who heat their homes than drive. There are people who heat their homes with things other than gasoline, so providing tax relief in that way would be a way of providing tax relief that is not prejudiced in favour of the oil and gas sector, but would recognize a more diverse suite of energy proposals. We also argued that, in many cases when it comes to utilities for home heating, there is regulation on price increases, which means it is harder for companies to simply make up the difference that is caused by the lower tax by raising prices to capture that fiscal room for themselves to increase their profits instead of passing it on to consumers.

We thought those were at least three very good reasons to provide that broad-based temporary tax relief on home heating instead of gas at the pump, and all we have gotten from the Conservatives so far on that was a simple no.

● (1155)

Canadians may not know that on opposition day motions, the person who presents the motion has to agree to an amendment in order for it to be debated and voted on. Earlier today, I asked the member who brought this motion forward, the member of Parliament for Abbotsford, if he could explain to the House why Conservatives were not prepared to entertain temporary tax relief on home heating instead of gas at the pump. While he did say a lot of things in response, he did not mention home heating at all, so we continue to wait on that answer.

I would say the motion misrepresents the will of the House. There is an opportunity to compromise on the question of temporary broad-based tax relief, but when we proposed a solution to that and a way forward in an attempt to co-operate and find consensus, the Conservatives declined that opportunity and should not have been surprised that their motion, therefore, did not pass.

What is the final call to action of this motion? It is that “the House call on the government to present a federal budget rooted in fiscal responsibility, with no new taxes, a path to balance, and a meaningful fiscal anchor.” Here is the incoherence in the motion. It talks about a path to balance. It talks about fiscal responsibility, and it explicitly excludes the entire revenue side of balancing the books. Rare is the conversation around corporate boardroom tables where they say their books are in bad shape, they need to figure this one out for the sake of their investors and they want to be able to pay out higher dividends and a better return on shares, but they are not going to talk about how the company can raise new revenue or increase its revenue and they just want to get back to balance without any question of revenue. That makes no sense.

In the public context, it makes no sense because, as the Parliamentary Budget Officer reported just in December, 1% of Canadians now own and control 25% of the wealth that is generated in

Canada. They are walking away with it without paying any taxes on it through tax haven agreements. Previously, the PBO estimated this is costing Canadian taxpayers \$25 billion a year. The fact that the Conservatives would talk about balancing the budget and deliberately exclude looking at that as a way to try to bring things back to balance, instead of simply cutting things that Canadians are depending upon, mystifies me.

It is one of the important differences between Conservatives and New Democrats, because we think tax havens should absolutely be part of the conversation. New Democrats have also run on having a wealth tax on fortunes over \$10 million. There is not a lot of people with fortunes of \$10 million or more in Canada. In terms of asking them to pay a little bit more, particularly in light of having seen Canada's billionaires expand their wealth exponentially during the pandemic, it is ridiculous to me that idea would be ruled out of order and not a possibility without further debate or discussion.

We have seen a number of large companies in certain industries, which were profitable before the pandemic, become even more profitable during the pandemic. It is why New Democrats continue to insist on the idea of having an excess profit tax, where we look at their average profits over the years in advance of the pandemic, we look at their average profits postpandemic and on the amount that their pandemic profits exceed their prepandemic average, we have a higher incremental rate of tax to make sure they are paying their fair share and not profiteering on the pandemic.

That is a reasonable way to fund the services that Canadians need and to fund some of the things that Conservatives themselves, depending on the day, will call for to provide relief to Canadian households that are in economic distress, but this motion says, no, none of that. Conservatives are not interested in hearing those ideas or talking about the revenue side of balancing the budget.

We, in the NDP, think that is preposterous and it is why we will not be supporting the motion today.

● (1200)

The Deputy Speaker: I will interrupt the proceedings, and we will come back to questions and comments after.

The Chair has received notice of a question of privilege by the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

*Privilege***PRIVILEGE**

ALLEGED BREACHES OF PRIVILEGE PRESENTED IN THE THIRD REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a question of privilege related to the third report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics tabled earlier today. This report was previously tabled as the committee's second report in the second session of the 43rd Parliament and spawned two questions of privilege from my predecessors, as official opposition shadow ministers for ethics.

Last June, the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes raised this question of privilege on the day the report was originally tabled. Because the Chair had not come back to the House with a ruling before Parliament was dissolved last summer, the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil renewed the question of privilege in November on the day of the Speech from the Throne.

Concerning the second question of privilege, the Chair ruled, on December 9, 2021, at page 955 of the Debates, that it was:

...not possible in the current circumstances to seize the House on these questions of privilege....

By tabling its third report today, the ethics committee has changed those circumstances. Indeed, as the Chair ruled in December:

Since we are in a new Parliament, the issues raised are no longer before the House. It is up to the House and its committees to decide whether it is desirable to adopt these orders once again in the new Parliament.

The Chair also pointedly referenced an October 9, 1997, ruling of Speaker Parent. That case concerned the leak of a draft committee report in the dying days of the preceding Parliament, which our Chair favourably cited, saw Speaker Parent uphold, at page 690 of Debates:

If after examination a committee were to present a report recommending that this issue required further consideration, the House would have the opportunity of considering the issue at that time.

The ethics committee has gone to the trouble of considering and passing a motion to readopt word for word its former second report so as to be able to put these issues and the relevant evidence before the House once again.

In brief, the committee's third report can be relied upon to establish no fewer than seven breaches of privilege. I will repeat that: seven breaches of privileges.

The first three concern the failures of Rick Thies, Amitpal Singh and Ben Chin to appear before committee as ordered by the House. The next three relate to the government's instructions to each of these three witnesses to disregard a lawful order of the House of Commons. Finally, there is the prevaricating or misleading evidence given by the hon. member for Waterloo.

Since my colleagues previously laid out extensive arguments, and in the case of the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes provided written submissions at the request of the Assistant Deputy Speaker, I will save the House a

considerable amount of time by referring the Chair to these previous arguments, both oral and written, and adopt them as my own.

That being said, there are a few points I ought to address briefly in connection with the December 9 ruling. On page 954, the Chair stated:

...as a result of the dissolution of the 43rd Parliament, the orders of the House...have expired. The government and the people summoned to appear are released from their obligations.

It is correct to say that the witnesses were released from their obligations at dissolution, but all the same, an election call did not allow for their contempt to be purged.

This autumn, the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes shared several precedents in support of the proposition that one Parliament may punish a contempt committed against a predecessor Parliament. The Chair addressed these arguments, noting:

Distinctions must be made between the matter at hand and the precedents cited. When we examine the latter, the House had not expressed itself beforehand...

To be fair, unlike the situation concerning the government's failure to table documents concerning Winnipeg's National Microbiology Laboratory, the House had not yet pronounced itself on a privilege motion arising from the ethics committee work. The original question of privilege was outstanding when Parliament was dissolved, and the second question of privilege did not proceed in the absence of a renewed committee report.

With the third report tabled earlier today, the House is now free to express itself concerning the apparent contempts shown in the face of the ethics committee. Even if the Chair were to take the interpretation that the House had pronounced itself on the witnesses when it originally ordered their attendance on March 25, 2021, a year ago, the issues respecting the government's role in preventing their attendance, as well as the concerns about the testimony of the member for Waterloo, were only brought to the House's attention when the former second report was tabled.

As I noted, it was not pronounced upon by the House before the Prime Minister sent the country early to the polls last summer.

● (1205)

Of course, I will quickly note that it is not an interpretation I would share. Instead, I would argue the House has not pronounced on any privilege matters here, but I do recognize that other perspectives might exist.

In closing, the WE scandal itself was a seriously blight on good government in the country. The ethics committee has done good work shining a light on some of the issues exposed. However, as the ethics committee report also shows, the scandalous behaviour did not stop the Prime Minister's government from offering more than half a billion dollars to his pals, the Kielburgers, but it continued through the committee's study with the open contempt of Parliament shown by cabinet ministers and their staff.

By readopting and retabling this report today, the ethics committee is saying that it does not wish for such irresponsible behaviour to go unchecked and unaddressed.

I would like to quote from the supplementary opinion attached to that report today. It says:

Whether it is illegal vacations to billionaire island, ClamScam, forgotten French villas, political interference in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin, or the WE Scandal – this Liberal government's complete disregard for good ethical governance has greatly damaged Canadian's trust in their governing institutions [including here, in Parliament]. The existence of a two-tiered set of laws is a reality for everyday Canadians. There is one set of rules for the Liberal elite in this country and another set for everyone else.

This is why I am prepared to move an appropriate motion, should you find a prima facie case of privilege.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to underscore that the Green Party of Canada was dissatisfied with the level of investigation that took place into the SNC-Lavalin affair and into efforts to impede the investigation by the RCMP. It is not exactly the same point of privilege raised, but it is tangential to it.

I certainly think the public of Canada needs to know why pressures were placed on our former minister of justice, the hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould, who was also, of course, the then attorney general of Canada.

I am not convinced those pressures came from the PMO. I will say that. I have an open mind on that question. However, pressures were brought to bear, and I think it requires a full investigation, which we have not had.

• (1210)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois reserves the right to intervene on this question of privilege at a later date.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that the NDP House leader may wish to weigh in on this at some future point.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for the question of privilege. We will review the information and get back to the House as soon as is practical.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL BUDGET

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP backed the government, which will be presenting a budget with no plan to balance whatsoever. The NDP has given this government, to 2025, full backup to run a deficit, doubling the national debt within six and a half years.

Inflation is at the highest in decades. Canadians cannot make ends meet, and as far as bringing in food, going to school, buying a

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car or using transportation, their lives are getting more expensive by the day. Still the NDP is backing the government.

I am not sure how the hon. member can defend his position and the government's position as well, considering where the money is going to come from. That is the question they are not asking. They want all these fantasies of spending at all levels. They want to please everybody, but the question they are not asking themselves is where the money is coming from.

As far as now, the money is only coming from Canadians who need the money the most, Canadians who cannot make ends meet and Canadians who want to see a better future.

Can the hon. member tell us where the money is going to come from?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would start by noting that Canada is not alone in having made massive expenditures during the pandemic period. We are alongside our G20 colleagues in having made incredible expenditures, so it is not something that is out of the ordinary with respect to responding to the pandemic. A lot of that spending went into direct transfers to individual households to help weather the economic consequences of the pandemic.

Finally, I would reiterate a few of the points from the end of my speech, which were very much about revenue. I mentioned having a wealth tax on fortunes of \$10 million and over as a way to generate revenue, as well as closing the tax havens, which would bring in \$25 billion in tax revenue from the most wealthy. It is not the people who are struggling with the cost of inflation, but those who are best able to cope with it, who are getting away with a further \$25 billion in wealth every year because of our tax haven arrangements.

These are things we can do to address the revenue side. It is simply not true that New Democrats are not interested in the question of where the money comes from. We simply do not agree with the Conservatives that the wealthiest among us should continue to get a free ride while everyone else struggles.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I think gets missed in a lot of the rhetoric we hear from the Conservatives is when they say we should stop spending government dollars on programs. I will use the example of child care. In Canada, for the first time, we now have a national child care plan.

Mr. Speaker, if we look at the impact that has had in your home province of Quebec, it increased the workforce significantly. It is believed the same will happen at the national level, where we will have more people engaged in the workforce. Yes, there is a cost to providing that plan, but there will be many social and economic benefits because there will be more people in the workforce who will be paying taxes.

I wonder if my friend could provide his thoughts on the fact that the government spending money does not necessarily mean it is an absolute cost because often there is revenue that is generated.

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• (1215)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for returning to one of the points I made in my speech, which is the idea of public investment and the ways in which the public can get a return on investment from public spending.

Child care is a very good example. It is well documented that investments in child care can help grow the economy, and one of the by-products of growing the economy is an increase in government revenue. This was an argument we made vociferously in this place from 2015 onward. At the time, the Liberals ridiculed us, saying this was not something they could do, that it did not make sense because it was a provincial jurisdiction, that the provinces would never agree to it and they would not be interested in the money. We of course knew that leadership and money coming from the federal government would allow the provinces to get more ambitious in the child care services they provide, which would have a beneficial effect on the economy.

We are glad the Liberals finally came around on child care. That is why we continue to push on a number of measures. We brought them around on dental care after they voted against it only nine months ago. We are looking forward to similar returns on investment for the Canadian public by putting this program in place as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about balancing public finances and balancing the budget, I think the concept of tax fairness is fundamental.

When we talk about reducing the deficit without even mentioning the possibility of tackling the problem of tax havens or of creating a special tax on the super wealthy and those who have profited from the crisis, while so many SMEs have been struggling during the pandemic and are at the end of their rope and so many of them have been forced to shut down after so many lockdowns, it seems to me that this is simply called “deficit reduction”. However, it is reducing the deficit at the expense of the population and that of the provinces and their public services, similar to what happened during the Chrétien and Martin years.

This could only be regarded as the rich looking out for the rich.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, it was not just the provinces but the people that they served who suffered immensely when the Chrétien-Martin government of the 1990s made the deepest cuts that we have seen to the health and social transfers.

New Democrats are concerned to restore a meaningful role for the federal government in funding health services. In some cases, that means doing it ambitiously by providing programs in collaboration with the provinces that will bring new services to Canadians through public funding, but it also means making up for the simple absence of federal funding with some unconditional funding for the provinces as well. We think there is an appropriate mix of those things that can contribute to improving health care and other services in Canada.

The way to do that is to make sure that the wealthiest are paying their fair share. There is a trajectory over the last 30 or more years in Canada of the people at the top paying less and less in taxes. In fact, there was a Liberal platform commitment to impose a minimum tax on the wealthiest because their effective rate of taxation is often lower than it is for the poorest Canadians who are paying taxes in Canada. There is something incredibly perverse about that. It is something government action can fix, and there will be a salutary effect on the books here in Ottawa if we do it.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to get back to the idea that we should be cancelling the increase in the carbon tax because of its impact on Canadians.

Just to review some reality that we have not had injected yet, as of tomorrow, the carbon tax impact for a litre of gas will be 2.2¢ a litre. However, because of the global instability and because of what is happening in Ukraine and with the lockdowns in China, gas prices have had volatility of up to 32¢ in the last month in the GTA, and yes, we have gas experts predicting it will drop by 15¢ because of increased supplies from the opening up of reserves.

I see the increase in the gas tax for the purpose of adding to the carbon price as being so small as to be a blip in a sea of volatility. Can the hon. member comment?

• (1220)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands makes an excellent point. In fact, I think in my lifetime alone, I have seen long weekends have a bigger impact on the price of gasoline than the carbon tax.

We know that oil and gas companies are prepared to raise the price at the pump for just about any reason, and sometimes for no reason at all. It is the wrong focus if we are going to talk about meaningful tax relief for Canadians in this difficult time. It is why we proposed providing some relief on home heating costs instead, because often those prices are regulated and companies actually have to provide a justification for a rate increase and can be denied those rate increases if there is not an adequate reason. It was very much along those lines that we proposed the amendment that the Conservatives refused last week.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak in the House today on this important opposition day motion, and I will be sharing my time with the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

Next week we will find out what is contained in the Liberals' budget. This will be a historic budget, as the NDP has already pledged to vote in favour without even knowing its contents. If my NDP colleagues are not nervous, I certainly am.

The pre-budget leaks have not started just yet, but we know that in the coming days a few selected journalists will be given a couple of tidbits to help set the narrative. It is a tactic that is as old as time, and I am hoping the Minister of Finance will be signalling to the media that she will be tabling a plan to balance the budget.

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Our motion today is starting the important conversation about getting our nation's finances back in order. It does not dictate what the government must spend money on, but it does ask the Liberals to finally table a plan that outlines a path back to balance.

The government's budget is by far the most important document of the parliamentary cycle. Louis XIV's finance minister stated, "The art of taxation consists in so plucking the goose as to obtain the largest possible amount of feathers with the smallest possible amount of hissing." Well, I doubt the Minister of Finance will agree with that statement.

I know that every member of Parliament is hearing from their constituents about the cost-of-living crisis that we are in today. If Liberal MPs went to their local grocery store or gas station and asked their constituents if they wanted the government to provide some tax relief, the overwhelming answer would be "yes".

This government's nickel-and-diming is starting to add up. This is the government that said it would never introduce a Netflix tax, and then it did. Now it wants the CRTC to regulate online content providers, and inevitably those costs will be passed down to businesses and consumers.

The carbon tax is going up this Friday, tomorrow, as my colleagues were just talking about, which will push the price of fuel even higher. Just last week, the Liberals voted against our Conservative motion to provide GST relief at the pump, but are now refusing to press "Pause" on the carbon tax hike, and they are raising payroll taxes on businesses just as many are clawing their way out of this terrible pandemic.

While the Liberals may view themselves as Robin Hood, in reality they are more like the Sheriff of Nottingham, ever on the hunt for whatever they can scrounge up. We have never seen a government so committed to class warfare as this one. They fought my private member's bill on the transfer of small businesses and farms because they thought it would provide tax loopholes for families. I, like many of my colleagues in this place, had to endure listening to speeches by the ever-present members for Winnipeg North and Kingston and the Islands about how awful my bill was. Thank goodness most of the Liberal MPs who studied my bill had the fortitude to ignore their nonsensical rhetoric and voted in favour of it. Let us never forget that this is the government that called entrepreneurs, farmers and small business tax cheats.

I remember all too well when the Liberals rolled back the TFSA limits because they said it was only helping the wealthy. This is a government that also put up an escalator tax on Canadian spirits and alcohol, another needless cash grab.

I also get the fact that the Liberals want us to fight them on their tax hikes on big-ticket purchases. That is politics, and it is part of the parcel of how the government wants to define itself and to wedge the opposition. If anyone on the Liberal bench does not want to admit that fact, they can save their breath and start proposing solutions rather than just tax hikes.

In the budget next week, I am eager to see a plan to get inflation under control. I want to see a commitment to stop raising taxes. I want to see a plan to provide relief for families and seniors. I want to see a plan that brings spending levels back down to earth. I want

to see a strategy that encourages the private sector to start building homes, that gets energy and mining projects built and that acknowledges that Canada can be a food superpower.

Regardless of what some may have us believe, there is not an unlimited supply of money. A good finance minister has the strength to tell her colleagues "no", the courage to defend those tough choices and the ingenuity of reprioritizing spending where it matters the most.

It was not that long ago that this government vocalized such commitments. Back in the budget of 2017, Scott Brison was tasked to conduct a spending review to find government waste. He was tasked with finding and eliminating poorly targeted and inefficient programs, wasteful spending and ineffective and obsolete government initiatives.

• (1225)

Like many parliamentarians, I was eager to see what Mr. Brison would discover and what he would decide to eliminate. We already knew by then that the government's most modest deficits had turned into permanent deficits. Here we are, four or five years later, and no savings were ever found and no waste was ever eliminated.

I do not know a single Canadian who believes that the government is running at peak performance. If one exists, they are probably on the other side of the House across the floor. Knowing Mr. Brison, he probably did offer some solid ideas to reduce spending and improve government efficiency, but did his proposals fall on deaf ears?

One can only speculate on how difficult it must be for a minister in the Liberal government to reduce government spending. Now Mr. Brison is retweeting the thoughts of a Conservative leadership candidate on approving an energy project and is providing his thoughts on the new NDP-Liberal alliance. He is now a distraught Liberal, worried about the possibility of the decades of economic damage that this new parliamentary alliance with the NDP will cause. When the Liberals have lost Scott Brison, it is clear they have lost their way.

I too am worried. Taxpayers, job creators and entrepreneurs are already bracing themselves for next week's budget. They are worried about the never-ending deficits. I have already said that today's deficits are tomorrow's taxes, but I remain hopeful. I am hopeful because the best day to adjust course is today. If steps are taken today, it will be all the easier to restore Canada's fiscal future. Waiting, on the other hand, will only make things worse.

Business of Supply

It is easy to look the other way. It is easy to pretend Canadians are not facing a serious cost-of-living crisis and it is easy to make popular short-term decisions for political reasons. However, there is courage in recognizing when the old approach is failing. I am asking the Liberal government to think outside of the narrow lines it has drawn for itself and do what is right. There is no question that we must respond to today's challenges, but there is much to be said about also being ready for whatever tomorrow brings.

I fully understand that we had to help people get through the pandemic. As we look to the future, it is now time for the Liberals to make some tough decisions. They can no longer kick the can further down the road. The budget next week must tell ministers to start looking inwards for funding to help pay for any new spending commitments.

If a minister wants to introduce a new spending initiative, the Minister of Finance cannot just add that to the deficit. Ministers should review how their department delivers programs and see if there are ways to trim costs to reallocate those funds to pay for new commitments. This would force every minister to scrutinize every program they oversee. It would task them with determining if every program is meeting its objectives or can be delivered differently. I know these conversations will not be easy, but they are necessary. For those thinking this is common practice in government, I can assure them it is not.

In closing, I know there are going to be costs in the years ahead to purchase equipment the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces need to do their jobs. There are going to be further expenditures to invest in our health care system and to support our seniors. These are things every member in the House recognizes. I implore my colleagues to vote in favour of this motion, which calls on government to present a federal budget rooted in fiscal responsibility, with no new taxes, a path to balance and a meaningful fiscal anchor. That is something that we should all support. Our responsibility is not only to Canadians today but to future generations, and the budget should signal as much.

• (1230)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things I would agree with in the member's remarks. The importance of Canada vis-à-vis its role in agriculture is a value that he and I share, as well as our respect for Scott Brison, my predecessor. I will certainly second him on his work over 21 years, and let me go on the record to thank him for his public service.

The member opposite talked about inflation and bringing inflation under control. While we know this is a global problem, it is not easy to tackle it, and other governments in the past have had to make policy choices.

As my question for the member opposite, with regard to inflation and the challenges inflation puts on vulnerable Canadians, does he think there should be a continued emphasis on targeted programs to support vulnerable Canadians, even if it means that there has to be some continued spending in that domain, or does he think it is best to perhaps cut certain social programs and let monetary policy take effect by increasing interest rates to try to get inflation down, which would also have corresponding benefits for individuals who—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie): The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent question. My hon. colleague knows from the speech I just gave that I am very concerned about the inflationary aspects of the government spending we have seen. I noted that it does take hard decisions. I am not saying cut those programs. I am saying realign the priorities of the government departments for each minister and look internally to find out where the savings will be and how they can deliver new programs, perhaps with the same amount of funds.

I will give a prime example. In the 2009 recession, Prime Minister Harper spent \$150 billion. Everybody thought that was an atrocious amount of money, but the plan, as he said right from day one, was to balance the budget in seven years and he did it in six.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want to cut the deficit and taxes while still taking care of people. It is as though money were falling from the sky.

Money does not fall from the sky, but we do know where to find some. Major Canadian banks made fat profits of nearly \$60 billion in 2021.

Why has his party always opposed abolishing tax havens for major Canadian banks?

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague knows that it was the Harper government that went after the offshore accounts of people who were transferring funds out of the country in those areas. I will go back to saying that we need to be very responsible in regard to how money is managed. We know we had to do some spending to get through the pandemic, but even the Parliamentary Budget Officer has said that pandemic issues account for only a third of that money. The other two-thirds were not used in those areas. That is what I mean by responsible spending and responsible accounting.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the sentiment shared by my colleague around the struggles that many are facing. Obviously we know that for many in rural Manitoba, where life was more expensive to begin with, life has only become more challenging for people, families and communities. It is clear that we do need federal action.

Obviously we have expressed disagreement with what is being proposed today, but I am wondering if the member does not also see the need to make sure that the wealthiest among us, who have made significant profits, pay their fair share of taxes so that money can be reinvested in supporting our communities across the country.

Business of Supply

• (1235)

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, we have a system in Canada today that has over a 50% tax rate for a lot of Canadians who are in those brackets the member was just talking about. How much further can we go? As an example, what the Liberals did in one of their first budgets was to increase the tax on those making over \$200,000 by 1%. Only a Liberal government could do what it did. It raised the tax to 1% but received less money. All I am saying is that Canadians will find new accounting processes to change the law or get around what the Liberals are trying to do with regard to this, even though we tried to be fiscally accountable in the years I just pointed out and did balance the budget with a plan. All I am asking for today in this budget is that there is a plan to allow Canadians to escape from some of the inflation that has been caused by the pandemic.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has announced that she will table a NDP-Liberal budget on April 7. We are very worried. We have serious concerns. We moved a motion, which I will read, because that is what we are debating today.

That, given that,

- (i) excessive government spending has increased the deficit, the national debt, and fuelled inflation to its highest level in 31 years,
- (ii) taxes on Canadians continue to increase, from the carbon tax to escalator taxes to Canada Pension Plan premiums,
- (iii) the government refuses to provide relief to Canadians by temporarily reducing the Goods and Services Tax on gasoline and diesel,

the House call on the government to present a federal budget rooted in fiscal responsibility, with no new taxes, a path to balance, and a meaningful fiscal anchor.

I rise today to try to make the government listen to reason. This government listens only to itself and prefers to focus its efforts on making deals behind closed doors with the NDP. As we know, the NDP is a party that pushes for very expensive plans. The Liberal Party of Canada is now the NDP-Liberal party. Take a hard left, everyone.

Times are tough for Canadians, Quebeckers and the people in my riding. Inflation is at 5.7%, the highest it has been in 30 years. This runaway inflation is crippling our families, who are struggling to pay for groceries, which will cost them \$1,000 more this year. They are struggling to pay for fuel. This morning, in my riding, Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, gas was going for \$1.75 a litre. Seniors are wondering what they should pay for first among the essentials that they need.

As for real estate, young people are unable to achieve their dream of owning their first home because of skyrocketing real estate costs. On March 15, the Canadian Real Estate Association released the highest real estate inflation numbers ever recorded. In fact, house prices have increased by 3.5% over the past month alone and by nearly 30%—29.2% to be precise—over the past year. It is crazy.

House prices have doubled since the Liberals came to power in 2015, when the average house price was \$434,500. That same house now costs \$868,400. How is a young couple supposed to buy

their first home? This makes the dream of home ownership impossible for families and young people all across the country.

Even better, recently released documents show that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, or CMHC, paid more than \$48 million in bonuses over the past two years, while four in five Canadian families were forced to cut spending and tighten their budgets. The CMHC's only purpose is to make housing more affordable for all Canadians, yet it is rewarding its own employees with exorbitant bonuses when the real estate sector has become untenable.

That is a snapshot of the Liberals' management style, which is reckless, illogical and indulgent.

Our regional economies are under pressure as well, because businesses cannot find the workers they need.

• (1240)

Add to that huge issues with processing foreign workers' applications, and it makes for the perfect storm.

My colleague from Beauce could talk about immigration issues, a perennial headache for the people working in our riding offices. We have asked the government countless questions about this, but we have never received an answer, even though it is a very serious problem that affects our regions.

Last August, Chaudière-Appalaches elected officials and business community representatives carried out a study documenting the impact of the labour shortage on the economy of this very productive and very large region of Quebec.

According to the study, the 309 manufacturers surveyed have 3,300 vacancies. The labour shortage is responsible for \$2 billion in losses due to low productivity in the Chaudière-Appalaches region alone. Because of the labour shortage, production drops and businesses have to turn down contracts and miss out on all kinds of opportunities. It also means less money in government coffers. Here again, as usual, the government is a very bad manager.

This government has been spending recklessly ever since it came to power. The Parliamentary Budget Officer even said that it was time to stop spending so much. The debt is out of control, and this government is like a rudderless ship, adrift on the ocean, with no plan for balancing the budget. The Liberal government's objective is to stay in power by forming dubious alliances with the NDP rather than working to balance the budget through rigorous management of public funds, and yet that is what Canadians expect of us.

Business of Supply

Our constituents want a serious government that properly manages public funds, the money they work hard to earn every day. Doing so requires courage and political will. This government has been running a deficit since 2015 and has not delivered a single balanced budget since it came to power. It has been plunging us into deficit for six years, and that has to change. It is long overdue.

Since 2015, deficits have been building up and the debt has been growing exponentially. It is now at \$1.234 billion. I have said it before, but I do not even know how many zeros come after that number. It is alarming. As it drafts its budget, the government is selling its soul to stay in power. In exchange, the Liberal Party is bringing in measures from the NDP's election platform, a platform that Canadians did not want. Our constituents did not vote for the NDP, and that party does not even have 10% of the seats in the House. What a mess. What an affront to democracy.

This will only breed public cynicism.

As if it were not enough to call an election that no one wanted at a cost of \$620 million and that produced the same result, now the Liberal government is not respecting the will of the people. That is too bad. It is pathetic, really. The Liberals clinched their agreement with the NDP just before presenting the budget, and that is no coincidence because it has been all planned since the beginning of this Parliament. What can we say about the arrogance of this new government led by two centralists who will have both hands, or should I say all four hands, in provincial jurisdictions?

They have been warned. The provinces are keeping an eye on them.

• (1245)

Instead of spending its time thinking about how to remain in power and concocting secret agreements with another party, the government should do its job and listen to Canadians, consider their concerns and come up with solutions.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the latter half of her speech, the member talked about the agreement that the Liberal Party and the NDP came to as being a slap in the face of democracy. This is exactly what democracy is about.

Democracy is about finding compromise. Democracy is about working together. Democracy is about putting forward our ideas and testing them, and looking for compromise and solutions we can move forward with together.

Democracy is not about the Conservative approach of standing up, day after day, and pinpointing individuals, whether it is the Prime Minister or a particular minister, chastising those individuals and attacking their character all day long. That is the only thing we see from the Conservative Party. We never see anything from them that has to do with advancing and promoting the democratic ideal.

For the member to stand up and say that working with another party in a parliamentary democracy is somehow a slap in the face towards democracy is ludicrous at best.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that we should not work with all other parliamentarians and other parties. Having been a parliamentarian and a minister, I know what it means to negotiate with other parliamentarians and reach a compromise. That is very normal and that is why we are here. That is why we have committees: to improve bills and arrive at the best possible solution.

However, what we are talking about today is an agreement reached behind closed doors to keep this government in power until 2025 in exchange for implementing the NDP platform. Canadians never voted for that.

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague read the Conservative motion to us, and it deals rather harshly with the carbon tax. Quebec has a carbon market, which is a pretty good system. Quebec recently approached Ottawa and invited it to participate in the market along with California, which is working with Quebec.

The system in question was created by one Jean Charest. He recently declared that he does not agree with abolishing the tax, but he does think that it should be paused and that we should think carefully before increasing the tax. I would like to ask my colleague if she supports abolishing the tax or simply pausing it.

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Speaker, let us leave former prime ministers and the leadership race out of this debate.

The Conservatives have moved a clear and simple motion calling on the current NDP-Liberal alliance to present a credible, reasonable plan to balance the budget with well-defined measures for government spending. Every expenditure must correspond to revenue. That is what we are saying today.

• (1250)

[English]

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will, once again, zero in on the second problematic point of this cockamamie Conservative motion, which states that taxes on Canadians continue to increase, from carbon tax to the Canada pension plan premiums.

The text of this motion mis-characterizes the Canada pension plan as a tax, when in fact it is a deferred wage and a meaningful way for Canadians to plan for retirement.

Given that the previous Conservative member refused to answer this question when I put it directly to him, could the member opposite clarify why the Conservatives believe the Canada pension plan premium, which saves for retirement, is considered a tax? Also, by cutting pension premiums against inflation, would it not stand to reason that Conservatives are also looking to lower the meagre payouts to our most vulnerable seniors?

Business of Supply

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien: Mr. Speaker, Canadians, including my constituents, are under a lot of pressure. They are in the clutches of skyrocketing inflation, which is currently at 5.7%.

Our fathers, mothers, sisters and children are struggling to make ends meet. Young people cannot buy a home. Seniors are unsure of what they can afford and why they have to choose between food and medications. That is what we are talking about today.

We are calling on the Liberal government to be careful and reasonable in its upcoming NDP-Liberal budget and to be mindful of spending too much. That is what the Conservatives are saying today.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Kings—Hants.

It is a great pleasure, as always, to rise in the House on behalf of my riding of Davenport to speak to the opposition day motion put forward by the Conservatives, which calls on our government to present a “federal budget rooted in fiscal responsibility with no new taxes, a path to balance and a meaningful fiscal anchor”. We are well aware that elevated inflation and the rise of gas prices are leading Canadians to worry about the cost of living and how this is affecting their everyday lives. Let me remind everyone in this venerable House today, and all those listening, of a few things.

Inflation is a global issue. Initially, it was due to global oil prices, pandemic supply chain problems and the way the virus changed our spending habits. We also know that inflation is being exacerbated by Russia's illegal war in Ukraine. Since the beginning of the pandemic, our federal government has been tireless in our efforts to protect Canadians, to support them through ongoing challenges and to bridge them through the postpandemic recovery. This significant fiscal policy support has contributed to a rapid and resilient recovery so far. I would add that we have provided if not the most generous, then among the most generous emergency supports in the world.

The motion we are speaking to today asks the federal government to present a federal budget that is rooted in fiscal responsibility and also to provide meaningful fiscal anchors. We have been fiscally responsible every step of the way during the pandemic, as well as since we were first elected in late 2015. Indeed, throughout the entire pandemic we have been in strong fiscal shape with the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio of the G7.

Our GDP returned to nearly prepandemic levels in the third quarter of 2021, and it grew by an annual rate of 6.7% in the fourth quarter of 2021. On top of that, Moody's and S&P have reaffirmed Canada's AAA credit rating. In addition, the Stats Canada labour force survey showed that the labour market gained 337,000 jobs in February of this year, and we have recovered overall 112% of the jobs that we lost at the peak of the pandemic. Therefore, we have been fiscally responsible, we continue to be fiscally responsible, and we will be fiscally responsible moving forward.

We have also had meaningful fiscal anchors. Those anchors have been net GDP-to-debt ratios that, as was mentioned earlier, are the

best in the G7, as well as an outstanding jobs growth number in addition to our overall GDP growth. The result is that our economy is growing back as it continues to try to come out of this pandemic into the postpandemic world and economy. I just want to point out that it is because of the generous emergency supports provided throughout the pandemic by our federal government that the economic foundation is strong and that companies can pivot back quickly as we are trying to come out of this pandemic.

Saying all that, I want to highlight some elements of the federal government's recovery plan that we have announced so far.

Our current recovery plan is targeted toward growth-enhancing and job-creating initiatives such as investment to support child care and the adoption of new technologies that will help boost supply. Increasing supply will help the economy to grow without the risk of higher inflation. As the situation across the country has improved, our federal government has moved from very broad-based support to more targeted measures that will provide help where it is needed and when it is needed.

When the new variants and major outbreaks occurred, lockdowns and capacity restrictions were painful but necessary last resorts to break the chain of transmission and to save lives. That is why, this past December, we announced that we were temporarily expanding the Canada worker lockdown benefit as well as the local lockdown program to support workers and businesses that were affected by capacity restrictions of 50% or more. We also temporarily lowered the current month revenue decline threshold requirement, from 40% to 25%, for employers to access the local lockdown program. This means that eligible employers could receive wage and rent subsidy support of from 25% to 75%, depending on how much revenue they had lost.

● (1255)

For workers who work in a region that introduces capacity restrictions by 50% or more, this means they can qualify for the Canada worker lockdown benefit. This enables Canadians to put \$300 a week in their pockets to supplement lost wages.

Business of Supply

Like all Canadians, we hope that lockdowns and capacity restrictions will be a thing of the past. We know Canadians are tired of COVID-19, but the unfortunate reality is that COVID-19 is not quite tired of us. We put these supports in place so that public health authorities could make the right, albeit difficult, decisions knowing that the federal government could be there to continue to support workers, small businesses and other employers in their communities when needed. We extended these key, enhanced lockdown support programs to ensure that Canadians were protected and workers and businesses had access to the help they needed to sustain them during the omicron wave.

There are a number of additional measures we have taken to support Canadians and address top issues affecting Canada's economic growth and prosperity. Last December, we introduced Bill C-8, which seeks to address housing affordability through the implementation of a national annual 1% tax on the value of non-resident, non-Canadian-owned residential real estate in Canada that is considered to be vacant or underused. It is something our federal government announced as part of budget 2021 to crack down on underused housing. The bill would introduce a new act, the underused housing tax act, to ensure that non-resident non-Canadian owners, particularly those who use Canada as a place to passively store their wealth and housing, pay their fair share of Canadian taxes beginning in the 2022 calendar year.

We are also working to address the issue of supply chain disruptions from around the world and shipping bottlenecks that have made it harder for Canadians and businesses to get the products and supplies they need, and that in many cases are contributing to rising prices. To help strengthen supply chains and address bottlenecks, the federal government has launched a new targeted call for proposals under the national trade corridors fund to assist Canadian ports with the acquisition of cargo storage capacity and other measures to relieve supply chain congestion. The fund will dedicate up to \$50 million to support eligible priority projects.

Today, we are on strong economic footing. Our federal government has also prioritized putting the lives of Canadians first. This has meant that we have had one of the lowest mortality rates in the G7 due to COVID-19. In addition, we are making vaccines free and a priority. As of March 25, over 85% of Canadians five and older were fully vaccinated, and the Canadian economy has seen the benefits of prioritizing our health.

Given all of the aforementioned emergency and economic supports, the Canadian labour market rebounded strongly from the omicron wave in February. I would add that the recovery and economic growth have been broad-based and supported by solid underlying fundamentals, with ongoing rebounds in sectors hardest hit by the pandemic.

In conclusion, our federal government is determined to continue to do what is necessary to sustain the recovery, to provide help where it is still needed, to create jobs and to set the stage for strong growth for years to come. From the start of the pandemic, we understood that having a job was essential to Canadians' economic well-being. That is why our investments have been so singularly focused on employment and why Canada has experienced one of the fastest job recoveries in the G7. Canadians can remain confident

that they have a strong hand at the wheel of the federal government in safeguarding and growing our economy.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment you on your hard work.

My colleague spoke about the tax on vacant housing owned by non-Canadians. This is not a bad policy for addressing the crisis that is playing out right now. Unfortunately, it is just a drop in the ocean.

The federal government's main programs, including the national housing co-investment fund and the rental construction financing initiative, are programs that, unfortunately, mean that Montreal's so-called "affordable" housing costs \$2,200. A lot of money is being invested in things that the average Joe cannot afford.

A decent program was launched during the pandemic: the rapid housing initiative. Rumour has it that this program could be extended as a result of the Liberal-NDP agreement. In Quebec, housing organizations are asking for predictability. Will the program be extended for just one year or for several?

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, housing is, indeed, top of mind for all Canadians, irrespective of what's happening with COVID and what's happening in the world today. Everybody's hearts and minds are with Ukrainians today and every day as long as this unprovoked illegal aggression is under way.

Housing is top of mind, both from a housing affordability perspective and an affordable housing perspective. I do agree that the underused tax is only one of the many things we have to look at. We introduced a \$72-billion national housing strategy and a \$4-billion housing accelerator fund. We will be introducing many measures in the coming weeks and months to address the housing issue in Canada right now. It will require steps to be taken at every level of government for us to urgently address this very important issue.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I came in at the back half of the member's speech and I did not hear her full remarks. I am sure it was a great speech, and I apologize if my question was covered in her earlier remarks.

Business of Supply

Given that we know Canadians are facing a cost-of-living crisis, this motion is quite simple in asking for the government not to increase taxes at a time when Canadians can least afford it. Based on the comments I heard by the member and others on the government side, it does not seem like they are too fond of the motion Conservatives brought forward today. I wonder what specifically they take issue with, given the fact that the cost of living is getting out of control for so many people in this country.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, costs and inflation are definitely top of mind for Canadians today. The federal government, since it was elected late in 2015, has taken a number of measures to try to make sure that we reduce income inequality and make life affordable for Canadians.

The latest thing we have done is to introduce the national child care plan. That is a historic plan. When I was first elected, I never thought we would see a day when national child care would be implemented in Canada. Today I am so proud to be part of a government that is implementing a national child care program that will reduce costs by 50% by the end of this year for all Canadian families that have children in day care.

We will continue to be concerned about the cost of living for Canadians and we will do everything we can to continue to support Canadians as we move forward.

• (1305)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member's comments on the third element of this motion, which is the government refusing to provide relief to Canadians by temporarily reducing the goods and services tax on gasoline and oil. If I pull up my pickup truck and fill up for \$200, I get \$10 back. If I fill up my Toyota Corolla for \$20, I get \$1 back. I still get 500 kilometres with both vehicles.

I would be interested in the member's comments as to whether she thinks that is fair.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, we had a very important discussion and debate around the increasing price of oil and gas in this country. We had an important debate around implementing a tax holiday. Our government will continue to be very concerned about gas prices and prices overall in this country and we will continue to support Canadians—

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in the House of Commons, even in a virtual manner, to address the opposition day motion today on what I think is an important element for us to talk about: economic and fiscal policy.

What I am going to do in my 10 minutes is to try to tackle some of the elements in the actual text of the motion and also to provide some of the recommendations and thoughts I have as a member of Parliament about things that I think all parliamentarians should be thinking about in the days ahead as we start to work our way out of COVID and look to how we can maintain fiscal balance but also continue to pursue the social programs that Canadians expect.

Before I get into the text of the motion, I want to take us back to the period before the pandemic, from 2015 to certainly just the early part of 2020, and how this government approached spending and its parameters around what it felt was important.

The member for Burnaby North—Seymour, who is the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance, made what I thought were really important remarks this morning when he talked about the government coming in at a time when the Harper government had really underfunded a lot of really important programs. He spoke about not just economic deficits but social and infrastructure deficits that had essentially protruded over time.

When we look at the level of spending the government took on during that time frame, it ran relatively modest deficits of around 1% of GDP at a time when the economy was continuing to grow. We would remember that, following the global economic crisis in the 2008-09 period, there was a lagging economic recovery that had been evident under the Harper policies. We really saw a lot of economic growth from 2015 to 2020. I will remind colleagues that unemployment was at a 40-year low just before the pandemic, and although the government was spending deficits, the economy and economic growth was far outpacing the cost of the debt taken on at the time.

Essentially, we came into the pandemic with the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. We were in a very strong fiscal position to be able to tackle what was a once-in-a-generation type of pandemic. We had not seen this level of uncertainty since the Spanish flu and the influenza crisis just following World War I, so I want to remind Canadians and colleagues that this government has been able to walk the line between not only investing in Canadians but also maintaining important fiscal balance in the same sense.

I will go to the text of the motion. The first part speaks about “excessive government spending” during the pandemic. I think it is an open debate whether or not that was indeed the case. Other colleagues, and also perhaps the Minister of Finance, have said that, if we are putting out a fire, we are usually not critiqued on how much water we use to eliminate the fire. It is easy for armchair quarterbacks on the opposition side to sit and suggest that the government spent too much, but private sector economists, Canadians and the people who needed support during this extremely difficult time would tell us that these were important investments to ward off the economic scarring that would have happened in a similar light to what happened during the 2008-09 financial crisis.

Of course, the job of Her Majesty's loyal opposition is to critique and hold the government to account, but I think on the whole the government was responsible in making sure there were programs in a timely manner that were there to support Canadian businesses, Canadian individuals and even the provinces and territories because we had a strong fiscal footing going into the pandemic. Therefore, I would take issue with the fact that there is text in the motion that talks about “excessive government spending”. During the magnitude of the challenge we have just gone through over the past two years, which I would remind my colleagues we are not completely out of, I think it was proportionate to what we saw.

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I also want to remind my Conservative colleagues that, in the 43rd Parliament and leading into the election in September, they were proposing to spend more money than what the government had allocated in its platform commitments. I remember sitting, virtually, during the height of the pandemic, listening to Conservative members get up and say in one breath that the government was spending far too much money, which goes to the excessive spending piece they are talking about now, and in the same breath would come back and say the government is not doing enough and it needs to do even more. That inconsistency around how best to move forward is why I think the Conservative Party continues to not have a true idea of where it necessarily sits on this issue.

• (1310)

I want to talk about fuelling inflation. The idea in the text of this motion is that the government spending during the pandemic has fuelled inflation. I think, in part, it has, but this is a much more nuanced question. Governments around the world have invested to try to ward off the worst economic implications. We know that had to happen. Otherwise, we would have had an economic collapse.

This has to do with the supply chains that were impacted. This has to do with climate change. The member for Abbotsford's community and certainly the communities close to him were severely impacted by the atmospheric rainstorms that we saw in British Columbia, which then created supply challenges. Climate change is having a major impact on global inflation, as well as is the war in Ukraine. I would also argue that low interest rates contribute to this. There is a fiscal piece to this, but there is also a monetary element, where the Bank of Canada significantly lowered its interest rates, which also stimulates investment and spending, which is also part of what we are seeing now.

There is a piece of this motion that talks about the taxes continuing to increase with reference to the carbon price. What the motion does not mention, of course, is that the carbon price is designed to give money back to Canadians. On a per capita basis, money is returned so that it actually incentivizes change in behaviour.

As the chair of the agriculture committee, I will recognize that in some instances, in particular, our farmers have been impacted in the sense that they may pay a higher proportionate cost. That is why we have made adjustments in the economic update, which we are still trying to get through the House as the Conservatives continue to delay, to get measures that will actually give rebates to farmers who many not have otherwise had the opportunity to get around those challenging circumstances.

There is also a provision around relief to Canadians through the GST. I had lots to say on that with the member for Abbotsford about a week ago. I think there is merit at looking at affordability. I think the manner in which the Conservatives are proposing to go about this allows members of Parliament, who are some of the higher income earners in the country, to benefit from something. It is not targeted. I think there are more targeted ways we can try to focus on supporting individuals who truly need the help, given the circumstances we are under.

The last piece, and this is the piece I tend to agree with, is that "the House call on the government to present a federal budget rooted in fiscal responsibility". I do fundamentally believe that is an

important element that this government is going to have to tackle in the days ahead. There has to be a balance between social progress, which I believe in, and the programs that matter, and having a plan for how those can be sustainable over time. I would agree on that point.

I also agree that the economy is very hot right now because of the investments that we have made and because of how we have been able to support businesses. Unemployment is at historic lows right now. Members opposite and members in the House writ large have talked about the importance of immigration to make sure that we can fill job vacancies that exist in the country.

I do think we have to be mindful about not continuing to put liquidity in an already hot economy, which is ultimately going against the principles of monetary policy when the Bank of Canada is signalling that it will be increasing interest rates in the days ahead.

Just quickly, on no new taxes, I think the Conservatives are either going to have to come clean that they do not necessarily want to support some of the social programs that are being talked about, whether it be dental care or pharmacare, or they are going to have to say that there is going to have to be a revenue generation to pay for those. Whether that is growing the economy or looking at ways to work in a multilateral form so that we do not price ourselves out in a competitive sense around tax policy, there are going to have to be serious questions around revenue to make sure that these programs that are being introduced are sustainable over time.

Let me just say again, as I have said in the House before, I think this country has a tremendous opportunity on foreign policy. We have the propensity to feed the world. We have the propensity to provide energy to the world. We have the propensity to provide critical minerals that are key to the energy transition.

There is a great opportunity on foreign policy, but it is also an important economic driver that can help pay for some of the very important social programs the government has introduced and is planning to introduce in the days ahead.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the start of his speech, the member spoke about the Liberal government's goal of maintaining a balanced budget while also adhering to the very worthy plan of safeguarding social programs.

However, I wonder why this government is depriving itself of the gargantuan profits made by the big banks in 2021, nearly \$60 billion. Why are the Liberals opposed to eliminating tax havens?

[*English*]

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that the government is contemplating those types of policies. Let me say, though, which I often say to my NDP colleagues, that there is merit in looking at individuals who have the propensity to pay more to help contribute to social programs, but we need to do so in the sense that we are in a global economy.

The best way to move forward is working in a multilateral forum with other countries so that we create things like a minimum corporate income tax and do not basically create an environment where we do not have foreign direct investments and companies do not want to come here. We have to always guard against that, and working in a multilateral forum globally is the best pathway forward.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Qujannamiik, Uqaqtittiji.*

The lack of housing is the biggest issue in my riding. All too often I hear about 18 people living in a three-bedroom unit. This is an all-too-common story from Nunavut.

Will the government commit to making sure that the wealthy pay their fair share so my constituents do not have to continue to live in deplorable conditions that help prevent real reconciliation?

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I know the particular housing situation in Nunavut would be more nuanced than the one in my riding of Kings—Hants. However, the government certainly has committed publicly to investing in indigenous housing specifically in the days ahead, and I take notice that this is important to the member opposite and her constituents, as well as to many others across the country.

In perhaps a lesser sense, in terms of basic shelter, housing prices in Kings—Hants have gone up I think 40% year over year. This is a challenge being faced across the country, and the government has to work with all three levels of government and the private sector. Particularly focusing on social housing would be an important element in the days ahead. We have to have important conversations about the revenue to pay for such programs, but I do support that principle.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from the Liberal Party brings a lot of solution-oriented remarks to this chamber. I always appreciate his interventions.

He noted that the carbon tax impacts agriculture disproportionately. I would argue that extends to rural and northern communities of the country more broadly. I am wondering if the member can articulate further some ways he thinks we can support agriculture and support our rural and northern communities in giving them relief from the carbon tax.

● (1320)

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, likewise, I always enjoy the interventions from the member for Kenora and his insight.

This government recognizes that for certain industries and certain individuals, depending on where they live in the country, there are fewer options. Being in a rural area myself in Nova Scotia, I know that my constituents may not have the same access to public transit and different elements as others, so there is a lot I could address.

On agriculture, the government has recognized that the price some farmers are paying exceeds what they may be returned under the current model. That is why we introduced Bill C-8, which has monies designated specifically to go back to farmers to continue to keep the price signal there and continue to encourage innovation, not necessarily to harm farmers in any way. I hope the member op-

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posite will have conversations with his colleagues so we can advance that bill and make sure support is given to his farmers and many others across the country.

Mr. Eric Melillo (Kenora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to join this important debate and discussion today.

Before I get into my formal remarks, I want to tell members that I am wearing a very special tie today. In the spirit of non-partisanship, I want to make note of this because this tie was gifted to me yesterday by a good friend, Anthony, who, as members know, works in the lobby for the NDP. He is a great man. Of course, we disagree on many policy initiatives and I am very disappointed that his party is supporting the government for the next three years, but I wanted to make note of the tie and hopefully embarrass him a bit in the process. I cannot hear him laughing quite yet, but I am sure I will shortly. Also, he did not give one to the member for Kingston and the Islands, which is the cherry on top, I have to say.

I am pleased to be splitting my time today with my friend and colleague, the member for Kelowna—Lake Country, who does a fantastic job representing her constituents in British Columbia and Canadians across the country in her role in the shadow cabinet of supporting small businesses and ensuring that we have a robust recovery across the country. I am very much looking forward to hearing her remarks today.

This motion is very important for me and the Kenora riding and people across northwestern Ontario and across the country. As we have heard from many members on all sides of the House, inflation is getting out of control and the cost of living is driving through the roof. We know that food prices as a whole have increased by 7.4%, with beef up almost 12% and ham and bacon up 15%. It is getting harder for people to put food on the table because prices are going up and wages are not keeping up. As we have seen in reports from the PBO, this has been driven in part by the reckless government spending we have seen from the Liberal government. It is continuing the spending beyond the point that was necessary throughout COVID-19 and the height of COVID-19, and as a result, Canadians are now facing the highest inflation they have seen in 31 years. It is the highest inflation I have seen in my lifetime.

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I want to focus specifically, off the top, on gas prices. Gas prices in my riding always tend to be a bit higher than in other regions of the province and the country, being that it is in northwestern Ontario. However, it is getting especially difficult now. This week, gas in Dryden was 185.9¢, in Red Lake it was 191.9¢ and in Sioux Lookout it was 193.7¢. In Fort Hope First Nation, the gas price this morning was \$2.65 per litre. When we hear the government talk about reconciliation and wanting to ensure that it has an important relationship with indigenous Canadians, it is hard to look at something like this with the cost of living on reserve. The remote community of Fort Hope is just one example of many in my riding, and it is hard to square that circle, because a lot of the government's policies, such as the carbon tax, choose to keep taxes high.

Based on the remarks today, as I mentioned earlier, it seems like the Liberals are not fond of our motion. However, it seems like the policies the government is bringing forward from a fiscal point of view are hurting a lot of northern, rural and indigenous Canadians the hardest, and we are seeing that in my riding.

The government claims that Canadians are going to be better off when they get their rebates for the carbon tax specifically. However, I respectfully note for members across the aisle that many Canadians right now cannot wait for that rebate. They are struggling to get to the end of the week and the end of the month, and for this rebate, although it will be coming, this is too long for them to wait. They are paying for it right now.

Also, the PBO report has actually refuted the minister's and government's claim that most of the costs would be recuperated. Indeed, households subject to the tax are actually going to experience a net loss, so even after waiting for that rebate to come back, it will not be enough to fill the gap.

• (1325)

This is especially important in my riding because we have very few transit options for busing. Subways are non-existent. It is certainly far different from University—Rosedale or many of the ridings represented by government members. In my riding, as I have mentioned before, many people have to travel a number of hours just to see specialists or go to the hospital, either to Winnipeg or many more to Thunder Bay. That is even farther to drive, but based on a lot of the rules around health care, they have to stay in the province so they have to go to Thunder Bay.

Just recently, Red Lake, because of a shortage of health care personnel, actually had to close its ER. The community of Red Lake, with 5,000 or so people, for 24 hours did not have access to an emergency room. The closest emergency room would be about two and a half hours away, in Dryden. Needless to say, if someone had a serious emergency, it would not end well. We are thankful that nothing happened over the last weekend, but the threat will remain there as the shortages exist across the region. That is why fuel is so important and gas is so important. It is actually getting incredibly prohibitive for people to travel to access critical services such as health care.

In my remaining time, I want to bring this back to the motion today, because I think we are not asking for very much in it. What the motion is saying is pretty simple, and we have not been asking for much over the last couple of weeks and months. We have suggested

providing a GST holiday on gasoline. We also suggested a suspension of the carbon tax increase that is coming on April 1. The government has shut the door to those discussions. Frankly, respectfully, I think we are bringing forward reasonable proposals and trying to help alleviate the cost-of-living crisis and help ensure that people can keep more money in their pockets. I am having a hard time understanding why members on that side of the House do not seem interested in having this discussion right now.

Today, specifically in the motion, we are asking for the upcoming budget, as my colleagues have noted, to be rooted in fiscal responsibility and to not add any new taxes. Frankly, it is the least we can do at this pivotal moment for many families across my riding that are struggling. They are just asking for the government to help them, and that is why we are bringing forward this motion here today. We want to lower taxes to give a little more peace of mind and to take one more cost away from the equation. I ask government members here today to think about that and remember this: In my humble opinion, money is better spent by the people who have earned it than by a government that thinks it has a right to go in and tax it. I ask my colleagues on the other side to think of that.

We are hoping that the 2022 budget will not include any new taxes, of course. I hope that all my colleagues in the House will support this practical motion today and ensure that our budget does have a debt management strategy, because Canadians are struggling to get by. They are struggling to afford the basic necessities. It is time for the government to step up to provide relief to ensure that we do not leave Canadians in rural and northern communities and in many indigenous communities across northwestern Ontario behind.

• (1330)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always find the hon. member for Kenora very level-headed in his approach and in the manner in which he presents his position on matters. I do not say that to contrast him with some of his colleagues. I say that because I genuinely appreciate it and I want him to know that.

One of the primary things that I find problematic in this motion is that the second bullet specifically refers to the CPP, the Canada pension plan, as a tax. It is not a tax. This is money that is generated by the employer and the employee. The contributions are calculated annually, and the employer and employee both pay into this in order to provide pensions for individuals later on in life. It is a form of retirement savings that has nothing to do with taxation.

Can the member provide comments on why he thinks the motion is worded like that?

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Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, I take the member for Kingston and the Islands' point. I have heard that point raised by a few members here today. I think it goes back to my comments around the carbon tax rebate and the simple fact that Canadians need the dollars right now. They are struggling to get by right now. It is hard for them to make it to the end of the week and they are not sure if they are going to be able to continue putting food on the table.

Given the cost-of-living crisis right now, we do not need more deductions from the take-home pay of Canadians. That is why we are calling for a halt to these premiums. I think it is a very tangible, practical measure that is going to benefit Canadians right now and into the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question. Do the Conservatives realize they are being inconsistent with the motion they are moving this morning?

When we talk about increasing health transfers—a unanimous request from the provinces—the Conservatives usually agree with us. When they say that overspending needs to end, does that mean they will now oppose this?

Similarly, when we ask for increases to old age security, will they be against that, too?

Is my colleague aware that, if we tie our hands with today's motion and say that there will be no new taxes, we are closing the door on imposing a tax on businesses that have made exorbitant profits in the past two years? That money could be redistributed to people who need it to buy groceries.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say.

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, I should have mentioned this in my previous comments, but it is great to see you in the chair again.

I appreciate the question from my Bloc colleague, who made a good point around health care specifically and the need for increased health transfers. I stand by that. I frankly do not believe that there is a contradiction there, because I think it comes down to priorities.

Obviously nobody on this side of the House is saying that the government should never spend a dollar ever again. That is just not going to be possible, and it is obviously not good policy. However, we need to spend more wisely. We need to ensure that we are prioritizing the right things. What we have seen in recent PBO reports is that the justification for stimulus that was used during the pandemic—and rightly so, to a great degree—is no longer there. It is time to rein in spending and get things back on track.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that many people in northern Manitoba, much as they are in northern Ontario, are struggling with the increased cost of living. I know that many in my neck of the woods are also making it clear that Canadians are paying more than their fair share and that the richest among us, who have made incredible profits during this pandemic, are not.

Would the member agree that if we are going to talk about fairness, it is time to tax the rich?

• (1335)

Mr. Eric Melillo: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member from my neighbouring riding, just across the border.

Obviously, everyone needs to pay their fair share. To the member's point when she said to tax the rich, I do not know specifically what she means when she says that, so I am not going to elaborate on that. We need to ensure everyone is paying their taxes, but what we are saying in our motion is that all Canadians need to be paying less.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Kenora, for his great intervention and speech.

It is always a pleasure to rise in this House, and today it is in response to the announcement of the tabling of the first NDP-Liberal budget on April 7, to represent my constituents of Kelowna—Lake Country and to speak on this Conservative opposition day motion, which looks to make recommendations to give people a break from higher taxes and out-of-control debt. We have made many recommendations to help Canadians, to help get our fiscal house in order and to have fiscal anchors. I will be gladly speaking to some of these points.

I hear from constituents every day who cannot afford basic necessities and cannot afford housing costs, which are up over 30% in the past year alone, and I hear from businesses and not-for-profits that are being squeezed by higher costs. This situation is becoming critical for many people.

We have heard one word from the government a lot in the last few weeks: “tired”. The government likes to say that it recognizes that Canadians are tired: that they are tired of federal COVID-19 restrictions, tired of paying so much at the pumps and tired of an escalating grocery bill. However, we never hear anything from the government afterwards about giving any peace of mind to Canadians, or any hope.

There is a reason for that. It is because it would involve reversing the government's stated choices. Provinces are reopening and are removing restrictions and mandates, but the federal government chooses to not even set a date. It chooses not to bring forth any data or any metrics on how it is making decisions around this issue. This is holding back the economic recovery of Canada and creating uncertainty for my residents and businesses in Kelowna—Lake Country and across the country.

Small businesses might be coming out of the pandemic struggling with debt, labour shortages and squeezed margins, but ministers in Ottawa still choose to raise their taxes. Consumers might find it harder to manage grocery or gas bills, but the Prime Minister chooses to leave tax relief off the table.

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Let us not kid ourselves about who these choices harm the most. It is the poor, the vulnerable, struggling young people, families and seniors. The Liberal elites, multinationals and large real estate investors seem to have nothing to complain about. They have fared well during the pandemic.

A report released a few weeks ago from the government's own finance department showed that single parents, lower-income households and recent immigrants are more likely to see 50% or more of their earnings offset by higher taxes, clawbacks in benefits or a combination of the two. Calls are coming from inside and outside this House to halt taxes and take action on inflation, but the Liberals still refuse to listen. As made-in-Canada inflation continues to rise, even former advisers to Liberal finance ministers, such as Robert Asselin, are calling for the government to rein in its spending to reduce our inflationary levels.

It was not long ago that ministers in the government called our rise in inflation rates “transitory”. Well, inflation has transitioned—from bad to worse. Other governments in the U.K., Germany and the United States have set out plans to tackle inflation, and it is long past time for the government in Canada to do the same. Failure to deliver a budget that will reduce inflation will be a budget that will fail to reduce our cost of living. With government's coffers growing as a result of inflation, there is no reason to celebrate, yet with families facing an increase of more than \$1000 in their annual grocery bill alone, Liberal insiders choose to brag in the press about the extra tax revenue they are collecting from them.

People are being squeezed with lower paycheques due to the January payroll tax increase and rising costs on everything. That is why we are bringing forward this motion to call on the government to not implement new taxes and to bring forth a path to balance to aid them.

I am sure there is no member of this House who has not heard from their constituents about how they are being hammered by high gas prices. Constituents in my part of the country have seen prices rise as high as \$2.145 this month. If parties here today had joined in our call to introduce a 5% GST reduction on gasoline and diesel, the government would have been given the opportunity to reduce the average price by approximately 8¢ per litre. Unfortunately, the other parties voted against this motion last week.

What we are asking for today is common sense to help people. It is a practical way we could improve lives today.

● (1340)

Another way Conservatives are looking to provide relief is by calling on the federal government to end its upcoming April 1 tax increases. The first April Fool's Day tax increase is on excise tax on alcohol products. The kicker with this is that it is based on the CPI, meaning it is based on inflation; therefore, the increase would be higher than ever before. It is basically a tax increase on inflation, and what is worse is that it is automatic. It does not have to be debated and voted on by parliamentarians every year.

Wineries, cideries, breweries and distilleries in my riding cannot afford increases to the excise escalator tax after two years of pandemic damage to their bottom line. This measure affects dozens of small businesses in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country that have

deep roots in our agriculture history. We have craft beer tours, winery tours and a cider festival. This is an emerging sector, and there are dozens of businesses in my riding that would be affected. The tax increase will ultimately have to be passed on through the supply chain and to consumers. That is why I was pleased earlier today to second a bill from my colleague, the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, that would eliminate this escalator tax.

Poor policies and poor leadership by the Liberals caused rolling COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns and left producers with the least profitable avenues of sale, such as government liquor stores. Even with restaurants, hotels and farm gate sales slowly returning, they have a lot in their bottom lines to recoup, and recovery will be sluggish. Their efforts to survive should not be penalized with more taxes and new taxes, as domestic producers who have not been applicable will have to start paying on July 1.

We have to remember the average small business took on \$170,000 in new pandemic debt and was hit with payroll tax increases on January 1. These costs came directly off their bottom line. When both the finance minister and the small business minister, who have not had to make payroll or read financial statements in their past careers, are making decisions that will affect people's lives, we can see why they have no clue about how businesses are being squeezed.

The second April Fool's Day tax increase is to the federal carbon tax, and we have called for it to be halted. The government's decision to proceed with raising the floor of the carbon tax is entirely out of touch with people who are just trying to fill their car with gas or heat their homes. The government's choice to then worsen this situation by adding 11¢ a litre to Canadians' gas prices is really to act without compassion. It is choosing to commit to an ideological agenda rather than appealing to common sense.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer recently reported that the government is taking in more in carbon tax than it is rebating, and many people will receive far less than they pay. The carbon tax is not reducing emissions and is nothing more a windfall for the government on the backs of Canadians and small businesses.

In addition, if Canada was more energy dependent, we could be helping our allies right now.

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Lastly, I want to touch on another financial penalty that will affect every Canadian: the growing size of our national debt. A recent mandate letter of the finance minister stated that creating any new permanent spending should be avoided. With this new Liberal-NDP backroom coalition, this will be another broken promise. We are calling today for a meaningful fiscal anchor.

Kelowna—Lake Country was recently visited by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's national debt clock. The Liberals broke the former debt clock when it went over \$1 trillion. Every second, \$4,531 is being added to our national debt. By the time I am done my fifteen-minute debate today, Canada's national debt will rise an extra \$4,077,900. Any member in this House who ignores the responsibility of this House to manage this is leaving the future of our children and grandchildren at risk.

Choosing to offer relief today to Canadian families and seniors with immediate savings on daily costs while ensuring our financial stability for the next generation is how this House should be choosing to act. A commitment to an ideological tax-and-spend agenda will not help either of those goals. I hope all members of this House will support our motion today to give people hope and give them a break.

• (1345)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member can also refer to the debts of the other G7 countries, because the reality of the situation is that it is more important to base the value of the Canadian economy against the economies of our trading partners. To value what the Canadian economy is genuinely worth is to value our debt-to-GDP ratio. The reality is that we have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio, so that actually means that we are in the best fiscal position when compared to our G7 partners in terms of where we can go to rebuild our economy.

I am wondering if the member can weigh in a little on those facts.

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that my future grandchildren, which I do not have yet, will be paying off this debt, as will the future grandchildren of other people in this House. We have to be cognizant that someone will have to pay back this debt that we are creating right now. We are not setting up our children and grandchildren very well here.

Regardless of what others are doing, we have to focus on Canada and on the fiscal prudence of this country. We need to get our fiscal house in order. Yes, we need to help people who really need help, but at the same time we also need to be looking ahead. We need to look ahead for how we can increase investment in Canada and increase the prosperity of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, again, I would like to commend you on your hard work.

All morning I have been hearing the Conservatives say, and rightly so, that they are concerned about rising debt and inflation. We should be concerned, and we cannot allow spending to increase this way.

Let us focus on the housing crisis. Right now, federal government spending and the Liberal government programs are primarily helping private developers. That does nothing for affordability and accessibility.

I see my Conservative friends worrying about the fact that house prices have doubled, and they are right. However, I never hear solutions coming from the Conservative side.

What is the Conservative plan to tackle the housing crisis?

[English]

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, first of all, one of the reasons the housing prices have increased so much is because the government printed \$400 billion that was put into the market. The benefit of that was for the largest investors. They have really come ahead in this, and it has driven up prices.

Conservatives have put together and announced a task force on housing that is going to be looking at this. We had many recommendations in the platform during the last election, but now we are putting this task force together to look at it even more closely and come up with more recommendations than we have given already.

Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, working people have been struggling since the beginning of the pandemic, but the Conservatives have made no gains for working people. Not surprisingly, the Conservatives have a history of standing up against workers' rights by undermining EI programs and protecting big bank profits. They are also against our NDP efforts to eliminate tax evasion by the ultrawealthy and big business.

While the hon. member listed many groups marginalized by the economic violence of capitalism and spoke at length about the impacts of inflation, she never mentioned a word about the impacts of austerity, stagnated workers' wages and cuts to their benefits. Will the hon. member acknowledge that the government has a role to play in helping our most vulnerable people, and that doing so requires revenue and increased labour rights and protections for workers?

Mrs. Tracy Gray: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of constituents who reach out to me who have had to switch jobs that maybe they were not trained in or have not worked at in a long time because they have not been able to meet the current mandates of the government. When the government gives numbers to say we have recouped this many more jobs, the jobs may not be necessarily in the fields that people had trained for or at the high income levels that they were making before. That is the first thing.

The second thing is that during the entire pandemic, we have continually made recommendations to the government to make sure that programs were amended so that they were applicable to more people. There were many times when some of the people most hit by the pandemic were not actually eligible for many of the government programs.

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• (1350)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to start off, it was only a couple of weeks ago that President Zelenskyy from Ukraine spoke to Canadians virtually through the House of Commons. Just down the hall today, there are a number of Ukrainian members of Parliament shared a very strong message with parliamentarians and Canadians in terms of the need for support with lethal weapons in Ukraine, and the need to continue with sanctions. They talked about the importance of our friendship and the infrastructure needs of Ukraine, not only today but going forward. I believe that unanimously in the chamber, there is a very strong sense of solidarity with our Ukrainian brothers and sisters. We will do what we can.

I should mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Having said that, I want to provide a bit of an overview in the time that I have, if it is possible, of what I believe is an opportunity for members to get engaged and talk about budgets and the importance of the budgetary process. It will come as no surprise to members that I have a difficult time with the Conservative Party's approach to dealing with budgets.

Let us look at budgets in general. We have presented budgets since 2015, after the election. Every time the government has presented a budget in the House, the Conservatives have been true to form and voted against it. That includes budgets that provided tax breaks, for example. Members will recall that when the Liberals first became government, we said the priority for the Government of Canada was to support Canada's middle class and those aspiring to be part of it. That was priority one.

In that budget, there was a tax break for Canada's middle class, which the Conservative Party voted against. There was a hike on the tax rate for Canada's wealthiest 1%, which the NDP voted against. Inequality of income was addressed through such things as the reformation of the Canada child benefit program: a program that saw hundreds of millions of dollars go into communities across the country to deliver children from poverty. There was the delivery of hundreds of millions of dollars to the poorest seniors in Canada, lifting hundreds and thousands of seniors out of poverty.

Through our budgets, we have consistently provided supports to the provinces and to our infrastructure. Historic amounts of money are being invested in Canada's infrastructure. As we continued to support Canada's middle class pre-pandemic and were there in very real and tangible ways through legislative and budgetary measures, we saw the Canadian economy grow. In fact, in terms of economic growth, such as employment opportunities, we were able to achieve more in the first four years than Stephen Harper did in 10 years. At the end of the day, I would argue that by investing in Canadians and infrastructure, we were able to build a stronger and healthier economy, because we understand that a healthy middle class is the best way to deliver a stronger economy going forward.

• (1355)

The first number of budgets people saw were heavy on supports for the middle class and building our infrastructure. Then the pandemic hit, and through the pandemic we saw the continuation of a

government that recognized the value of being there to support Canadians and small businesses in particular. We saw it in the form of programs such as CERB, which put literally billions of dollars into the pockets of Canadians at a time when they needed that support.

By doing that, we ensured that Canadians were able to pay critical bills that needed to be paid. We supported small businesses, whether with wage subsidy programs that preserved literally thousands of jobs across this country and prevented businesses from going bankrupt, or with loans and other forms of support for small businesses. Our budgets reflected that.

When Canadians needed a government that was going to be there, we were there, not only with words but with legislative and budgetary measures. Throughout, we constantly saw a Conservative opposition more focused on character assassination and flip-flopping on different policies than on recognizing and contributing to the ideas that were flowing to support Canadians and build our economy.

In listening to the Conservative Party, one would think that Canada was in a doomed state when it comes to inflation. Let us compare Canada's inflation rate with that of the United States, or look at Canada's inflation rate compared with those of the G20 countries. If we take a look at the average of the G20 countries and the United States, we find that Canada's inflation rate is less.

My colleague for Kingston and the Islands just made reference to the GDP and how Canada is in a good position to continue to build strength for our economy and to continue to be there for Canadians. Unlike Conservatives, we believe in investing in the people of Canada. A good example of that is what recently happened in the province of Ontario: My Ontario colleagues were very happy the other day when we finally got Doug Ford to recognize the true value of a national child care program. This is a program that now stretches coast to coast to coast. It is a program that is going to enable more people to enter the workforce.

The Conservative Party would look at that program and say that the government was spending money. It would say that all the government does is spend money and that we need revenues. Education 101 is that enabling more people to get engaged in the economy generates more revenue for the Government of Canada. Not only does a national child care program help by providing much-needed child care spaces, but it is good for Canada's economy too. I only wish the Conservatives would recognize that.

When the Conservatives talk about issues of taxation, they are so confused. They do not care about the middle class, because when it came time to increase the CPP, which would benefit the working class of today for tomorrow, they are just as likely to call it a tax and say that it is a bad thing. No. We are thinking about tomorrow's seniors. The working class of today also needs to be protected.

This is a government that is progressive and that understands the importance of being there for Canadians. We will continue to have their backs, as we have demonstrated in the past six years.

• (1400)

The Deputy Speaker: I hate to interrupt such an impassioned speech, but the member will have one minute remaining in his speech before we go to questions and answers.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is incredible to think how one announcement can transform an entire community, but that is exactly what happened last week in my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh.

Our federal government secured a \$5-billion investment that will see the first battery factory in Canada built in my hometown of Windsor. That partnership with Stellantis and LG will create 2,500 auto jobs in our community. It is the largest automotive investment in the history of Canada and it is the largest single investment in the history of Windsor—Tecumseh. Residents describe it as transformative. What this does is it helps a community that has seen its fair share of valleys build a bridge to prosperity for generations to come.

Windsor-Essex is the automotive capital of Canada. We build things better than anyone else in the world, and with federal leadership on climate change, we are ready to lead our country's transition to a zero-emission future.

* * *

RURAL COMMUNITIES IN SASKATCHEWAN

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, members from the South Saskatchewan Ready partnership came to Ottawa regarding the phase-out of coal-fired electricity and the negative impacts it is having on rural communities.

Only 3.5% of the funding given through just transition has been dedicated to economic development that would ensure SSR communities remain viable post-2030. A recent study shows that the coal transition could lead to a 67% loss in population and an 89% loss in household income, just for the Town of Coronach alone.

The government implies the green jobs that are created will be in the areas where energy jobs are lost, but this is not the case. These jobs to build green infrastructure are not in rural ridings. Investing transition funding into community infrastructure will do absolutely nothing when there are no people left to use said infrastructure.

Statements by Members

Places like Coronach, Bienfait and Estevan deserve more from the government.

I thank the members of SSR for their advocacy and dedication to the sustainability and future of these communities.

* * *

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this has been an exciting week.

Budget 2021 set out our plan for affordable child care for only \$10 a day. On Monday, Ontario finally signed on, which means we have deals to deliver affordable child care to every province and territory. This has been a top priority in my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills and we delivered. That was in 2021.

Next week, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance will table budget 2022, and I would like to share some of my priorities. They include building even more affordable housing, addressing gender-based violence, filling labour gaps and creating more jobs across Canada, supporting small businesses, seniors and youth, and building a clean, green economy.

We have a lot of work ahead and I am looking forward to our budget so that we can get to it.

* * *

[Translation]

WEIR FISHING

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, ever since the birth of the Quebec nation, fishers in Charlevoix have been weir fishing for capelin.

It is a tradition, not an industry. It accounts for less than 1% of the total fishery. However, this traditional fishery not only supplies our restaurants, but is also part of our history and is in the process of being recognized by UNESCO.

The problem is that Fisheries and Oceans Canada off in Ottawa, which is very far from the sea, is lumping our weir fishers in with Newfoundland's commercial fishers. It is forcing them to open their season in June, just like in Newfoundland.

What Fisheries and Oceans Canada does not know, being so far from the sea, is that, where we are on the St. Lawrence River, capelin are abundant in April and gone by June.

This national tradition will disappear if the minister does not open the capelin season on the river on April 1. April 1 is tomorrow.

Statements by Members

The Bloc Québécois is asking the minister to intervene. The time to save the weir fishery is now.

* * *

BRYLEE AND GUAYCLAIR FARMS

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to acknowledge the outstanding work of two cattle producers in my riding: Brylee farm in Lochaber and Guayclair farm in Brownsburg-Chatham.

They were both honoured with the Environmental Stewardship Award, Quebec chapter, in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

This award is handed out each year in recognition of cattle producers' leadership in on-farm environmental management. The Guayclair and Brylee farms both received provincial recognition for their outstanding contributions.

Just like last year's winner, the Brylee farm, this year, the Guayclair farm is nominated for national recognition from the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. The national winner will be announced later at the Canadian Beef Industry Conference.

Congratulations to the Guayclair farm and the Brylee farm. They are solid examples of innovation and excellence in on-farm environmental management.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

LAKE SIMCOE CLEANUP FUND

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been five years to the day since the Liberals cancelled the Lake Simcoe cleanup fund. The finance minister stood on the shores of the lake in 2019 and promised to bring the fund back, but it has been 1,826 days and there is still no funding to clean up and restore the lake. It is unbelievable.

Finally, municipalities and organizations from around the lake are joining me and my Conservative colleagues in calling for the cleanup fund to be reinstated. Instead of more taxes in next week's budget, the government must support community-based grassroots projects that will protect the precious Lake Simcoe watershed and ecosystem.

It can be tough to wade through all the broken promises and inaction by the current Liberal government on the environment, but that is why I am here in my hip waders once again calling for the Lake Simcoe clean-up fund to be included in the 2022 budget. It is time for action.

The Deputy Speaker: I will remind people about the use of props.

The hon. member for Kanata—Carleton.

* * *

EUGENE MELNYK

Mrs. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2003, Eugene Melnyk purchased our beloved Ottawa Senators fran-

chise. In doing so, he lifted the franchise out of possible bankruptcy. He brought jobs and economic growth to my riding of Kanata—Carleton, and he fought to keep those jobs in Kanata, despite proposals to move the franchise elsewhere.

Above all, he made the Senators a beloved staple in our city. He helped cultivate a love of hockey among young and old. Eugene never wavered in his desire and commitment to bring the Stanley Cup to our nation's capital.

Sadly, Eugene passed away peacefully on Monday. He will be fondly remembered by his friends, our community and Senators' fans everywhere. He leaves behind a legacy, a legacy of love for our Ottawa Senators, who our community will continue to support and cherish for years to come. The Ottawa community will miss his passion and dedication to the sport.

I know the Ottawa Senators club will one day win a Stanley Cup, and I am sure that Eugene will be watching proudly from above.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before we took office in 2015, the federal government had been absent on the housing file for more than 30 years. In the last six years, our government has made safe, affordable and accessible housing a top priority. Our \$72-billion housing strategy is working with the provinces and municipalities to tackle the issue of affordable housing and housing affordability.

We have started to see the impact of these investments in Burnaby and North Vancouver helping build, retain or find homes for 3,900 people through programs like the federal community housing initiative, the rapid housing initiative and the co-investment fund. We have also promised to do more. This includes building more supply, treating housing like a place to live instead of an investment vehicle and finding pathways to ownership for first-time homebuyers.

I am very excited to work with all members of the House to find more solutions to our housing crisis. I am also looking forward to the finance minister releasing budget 2022 on April 7, so that we can continue to deliver more affordable housing for Canadians.

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me immense pride to announce that the City of Brantford is twinning with Kamianets-Podilskyi in Ukraine. This is a symbolic gesture that will initiate much-needed practical support for it. Since the Russian invasion, the city has been host to thousands of refugees, has helped displaced single moms with kids and the elderly who were pressured to leave their homes, and has organized efforts to provide support for the Ukrainian army.

This wonderful idea was proposed by my constituent Andy Strassfeld and was unanimously supported by Mayor Kevin Davis and city council. I would like to thank Ukrainian MPs Georgiy Mazurashu and Ihor Marchuk, and the mayor of that city, Mykhailo Positko. I am also proud of the role that my team played to make this agreement a reality.

I encourage my colleagues in the House to work with their municipalities and find their sister cities in Ukraine. Canada can help in so many ways.

Glory to Canada. *Slava Ukraini.*

* * *

• (1410)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was sent to this great place in 2015 by the people of Saint John—Rothesay not only to stand here and speak in the House, to sit on committees and vote on legislation, but to advocate and fight for federal investment in my riding.

Saint John has some of the nicest waterfront in Canada, but that waterfront has been undeveloped due to federal investment. That is changing. We have invested millions of dollars in seawall restoration, millions in the Fundy Quay project, millions in Loyalist Plaza boardwalk refurbishment and over a million dollars in a container village.

These projects will transform not only my city but my region through tourism and economic prosperity.

My government has delivered for Saint John—Rothesay.

* * *

SENIORS

Mr. Gerald Soroka (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Morgen wrote to me about his mother who just turned 86. She is still able to live in her family home, living only off the Canada pension, old age security and GIS. He said, “I know it has been tough on her to make ends meet with these high power and gas heating bills...but she is too proud to ask for financial help from the family”, so she turns the thermostat way down low in order to afford her heating bills.

I have received many other emails, phone calls, Facebook posts and comments from seniors saying that they cannot afford this NDP-Liberal government any longer. Tomorrow, the carbon tax is going up again, meaning it will cost seniors more money to heat

Statements by Members

their homes or they will turn their thermostats down again, if that is even possible.

Will this NDP-Liberal government stop the carbon tax increase on April 1 so seniors do not have to live in a cold home, or is their answer, “Don't worry. Summer is coming. They'll be warm soon”?

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the tax on beer, wine and spirits will automatically go up, thanks to this government's excise escalator. Today, I tabled Bill C-266, an act to repeal the automatic excise escalator. This punitive tax harms Canada's world-leading brewers', vintners' and distillers' ability to compete internationally and punishes Canadian consumers.

Tomorrow, the cost of enjoying a beer with friends after work will go up, so will the cost of a bottle of wine for hard-working parents who want to enjoy a rare and well-earned date night. Inflation already makes these simple basic pleasures increasingly unaffordable for working Canadians.

This government's deficits and carbon tax are fuelling inflation, which automatically increases its alcohol tax, which fuels inflation even further. It is time to stop this automatic annual tax increase, let our industries compete internationally, give consumers a break and support Bill C-266.

* * *

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES DAY

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is National Indigenous Languages Day in Canada. It is time to celebrate the hundreds of indigenous languages spoken across Canada.

I am proud to stand with a government committed to the preservation and restoration of indigenous languages and that appointed the first-ever indigenous language commissioner. Congratulations to Ron Ignace.

This work is already being felt on the ground level in my own community. We have seen unprecedented investment into the revitalization of the Mi'kmaq through organizations like Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey.

[Member spoke in Mi'kmaq and provided the following text:]

Ketu Kaqamasi Kiskuk Aq ketu teluewey, tan telji welalusik Msit wen apoqmatmitij, tan teli Inusltik Nike aq Elmiknek. Welaliek.

Statements by Members

[Member provided the following translation:]

I rise today and I want to say how much we thank all those who are helping to revitalize languages now and into the future.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRANSGENDER DAY OF VISIBILITY

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): *Uqaqtitti-ji*, I am proud to rise in this chamber today to mark the International Transgender Day of Visibility.

Trans women, especially Black trans women, have led the 2SLGBTQ movement through some of our most difficult times. They marched on the streets and demanded justice, and won our community the rights we enjoy today. Some gave their lives in this struggle. We see them just as we see all trans folks today and every day, but when I look around this chamber, I do not see a trans person in any one of these 338 chairs. This must change.

As the first two-spirit person ever elected to the House, here is my message to the trans community: “We need you here. You will face many challenges taking your seat in this place, just like I do, but I know that you will overcome them. Always remember that you belong in this House just like you belong everywhere in Canada, and always remember that you are loved and you are beautiful. Never, ever let anyone tell you otherwise.”

Kinanaskomtinawaw.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the work of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada is vital in a democracy. Its employees provide Parliament with the truth about the government's spending, probity and effectiveness.

Employees in its audit services group, three-quarters of whom are women, have been without a contract since 2018. They have been working to rule since last November and are now on strike.

Although the Auditor General is independent, Treasury Board makes the decisions about budgets and negotiating terms. Obviously, the President of the Treasury Board can easily live with an Office of the Auditor General that is no longer able to produce reports that embarrass the government.

The men and women of the audit services group are not asking for the moon. They want a pay grid comparable to that of the federal public service. The difference of \$215,000 divided between 165 employees is practically nothing. The President of the Treasury Board must take action. Negotiations are under way at this time, and this must be resolved. This is urgent.

[English]

JUNO BEACH

Mr. Michael Kram (Regina—Wascana, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the morning of June 6, 1944, 14,000 Canadian soldiers landed on Juno Beach in Normandy, France as part of the allied D-Day invasion to liberate Europe from the Nazis. For 340 of those soldiers, that would be the last morning of their lives.

Fast forward to 2022, and today a group of French real estate developers is turning Juno Beach into a condominium complex. This is totally unacceptable. I personally visited Juno Beach several years ago and the people there have done a commendable job to preserve the area as a memorial to those soldiers who never came home.

Recently, the government claimed to be good at convening and making sure that diplomacy was happening. If that really is the case, then the Prime Minister should phone the French president and do whatever is necessary to save Juno Beach.

* * *

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, five Ukrainian members of parliament are in Canada to ask for our help. Over a month ago, Russia began a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Ukrainian people have been severely outnumbered and outgunned, but they have shown tremendous courage in defending their freedom and their homeland. I think it is fair to say that Canadians and people around the world have been inspired by that courage.

Notwithstanding that courage, the situation in Ukraine is dire. Ukrainians are fighting for their very existence. There is a massive humanitarian crisis: four million people have already left the country and nine million more are displaced in the country. This is a threat not only to Ukraine, but to global security, Europe's security and to Canada's security.

Ukrainians have been fighting for their freedom, but they are also fighting for us and we need to fight for them. We have been sending weapons and humanitarian aid, and even imposing sanctions, but it will not be enough until Ukraine wins this war.

To the Ukrainian MPs who are in Canada today, I say we admire their courage and the courage of the Ukrainian people. We thank them for fighting for us, and we will continue to fight for them until Ukraine is free and independent once again.

Slava Ukraini.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, the NDP-Liberal government will intentionally increase inflation in Canada by stubbornly insisting on increasing the carbon tax. That is a big deal. Everything is transported, so everything will cost more. In exactly one week, the Minister of Finance will present the first NDP-Liberal coalition budget. There will be more spending, more interference in provincial jurisdictions and no plan to balance the budget. NDP members are clapping, but the silence on the Liberal side speaks volumes.

Why are they remaining silent while Canadians are just asking for a little breathing room?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a clear promise to Canadians several years ago and we are fulfilling that promise. We promised to be there to support them, and we are continuing to support them this week with important announcements on the fight against climate change and on reconciliation with indigenous peoples, as well as major announcements about \$10-a-day child care within five years across the country. This will make a huge difference in Canadians' lives. On this side of the House, we continue to work for Canadians. We are staying focused on them.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, the NDP Liberals will make life more expensive for all Canadians by raising the carbon tax. When this leftist government claims that the economy is doing well, it neglects to mention that these inflationary pressures are generating billions of dollars in additional revenues for the government. Next week, the government will have a choice. It can use those revenues to provide relief to Canadian families by cutting taxes or it can implement the NDP's election platform.

What will the Prime Minister choose, families or his political future?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian—aside from Conservative politicians, it seems—knows that the cost of inaction on climate change would be far higher than the investments and responsible benchmarks we are proposing. We know that putting a price on pollution and making polluters pay is the right way to go, not only to protect the planet for our children and grandchildren, but also to create growth and new jobs. The Conservative politicians are the only ones who still do not understand that the economy and the environment go hand in hand.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on another matter, no one believes this Prime Minister anymore when he claims to be a feminist. The General Vance case highlights the Prime Minister's doublespeak. The Canadian Forces ombudsman did inform the clerk, the minister and the Prime Minister's Of-

Oral Questions

fice of the general's behaviour. The ombudsman was right, and the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister did nothing.

How can victims continue to trust this Prime Minister who, instead of taking action and punishing inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour, turns a blind eye and blames others?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the women and men who serve in our Canadian Armed Forces deserve an environment that protects them, supports them, and provides them with the resources they need to ensure that they have the proper supports if misconduct does occur. We also need to change the culture within the armed forces, and that is what we are doing. Yes, there is a lot of work to be done, and yes, it is taking too long, but we will continue to work on it every day to make sure that our Canadian Armed Forces live up to the expectations of everyone who chooses to serve their country.

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, regarding General Vance, this sad, sick story is not just about his conduct. The ombudsman told the clerk, the minister and the Prime Minister's Office, and collectively they turned a blind eye. Instead of being investigated, charged and disciplined, the general was extended in his post and given a raise.

Instead of removing the minister, the Prime Minister reappointed him to cabinet and supported the cover-up.

Why?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the very beginning, we have been focused on ensuring that the Canadian Armed Forces' work environment and culture are worthy of the women and men who choose to serve in the armed forces. We need to make sure that we are continuing to transform the culture and continuing to create supports and resources for everyone who serves in the armed forces. No one should be in a toxic work environment. No one should face harassment and intimidation, but particularly not people who are choosing to set their lives on the line for their country.

• (1425)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the victims of General Vance would agree with the Prime Minister today. When the ombudsman went to the former defence minister and told him that General Vance was engaged in sexual misconduct and harassment, the former defence minister showed the ombudsman the door. Instead of launching an investigation, as he was obligated to do, the minister told General Vance about his accusations and gave him a raise.

How does the government expect survivors to feel comfortable coming forward with this track record of protecting a perpetrator who has abused his power?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, as a government we have demonstrated through our actions, through our support and through our investments the need to ensure safe working environments for everyone, including and especially people who choose to serve their country through the Canadian Armed Forces. Obviously, we fundamentally disagree with the characterizations and the picture painted by the members opposite who are trying to score cheap political points on the fact that all of us need to work together to transform, for the better, the culture of the armed forces. That is what we are doing.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government has agreed to ease visa requirements for Ukrainian refugees coming to Quebec or Canada.

Now, being rich should not be a criterion for refugees. It is about being equitable. We do not want to run the risk of making some very vulnerable people even more vulnerable.

The only solution appears to be a humanitarian airlift. Does the Prime Minister agree that an airlift needs to be set up immediately?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to be there for Ukraine and Ukrainians who are fleeing the war. We are moving as quickly, safely and efficiently as possible to enable Ukrainians to come to Canada, and there is no limit to the number of people who can apply.

Everyone who arrives in Canada under these measures will be eligible for an open work permit and can start working right away, if they so choose. Canadians are standing shoulder to shoulder with Ukrainians in these difficult times, and we will continue to welcome them with open arms.

* * *

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government encourages inclusion in all matters, and I fully support this. However, there are positive ways of doing so.

Examples include making applications anonymous at the beginning of the application process or reserving scholarships for certain types of applicants. Exclusion, on the other hand, is unhealthy and eminently divisive.

Does the Prime Minister agree that exclusion is not the answer when it comes to education and research?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has always supported scientists and researchers, who have played a crucial role in Canada's progress, including in the fight against COVID-19.

Our investments and programs support world-class science and research across the country. We remain committed to providing the resources needed to ensure that all of our scientists and researchers can deliver to position Canada as a leader in innovation.

We will continue to support a strong science and research ecosystem that reflects the talent of Quebeckers and all Canadians.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have just rolled over yet again for the oil industry. The Prime Minister told the entire world that he would reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but he just announced that he is going to increase oil production.

Instead of investing in green energy jobs, the Liberals are giving a free pass to the oil companies so that they can get richer at the expense of our environment. This is an unacceptable and disgusting move that flies in the face of the climate emergency.

Why is this government giving handouts to oil companies when the planet is on fire?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have one of the most comprehensive emissions reduction plans in the world. We have credibly outlined the contributions that each sector must make to achieve our ambitious climate targets.

I am not the only one to say so: the Canadian Climate Institute, Équiterre, Clean Prosperity and other leading scientists have all approved our plan.

We promised an ambitious and achievable plan that will help reduce pollution and create opportunities for Canadians. That is exactly what our plan will do. We will always be there to fight against climate change and support the middle class.

● (1430)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at COP26 the Prime Minister promised the world he would finally put a cap on greenhouse gas emissions, but if we look at his new climate scheme, we can scratch that promise because he has given billions to the oil lobby to increase production on the fantasy of capturing carbon. That public money should be invested in energy workers to create a truly Canadian clean-energy revolution. We have the skills to do this, but we have a Prime Minister who has broken every climate promise he has made.

Does he not get that the clock is ticking, the planet is burning and the window of opportunity is rapidly closing?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we just put forward the most ambitious and concrete emissions reduction plan this country has ever seen. Every part of the country and every sector of our economy has a critical role to play to meet our 2030 climate targets.

As we made clear in the last election, we will cap emissions from oil and gas and ensure the sector reaches net zero by 2050. Our plan is informing our approach to cap and cut for emissions from oil and gas, and consultations are ongoing to make sure we design the right approach for Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is April Fool's Day and the Prime Minister is raising carbon taxes again. That adds another 11¢ to a litre of gasoline. Excise taxes are going up. CPP premiums are going up. GST revenues are going up. Interest rates are going up. All of these increases are driving up inflation and the cost of living for Canadians.

Does the minister not realize that inflation is spiralling out of control? Will Canada's first NDP budget deliver a plan to fight inflation?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us recall a bit of history. Canada entered this crisis in a strong fiscal position, allowing the government to take decisive action to put in place the supports that Canadians needed during the worst health crisis in a century. Our response to COVID was \$511 billion invested in the lives, livelihoods, communities and provinces of this country. It kept people in their homes and in their jobs.

While the other side is fighting itself over leadership, we are going to keep fighting for Canadians and affordability every day.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first-time homebuyers with good wages want to get out of their parents' basements. It is like a slap in the face to find out that the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation now offers government-backed mortgages with a 50-year amortization to landlords, yet denies first-time homebuyers a 25-year mortgage.

Why is the spend-DP-Liberal coalition fighting for more spending and lending to help the profits of big corporate landlords while leaving millennials out in the cold?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. member needs to have a conversation with his colleague from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, who stood up in the House last week and said that we should not help first-time homebuyers. He should have a conversation with the member for Calgary Centre, who said we should cut back on the national housing strategy. He should help the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, who has tried to table their platform in the House and cannot find the term “affordable housing” in the Conservative plan. That is their record.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Montreal is now saying there is a full-scale attack on Canadian home prices. Banks are raising interest rates and housing inventory is at an all-time low.

Oral Questions

The budget is next week and the average Canadian home price is a staggering \$868,000. To the minister, how much of this budget will Canadians actually be able to afford?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are moving ahead to make sure we implement the housing accelerator fund to offer more housing supply. We are enhancing and are committed to enhancing the first-time homebuyer incentive and making sure that we move forward on an innovative rent-to-own program that would turn more Canadian renters into homebuyers.

What did the Conservatives do? They voted against a tax on foreign-owned non-recreational residential properties. They are on record saying that we should pull back investments through the national housing strategy. They are on record talking down the first-time homebuyer incentive, a program that will help more Canadians become homeowners.

* * *

• (1435)

FINANCE

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it might not be a marriage of love, but it is certainly one of convenience for the NDP-Liberal government.

Here are some demands from the NDP platform. The New Democrats say they will raise the capital gains tax inclusion to 75%. They said they will raise the corporate tax rate to 18%. They said they will tax successful businesses with an excess profit tax. They will make life more unaffordable for Canadians.

The Prime Minister could not get the confidence of the majority of voters, so he bought the confidence of the House. How much is it going to cost Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to something as serious as the nation's finances, it is important to separate partisan posturing from the facts. We have seen the partisan posturing; now for some facts. The fact is that the world's two leading rating agencies, S&P and Moody's, have reaffirmed Canada's AAA credit rating. Our economy grew again in January, and it is the eighth consecutive month of economic growth. That is prudent leadership and that is stewardship of the economy that all Canadians can be proud of.

[Translation]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nobody wants to hear the government's same old tune about how inflation is a global phenomenon.

Oral Questions

Right now, inflation is at 1.5% in Switzerland, 1.7% in Japan, and 3.7% in Norway. Those rates are all lower than Canada's 5.7%.

Can the government compare itself to the top performers and tell us how it plans to slow inflation, which is currently eroding our fellow citizens' buying power?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts, and the facts are very clear. Canada's latest inflation rate was 5.7%. In the United States, it was 7.9%. Our inflation rate is lower than the G7 average of 5.8%, the G20 average of 6.2% and the OECD average of 7.2%.

Members across the way can fight amongst themselves during their leadership race, but we are going to focus on supporting Canadians.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he could at least have the decency to answer the question.

The NDP-Liberal party has no idea of what our constituents are going through. We meet with them every weekend. What do they talk to us about? They talk about groceries, which now cost an additional \$1,000, and houses, which cost an average of \$868,000.

When will the government do something? The budget is coming, so it is time to do something.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us remember the facts and review history.

Canada went into this crisis with a very solid financial position that made it possible for the government to invest in Canadians. We made investments of \$511 billion in Canadians' lives, in communities, in businesses, in the province, in Quebec and across the country to alleviate and prevent the worst depression since the 1930s.

There is leadership on this side; I am not sure what is on the other side.

* * *

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a call for applications for research chairs at Laval University is attracting a lot of attention because it excludes white men.

There are a lot of ways to promote inclusion and diversity within our institutions, and we completely agree with the principle. One way to do so would be through anonymous résumés, for example. However, exclusion is not the way to go. Exclusion is not a method of inclusion.

Does the government agree that it is a bad idea to exclude individuals from applying?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government firmly supports all scientists and researchers.

Over the past seven years, we have helped rebuild Canada's world-class science and research sector. We will continue to sup-

port a robust science and research ecosystem that reflects Canada's strengths and advances Canadian interests. Not only is this the right thing to do, but it is also the smart thing to do.

• (1440)

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, excluding the answer to a question is not a good idea either.

Exclusion is not a method of inclusion. What is more, what starts as a good intention creates division. There are young, competent male researchers out there who are in no way associated with the discrimination of the past, yet they are not even allowed to apply. These individuals are having their opportunity taken away in the name of equal opportunity. However, equal opportunity means that everyone is given that opportunity, at the very least.

Does the government agree that exclusion is not the way to go?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after a decade of being neglected by Stephen Harper's Conservatives, our government has consistently supported scientists and researchers.

We remain committed to providing the resources and tools our scientists need to bring tangible benefits to Canadians' health, environment, communities and economy. This will make Canada a leader in innovation.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government says its decisions are evidence-based, but when the government funds research, it tells science what criteria to look at. That is risky.

Science is neutral, objective and apolitical. Those are the conditions that make scientific progress possible and improve the human condition everywhere without discrimination.

Does the government acknowledge that criteria imposed by the federal government must never, under any circumstances, interfere with scientific progress?

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

Our government has brought science back after a decade of neglect, and not only is it back, it is a scientific community that looks a lot like Canada does right now. We applaud scientific research institutions that are taking steps to include diversity and inclusion in their hiring practices, and we will always support Canadian researchers.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the immigration minister introduced biometrics exemptions for some Ukrainians, but it seems that common sense is not so common with the NDP-Liberal government. A five-year-old might be exempt, but the mother has to wait weeks or months to get biometrics done. This makes no sense and is proof of inaction by the government, just like in Afghanistan. It puts people into the never-ending Liberal-made immigration backlog.

Will the minister put his ego aside, honour the will of this Parliament, listen to Ukrainians and please implement visa-free travel for Ukrainians?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share with the House that we have now had more than 12,000 Ukrainians arrive in Canada since the beginning of the year. Two weeks ago today we launched a new program that would expedite the arrival of Ukrainians, and we have now seen 12,000 more approvals under this new program in just the last two weeks.

We are going to continue to do what we can to welcome as many people as possible and will follow the advice of security experts, including to eliminate the requirement for biometrics for children, seniors and those with a travel history to Canada. I look forward to continuing my work with all members of the House and across parties to ensure we welcome as many people as possible who are fleeing this horrific and unjust war of aggression.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Khrystyna was nine months pregnant when this war broke out and she had her baby in an underground bomb shelter. She now needs to make her way through a war zone to get biometrics in Poland, with a brand new baby and a toddler in tow.

Liberal red tape is delaying people fleeing war. Liberal red tape is keeping people in conflict zones. When will the government show compassion and allow visa-free travel for Khrystyna and the thousands just like her?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her compassion. As the parent of an infant child, I cannot even imagine the horrific circumstances someone like Khrystyna is dealing with as she flees this horrific war.

We put forward measures that are going to expedite arrivals, and so far we are seeing that this is one of the largest and fastest humanitarian efforts in the history of Canada. We are responding in real time to a crisis in a way that does not just get people here quickly, but gets people here in a way that we trust can be secure.

I am not worried about the security threat this particular individual provides, but about others who may try to come into the program, including people who have been fighting in the Donbass in eastern Ukraine over the last eight years. It is something we need to address. We are going to do this in a responsible way and bring as many people here as quickly as possible.

Oral Questions

• (1445)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ukraine is attempting to negotiate peace with a cruel dictator, but Putin cannot be trusted. Ukraine needs military aid and it needs it now. President Zelenskyy has asked Canada and NATO for armoured personnel carriers and more missiles. While the Russians continue to wage war, Canada can give Ukraine our harpoon missiles for coastal defence. We can also give our light armoured vehicles that are being decommissioned right now, like our Coyotes, our Bisons and our M113s.

Will the Prime Minister immediately give Ukraine the lethal defensive equipment it needs so that it can win this war?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the minister has said many times, we are leaving no stone unturned to support our Ukrainian friends. We have announced six tranches of military aid, both lethal and non-lethal, to Ukraine since February alone. This represents well over \$100 million in military aid to Ukraine. In addition, we have assisted our allies in delivering aid to Ukraine via 21 flights on the C-130s that Canada is providing for airlift support.

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RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on a cold winter day in 2019, Dylan Paradis, Daniel Waldenberger-Bulmer and Andrew Dockrell climbed into a locomotive parked on a steep hill near Field, British Columbia. Minutes later, the brakes failed, the train ran away and the three men plunged to their deaths.

The Transportation Safety Board just released a scathing report on that accident, saying among other things that CP Rail did not listen to the safety concerns coming from its own workers. The government's hands-off approach to rail safety is killing railroaders.

When will it stand up to big rail corporations and protect workers' lives?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our thoughts continue to be with the families and friends of those who lost their lives in that tragic accident. We thank the Transportation Safety Board of Canada for completing a thorough investigation. Its investigation report was released today. We are going to examine it, we are going to act upon it and we are going to build on the interim measures that we put in place immediately after the accident.

Oral Questions

I want to assure my colleague, every member of this House and every Canadian that safety is our top priority, and we will continue to do everything we can to maintain the highest level of safety here in Canada.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were horrified to see General Vance walk away without consequence after allegations of sexual misconduct and obstruction. Women in the armed forces continue to wait for a real culture change in the face of sexual misconduct and assault, and yet, even though the Liberals have promised action for seven years, the minister has said they will wait again for yet another report. How many reports do they need?

Instead of delaying action when the solutions are known, will the government implement the Deschamps report so women get action now?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government takes all allegations of misconduct seriously and we are committed to taking strong action on any allegation that is brought forward, no matter the rank, no matter the position. We are committed to supporting survivors, and that is why we have committed over \$236 million through budget 2021 to eliminate sexual misconduct and gender-based violence in the CAF, transferred misconduct cases to the civilian system and passed the victims bill of rights, and that is only the beginning.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Women's History Month comes to an end today, women still face systemic barriers to participate in our economy, and there is still a lot of work that needs to be done for women entrepreneurs, especially those who are under-represented. Women should be celebrated every day and have equal chances to prosper. In 2018, our government announced the first-ever women entrepreneurship strategy, and this program represents \$6 billion in investments to advance women's economic empowerment.

Can the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development update us on the program and how the program contributes to advancing gender equality and women's participation in the economy?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from London West for her leadership and her hard work.

Our government continues to move the dial for women entrepreneurs and businesses by investing in their growth and in their success. Recently I announced a \$55-million investment for women-owned businesses looking for loans under \$50,000 and an additional \$25 million to further build out an ecosystem of support focused on under-represented women, and, by the way, this ecosystem has already helped 5,000 women's businesses to grow and

7,000 to start their businesses. If we do not measure it, there will not be any improvement, so we also invested \$4.2 million in the knowledge hub.

I want to thank the Canadian women entrepreneurs for all they are doing for the Canadian economy and helping to grow—

• (1450)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for South Shore—St. Margarets.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Unifor issued a news release on its meeting with the Minister of Fisheries that stated that the minister said her goal was to leave as many fish in the water as possible and that fishermen would need to sacrifice their jobs for climate change. In a statement responding to the release, the minister did not deny this.

Is the minister's actual goal to shut down the fishing industry?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my goal is to grow the fish and seafood industry, and for that we need sustainable stocks.

I have been misquoted at times and I will make decisions when stocks are in very critical state. I will make decisions that enable us to protect and grow them so that we can have sustainable fish and seafood and a growing fish and seafood industry for the generations to come.

Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member's NDP dance partner loves that the minister trashed the Unifor union.

Yesterday, the minister shut down the Atlantic mackerel fishery. Mackerel is the—

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe the member could back up and take away that “trash” comment.

Mr. Rick Perkins: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister shut down the Atlantic mackerel fishery. Mackerel is what we use for bait in the lobster fishery. Lobstermen in Maine used tons of carp this year for bait, yet the minister refuses to approve alternative bait methods over the concern that they may become invasive species. I have a news flash for the minister: Lobster bait is dead, rotting fish and cannot reproduce and is therefore not a threat.

Without other types of bait, there is no lobster fishery. Will the minister reverse this harmful decision?

Oral Questions

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do recognize that this decision on mackerel fishing will have an impact on some harvesters. The mackerel stock has been in a very critical state for many, many years, and it needs a break so that it can recover and be there as bait for the lobster and crab fishers. That is why I gave almost two months' notice: It was so that the fishers and the harvesters could find those alternative sources of bait, which do exist and are available in their communities.

These stocks are important for other fish, such as cod, salmon and tuna, and I know the member wants to see those fish have something to eat too.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, mackerel harvesters and processors are in shock after the minister closed this year's Atlantic mackerel fishery. Last year, harvesters in my riding witnessed an excessive abundance of mackerel, but much later than usual. They have observed changes in migration and spawning patterns, yet DFO science has not evolved with the ecosystems. For years, harvesters have lobbied to become involved in mackerel research surveys, as they are in other north Atlantic countries.

Does the minister care about the economic impact of her decision or is she just concerned with pleasing environmental activists?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I already mentioned, the mackerel stocks have been in a very critical state for a decade, and the time has come to give them a chance to regenerate and rebound, because we need mackerel stock for our fishers for bait for the very lucrative crab and lobster fishery and also for the whole ecosystem.

I am sure the member opposite would not want to be presiding over the extinction of such an important fish. We are going to protect it and regenerate it for the generations to come.

• (1455)

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after she was defeated in the last general election, the former minister of fisheries issued temporary moderate livelihood lobster licences to four first nations for the lobster season that ends in May. The former minister had the right and ability to impose conditions on the fishery in return for the issuing of these licences, which would sell in today's marketplace for over \$1 million.

Did the former defeated minister put in place a condition that these licences were not to be fished outside the DFO's commercial regulated seasons for lobster fishing areas 33, 34 and 35, yes or no?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know how important the lobster fishery and all fisheries are to the communities in Atlantic Canada as well as on the Pacific. I also know how important it is for reconciliation with indigenous peoples that they be able to satisfy their court-ordered or moderate livelihood fisheries rights.

With respect to the question, I am happy to look into it for the member. We do our very best to work with indigenous peoples to satisfy their rights and work with harvesters to make sure they are included in any changes of quota that will affect them.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, flights must be chartered to bring Ukrainian refugees to Canada.

According to Michael Shwec, president of the Quebec council of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the organization thinks that would be a good thing. Imagine a mother who winds up in Poland with her two children. She has to book and pay for plane tickets herself, so that is a barrier. If the government can help, that is one huge obstacle out of the way for her.

That is what Ukrainians want in terms of help for exiled Ukrainian mothers and their children.

When will an airlift be arranged?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada must welcome many Ukrainians who are fleeing Vladimir Putin's unjust war.

[English]

We have been working very hard to make sure that we can get as many people here as quickly as possible. That is why we introduced new expedited programs, and I am pleased to share that more than 12,000 Ukrainians have arrived in Canada already this year, with another 12,000 who have been approved just in the past two weeks. Previous to the new program coming on, there were an additional number, more than 7,500.

We are going to continue to welcome tens of thousands of Ukrainians. We are having conversations with the private sector to see what we can do to bring people here as quickly as possible. Every day we are working to introduce new measures to not just get people here, but to support them after they arrive.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us come back to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, which was asked yesterday what more the Canadian government could do to help. The answer was this: Relax the visa application process and help with travel. Send planes to bring these good people to Canada. Right now, they have to foot the bill and find their own way to Canada.

These people found a way to flee the war. The minister must now find a way to bring them to Canada. We have been saying for a month now that planes need to be sent in.

Oral Questions

When is the minister going to wake up and charter flights?

[English]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind the hon. member that typically refugee resettlement programs take years to implement to welcome people in large numbers. Over the past number of weeks, we have implemented new programs to allow those in Canada to stay. We have waived fees for new applications. We have found every application by a Ukrainian national that is in our queue already and are processing those applications in a priority way.

We introduced a new program so that people could get here in two weeks. We just this week extended new settlement supports to make sure people have language training and that they have access to employment assistance. We are continuing to do everything we can to support people. We will not stop and we will continue to introduce new measures to make it easier for them to get here.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the government's decision put salmon farms in the Discovery Islands on notice, there was no transition plan for affected workers. Now, 15 months later, the government has spent over \$20 million in PR exercises, but not a dime for worker transitions. The government's decision on the Discovery Islands deadline is three months away and there are still no transition supports for the workers who have lost or will lose their jobs.

Will the government provide targeted transition resources for displaced workers?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am committed to implementing a responsible plan to transition away from open-net pen salmon farming in coastal British Columbian waters. As confirmed by my mandate letter and as a west coaster, I know just how important this transition will be.

Last year, the department held preliminary engagements with first nations and many other stakeholders. That report was published last July and will be critical in developing our plan forward. We are going to do a lot more consultation, and budget 2021 provided funds to do just that.

• (1500)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is still no answer for workers. With regard to the expropriation of quota from crab and elver fishers, the minister told the fisheries committee that no decisions have been made on either the crab or elver fishery, yet DFO officials have written to crab fishers that the quota cut of 50% was final. They also told elver fishers that the 14% cut was final.

Does the minister understand that this will hurt the industry and kill jobs?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indigenous communities have a court-ordered right to fish in their traditional waters or to fish for a moderate livelihood. It is a principle of our government

to satisfy those rights. There is not always the ability to add quota to satisfy those rights while also maintaining conservation of the stock for the long term, which is absolutely critical. That is why we have been in consultation with the crab fishers and the elver harvesters to have an industry-led way forward on these matters.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, wharves are the Trans-Canada Highway of our commercial fishery. Without them, there would be no fishery.

They are a collective asset for the whole country, but the Liberals do not see the small craft harbours program that way. The Liberals see it as being just for Liberals. Here are the facts. In 2021, 74% of all projects went to Liberal ridings. Also, 15 of the 19 ridings that received more than one project were Liberal, and 20 of the 24 largest projects went to Liberal ridings.

This is just more misappropriation of funds for partisan purposes. As my colleague from Lévis—Lotbinière said, it is a scandal.

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand the importance of small craft harbours to rural fishers who depend on these facilities for their livelihoods. Livelihoods such as fishing, farming and tourism build resilience in rural and coastal communities.

It is a non-partisan program. The Conservatives did not invest in harbours, and we invested \$1 billion in a new fund under the small craft harbours program.

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CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, tax season is now half over. Millions of Canadians have already completed and filed their tax returns, and many others are about to join them by filing their returns in the next few days.

Can the Minister of Revenue tell us how this year's tax season is going?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his question and for his work.

Tax season is going well thanks to all the employees of the Canada Revenue Agency, who are doing an extraordinary job day after day. I would also like to take a moment to remind Canadians that they should file their returns by the deadline to receive the benefits and credits to which they are entitled as quickly as possible.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, invasive zebra and quagga mussels are devastating the ecology of waterways. They are harming natural species and ruining beaches, and they are costly to waterway infrastructure. Last summer, 17 boats were confirmed carrying invasive mussels coming into British Columbia.

With the summer fast approaching, we cannot have another year of inaction. DFO has a responsibility to stop the spread. What is the NDP-Liberal minister's plan to stop the spread of invasive mussels from coming to western Canada?

● (1505)

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my department is very seized with preventing and dealing with invasive species that are indeed a scourge of Canadian waters from east to west. We recently actually stopped zebra mussels from coming—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. As much as I like the fisheries questions, I like the fisheries answers and I want to be able to hear them.

Hon. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, my department and I have a very important responsibility to stop, and to prevent and reduce, the invasive species in the waters across Canada. Zebra mussels were discovered through work that my ministry did with our border agency. They were coming into Canada from aquarium supplies, and we stopped that. This is something we are seized with. We will continue to work on it, and our budget allows us to do just that.

Mr. Clifford Small (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, CPC): Mr. Speaker, salmon anglers in my province have been told that a decision is being made to stop all retention of salmon in the upcoming season. Last year, the Exploits River had returns that were nearly double the average returns for the past 10 years. Stopping salmon retention will take anglers off the rivers and put poachers in the driver's seat. Given that many rivers were stable or up in their returns last year, there is no reason to take away the right to retain salmon. In fact, retention of salmon can be increased.

Will the minister allow local anglers to retain salmon this year in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would say that on both coasts, west and east, wild salmon are incredibly important to our government and to the people of this country. Any measures that we put in place are to protect and to help regrow the stocks of wild salmon. We are very engaged with the sports fisher communi-

Oral Questions

ty on both coasts. In fact, I met with a group of sport fishers just yesterday who were salmon fishers.

Yes, we want to enable the sport fishing community to fish. At the same time, we are working with them and others to make sure that we sustain these populations and regrow them for the generations to come.

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TAXATION

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, the tax on beer, wine and spirits will increase automatically thanks to the government's excise escalator. Today, I tabled Bill C-266 to repeal this automatic annual tax increase.

Under the government, simple pleasures such as enjoying a beer with friends after work, or a bottle of wine over dinner with a loved one, are increasingly unaffordable for working people.

Will the government give Canadian brewers, vintners, distillers and especially consumers a break, and support Bill C-266?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will wait another week to see all the great contents of budget 2022, but what I can do is use this opportunity to hold the Conservatives accountable for their own record on affordability.

Let us get into it: we lowered the taxes for the middle class twice and raised them on the wealthiest 1%. What did the Conservatives do? They voted against it. We created the Canada child benefit and indexed it. What did the Conservatives do? They voted against it. We got tourism businesses all the way through omicron, and what did the Conservatives do? They voted against it.

We will stand for Canadians and affordability, each and every day.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over a month ago, Russia began an unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Ukrainian people have been very courageous in defending their homeland, but the situation is dire.

They are fighting for their very existence. There is a humanitarian crisis, and this is a threat to Canada's security, to global security and to Europe's security. Ukrainians are not only fighting for themselves, but they are fighting for us.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs please share with Canadians what Canada is doing to support the people of Ukraine?

Government Orders

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has one of the strongest relationships in the world with Ukraine, and we stand with Ukrainians in the face of this further invasion by Russia. We will continue to put maximum pressure on the Russian regime. We have imposed strong sanctions. We will send more lethal weapons, but we know we have to do more. We will do more. That is the reason why more sanctions are coming.

* * *

● (1510)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Tla-o-qui-aht member Lisa Marie Young was 21 when she went missing in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. It has been 20 years, and still Lisa's loved ones have no answers. Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals continue to go missing or be murdered.

Indigenous women are at least 4.5 times more likely to be murdered than non-indigenous women. How many lives need to be lost for the Liberals to set timelines and real resources to address this crisis?

Mr. Jaime Battiste (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her passion on this subject. Our government is committed to working with indigenous stakeholders all across this country to make sure that we move forward on the missing and murdered indigenous women calls to justice.

In fact, we put \$2.2 billion in a five-year federal action plan to make sure we are addressing that, to make sure that we see tangible results and to make sure, most importantly, that we keep indigenous women across the country safe and supported.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of an all-woman delegation of the members of the Ukrainian Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada. Will they please rise?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: We are honoured that they are here with us today.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

TERMINOLOGY IN THE HOUSE

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order in relation to a term that I think may have been used in question period and certainly featured prominently in debate earlier this morning. It caused me to reflect on the nature of unparliamentary language, as described in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which reminds us that the most important factor is whether the remarks create disorder in the chamber. As you know, confusion often leads to disorder.

Before getting into the term itself, I just want to quote a few relevant authorities for your benefit. The first comes from the bylaws of the Board of Internal Economy, which state that a recognized party is defined as “a party that has a recognized membership of 12 or more persons in the House of Commons.”

I would refer you also to the House of Commons website, under the subheading “Party Standings in the House of Commons”, where it lists four parties that meet that definition: the Liberals, the Conservatives, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP.

In order to find a reference to the term “neo-liberal party”, you have to go to the Oxford English Dictionary. It defines a neo-liberal as, “relating to a type of liberalism that believes in a global free market, without government regulation, with businesses and industry controlled and run for profit by private owners”. There are two parties that meet that definition: the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party.

I am concerned that in the confusion that arises from the use of this term, we may end up causing disorder in the chamber. That is why I thought it was very important to clarify the record that the social democratic party here in the chamber is by no means a neo-liberal party. We may be getting a neo-liberal party to do things with our leverage that it may not otherwise do, but that by no means makes of us a neo-liberal party.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for his intervention. Of course, we will look at that with great interest.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1515)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from March 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 3:14 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-5.

Call in the members.

● (1530)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 53)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey

Government Orders

Bains	Baker	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Barron	Barsalou-Duval	Plamondon	Powlowski
Battiste	Beaulieu	Qualtrough	Robillard
Beech	Bendayan	Rodriguez	Rogers
Bennett	Bergeron	Romanado	Sahota
Bérubé	Bibeau	Sajjan	Saks
Bittle	Blaikie	Samson	Sarai
Blair	Blanchette-Joncas	Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Blaney	Blois	Schiefke	Serré
Boissonnault	Boulerice	Sgro	Shanahan
Bradford	Brière	Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Brunelle-Duceppe	Cannings	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Carr	Casey	Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Chabot	Chagger	Sorbara	Spengemann
Chahal	Champagne	Ste-Marie	St-Onge
Champoux	Chatel	Sudds	Tassi
Chen	Chiang	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)	Therrien	Thompson
Cormier	Coteau	Trudeau	Trudel
Dabrusin	Damoff	Turnbull	Valdez
Davies	DeBellefeuille	Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Desilets	Desjarlais	Vandal	Vandenbeld
Dhaliwal	Dhillon	Vignola	Villemure
Dong	Drouin	Virani	Vuong
Dubourg	Duclos	Weiler	Wilkinson
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Yip	Zahid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi	Zarrillo	Zuberi — 212
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith		
Fergus	Fillmore		
Fisher	Fonseca		
Fortier	Fortin		
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Abouttaif	Aitchison
Freeland	Fry	Albas	Allison
Gaheer	Garneau	Arnold	Baldinelli
Garon	Garrison	Barlow	Barrett
Gaudreau	Gazan	Benzen	Bergen
Gerretsen	Gill	Berthold	Bezan
Gould	Green	Block	Bragdon
Guilbeault	Hajdu	Brassard	Brock
Hanley	Hardie	Calkins	Caputo
Hepfner	Holland	Carrie	Chambers
Housefather	Hughes	Chong	Cooper
Hussen	Hutchings	Dalton	Dancho
Iacono	Idlout	Davidson	Deltell
Ien	Jaczek	Doherty	Dowdall
Johns	Joly	Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Jones	Jowhari	Ellis	Epp
Julian	Kayabaga	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Kelloway	Khalid	Fast	Ferreri
Khera	Koutrakis	Findlay	Gallant
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Généreux	Genuis
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Gladu	Godin
Lametti	Lamoureux	Goodridge	Gourde
Lapointe	Larouche	Gray	Hallan
Lattanzio	Lauzon	Hoback	Jeneroux
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Kelly	Kitchen
Lemire	Lightbound	Kmiec	Kram
Long	Longfield	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Kusie	Lake
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor	Lantsman	Lawrence
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Lehoux	Lewis (Essex)
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Lloyd	Lobb
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)	McDonald (Avalon)	MacKenzie	Maguire
McGuinty	McKay	Martel	Mazier
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
McPherson	Mendès	Melillo	Moore
Miao	Morrice	Morantz	Morrison
Morrissey	Murray	Motz	Muys
Naqvi	Ng	Nater	O'Toole
Noormohamed	Normandin	Patzner	Paul-Hus
O'Connell	Oliphant	Perkins	Poilievre
O'Regan	Paupé	Rayes	Redekopp

NAYS

Members

Business of Supply

Reid	Rempel Garner
Richards	Roberts
Rood	Ruff
Scheer	Schmale
Seeback	Shields
Shiplay	Small
Soroka	Steinley
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thomas
Tochor	Tolmie
Uppal	Van Popta
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vis	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Williams
Williamson	Zimmer— 118

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to be very judicious in my language so as not to offend the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona and refer to it as a neo-liberal government. There has been thunderous applause this week every time we mention the NDP-Liberal government, so I would like to ask the NDP-Liberal government House leader what the plan is next week for the agenda in the House of Commons.

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow morning we will continue with second reading debate of Bill C-13, which would amend the Official Languages Act and enact the use of French in federally regulated private businesses act. On Monday we will have the fifth day of debate at report stage of Bill C-8, which is an act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update that was tabled in Parliament on December 14. Tuesday shall be an opposition day. Further, Wednesday we plan to start debate on Bill C-14, which concerns electoral representation in Quebec. We will continue debate on Bill C-13 and official languages on Thursday until 4 p.m., at which time the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance will be presenting the budget. Friday will be the first day of the budget debate.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL BUDGET

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 15 minutes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had previously finished commenting on child care, and

the last thing I would like to be able to emphasize is that we should remember that it was not that long ago, just a few months back, when we had a national election. One of the big policy issues for the Conservative Party of Canada was a price on pollution. Conservatives actually supported and campaigned on a carbon tax.

It would appear, if we listen to Conservative after Conservative stand up and speak in the House today, that at least the majority of them are now against a price on pollution. I think it is kind of encouraging, to a certain degree, that without a leader, we see that far right coming out and surfacing. It used to be the reformers. Many of them are not very sensitive to our environment and do not recognize the true value and the benefits of sound government programs, which we have seen developed over the last six years, going right up until we had the child care announcement two days ago.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his very loud and vociferous protestation and fantasy telling. I thought he was actually telling a fairy tale to a child at nighttime.

That being said, when the real world hits and we actually speak to people who live in our constituencies, and we talk to individuals who are seniors living on fixed incomes and cannot afford to eat, who cannot afford their rent, who cannot afford to drive their cars and who cannot afford anything, then these fantastical tales need to end at some point.

When is the government going to grow up and stop telling these tales to Canadians?

● (1535)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I will give the member a couple of facts. When he makes reference to seniors, one of the first actions this government took was to substantially increase the guaranteed income supplement, something that the Conservative Party actually voted against.

Then, once we got into the pandemic, we gave one-time payments to our seniors 65 and over, and for those on the GIS, there were two payments. Again, that is something in which we continue to support seniors through supporting, with literally tens of millions of dollars, non-profit organizations that provide different types of programs for seniors. Those are some of the direct and indirect ways in which we are there for seniors.

Then, we have many of my Liberal colleagues who are also advocating for things such as long-term care standards, financial resources and the issue of mental health. That is not to mention the campaign commitment we made, which we are materializing, of the 10% increase for people 75 and over. The list continues, and I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

*Business of Supply**[Translation]*

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I find it odd to hear my colleague from Winnipeg North say that seniors are important. The Liberals did promise an increase, but it only amounts to \$50 to \$60 a week. We know that seniors have greater needs than that. We only have to think of the cost of groceries and the impact of the increase in the price of gas and housing. Everything has gone up.

The Bloc Québécois is urging the government to implement a \$110-a-month increase immediately without discriminating against those aged 65 to 74. Yes, the Liberals did send out pre-election cheques to get people to vote for them, but they got their answer and they still have a minority.

What is coming is not enough. Does the parliamentary secretary agree that the Liberals are cheap?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, in the election, we made a commitment to increase OAS for seniors 75 and over by 10%. I can assure the member, that is not cheap. It is a substantial amount of money. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars. At a time when we really need to continue to support seniors, this government has been there. It has demonstrated its presence and support for seniors from virtually day one, as I pointed out, back in late 2015 going into 2016 and to this very day. I look forward to seeing yet another budget and the ways in which we will continue to see a Liberal government supporting the seniors of Canada because we truly care.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am sure you are very tired. You are working a lot and, while I am talking about the amount of time you have been here, I want to pass on my wishes to the Speaker to get well soon.

I have heard the Liberals talk about affordability. We have watched while they have let big oil get a free ride. Big oil has had record profits, and what did they do? They gave record dividends out to their shareholders, and then we saw gas prices go up for everyday consumers. We saw the big banks do the same thing. They had record profits and gave out record dividends. They then increased fees to their regular consumers. Grocery stores made record profits in the pandemic while grocery bills went up by almost \$1,000 for the average family. The Liberals continue to support this corporate welfare, just as the Conservatives did, instead of supporting everyday Canadians.

The Conservatives put forward a motion today where they actually want to increase taxes on people's retirement by not recognizing that the CPP is actually deferred wages that everyday people actually need. When will the Liberals stop supporting corporate welfare and make corporations pay their fair share of taxes?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, one of the very first things we did was indicate that Canada's 1% wealthiest needed to give a fairer contribution. That is why we had the tax increase on Canada's 1% wealthiest. That was one of the first actions we did back in 2016. Albeit the NDP did not support that motion, but we still moved ahead with it.

● (1540)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are talking about the Canadian economy, and we see today the Q1 gross domestic product report came out from Statistics Canada. Again, the Canadian economy is outperforming expectations. Again, Canadians, Canadian businesses and Canadian workers continue to have the confidence to move the economy forward as we recover from the pandemic. As we do our part as a nation based on shared democratic values fighting with Ukraine and making sure that Ukraine has the resources it needs, we are standing with the Ukrainian people.

I will just read from an article, which says:

Canada's economy is exceeding [Bank of Canada] expectations....

Canada's economy is growing...faster than the [Bank of Canada] forecast.

Despite restrictions, the economy still grew in January...

...and ripped in February.

Again, we are seeing the Canadian economy outperforming expectations. Again, we are seeing Canadian businesses and Canadian workers investing in Canada.

Our government understands that Canadians are being hit hard at gas pumps from coast to coast to coast as the prices of gasoline and diesel are reaching new records. While at first the idea of reducing taxes on gasoline and diesel may seem to be a good one, it is quite simply the wrong solution to a complex problem. This is simply not the right way to make life more affordable for Canadian families.

[Translation]

It is important to understand that the price of a variety of goods, including gas and diesel, is going up because of a global phenomenon driven by the unstable situation in Ukraine and the unprecedented challenges of rebooting the global economy after the COVID-19 pandemic. Market forces are behind the price of gas and diesel, among other things. This means that even if our government were to cut prices in Canada by 5% today by eliminating the GST, the benefits to consumers could be completely cancelled out in the days to come. The point here is that prices are very often tied to events that are out of our control and that are happening thousands of kilometres away.

[English]

There are much better ways to continue to make life more affordable for middle-class Canadians dealing with high inflation and high gas prices. I will provide very concrete examples of the actions our government is taking to help Canadian families make ends meet.

Business of Supply

This week, we signed a historic child care deal with the Province of Ontario in which the federal government will be investing \$10.2 billion over the next five years to reduce child care fees, first on April 1 and again on December 1, getting it down within the period of time the agreement takes place by 50% and creating 86,000 news spaces for Ontario families much like my own. My daughter will be going to day care come this October, and we will be able to place her not only in excellent care, but also where she will be learning with her classmates at the same time and at a much lower rate. That is improving affordability for Canadian families. We have done that since 2015, since day one.

I would like to remind my hon. colleagues that our government understands that in order to ensure a strong economic recovery it is necessary to be prudent and responsible fiscal managers. Our economic recovery plan is working.

Canada has exceeded its goal of creating a million jobs well ahead of expectation and has the strongest job recovery in the G7. As of February, 112% of the jobs lost since the peak of the pandemic has been recouped in Canada. I say this to all sides of the House: That is due to our government's focus on investing in Canadians and having the backs of Canadians so our economy could come rip-roaringly back as we exit and continue to exit the COVID-19 pandemic.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Furthermore, Canada's GDP has now returned to its pre-pandemic levels, and in spite of the unprecedented measures we had to take to combat COVID-19, our net debt-to-GDP ratio continues to be the lowest in the G7 by far.

We do not want future generations to be saddled with pandemic-related debt. We also want to ensure that Canada keeps its debt levels low.

That is why we remain committed to the fiscal anchors we announced in the budget last spring.

[*English*]

In terms of Canada's pollution pricing system, we are placing a price on carbon, which is a negative externality, and if one studied economics they would know about Coase theorem. We put a price on negative externalities that are not borne directly by the producers.

We put a price on carbon. That is actually the best way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to do it in the most efficient manner, while transitioning to a low-carbon economy by adopting technologies that are done through innovation. We have seen that. We have seen the announcement down in Windsor, Ontario, where LG and Stellantis will be investing nearly \$5 billion and creating 3,000 jobs in a sector of the future: batteries.

We will see, in the days going forward, further investments, not only in the auto sector but across our economy. We are seeing it in the oil and gas sector as it transitions to produce those energy sources in a low-carbon manner. That is what we need to do. We need to see the electrification of our electrical grid and make sure

that grid is producing low greenhouse gas emissions when it is in operation.

On jurisdiction, in 2022-23, payments for the climate action incentive will increase. A family of four in Ontario will receive \$745, in Manitoba \$832, in Saskatchewan \$1,100 and in Alberta \$1,079. In addition, rural and small communities are eligible to receive an extra 10%.

Our carbon pollution pricing system is innovative. It is groundbreaking. We know other jurisdictions and other countries are looking at it. We know the world needs to transition to a low-carbon economy. It is happening. It is happening quickly. We can look at Tesla and other companies. We can look at every auto company in the world. There is more than \$515 billion globally being invested into the electrification of the global auto fleet.

That is something that the Conservative Party of Canada is not going to stop, so it should get on the train. It should get on board and it should move forward like the Liberal Party of Canada has. That is the right thing to do for our environment. It is the right thing to do for our economy. It is a win for workers and it is a win for our standard of living.

What is more is that the remaining fuel charge proceeds that we gather are used to support small businesses, farmers, indigenous groups and other organizations. Going forward, the federal carbon price will continue to be revenue-neutral for the Government of Canada. This is how we make life more affordable for everyone from coast to coast to coast, while also protecting the environment.

Since we were elected in 2015, one of the key priorities of our government was to reduce taxes for middle-class Canadians, while raising them on the wealthiest 1 %, something that the Conservative Party of Canada voted against. We lowered taxes twice for middle-class Canadians. Once was in the 2015 budget, and then we increased the basic personal amount, which will reach \$15,000 for every working person in Canada on which they will not have to pay federal taxes. That is a winner. It is a multi-billion dollar tax cut, year in and year out, and it is something I am proud I championed.

I think it is fair to say that we have delivered on the commitment in real terms: promise made, promise kept. Our government has increased support for families and low-income workers through programs like the CCB and the Canada workers benefit, which have helped lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty since 2015.

[*Translation*]

We increased the basic personal amount that Canadians can earn before paying federal income tax to ensure that the middle class benefits from this support.

[English]

We will strengthen the middle class. We will continue to assist those working so hard to join the middle class.

[Translation]

The advantages of the increase are progressively eliminated for high-income taxpayers. When the measure is fully implemented next year, single people will pay \$300 a year less in taxes and families will pay \$60 a year less.

• (1550)

[English]

In addition, we have increased the guaranteed income supplement, the top-up benefit for low-income single seniors. I look forward to this July with a 10% increase to old-age security payments for over 3.3 million seniors, which is almost \$800 a year for so many seniors in my riding.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague who is quite gifted in the area of economics. I love asking him questions. I love hearing him speak in this House of Commons, especially when he delivers a speech that is full of meat. I will ask him some questions that, I hope, will give him an opportunity to put some more meat on the bones of what he gave us here today.

One of the things I like that he said was “promise made, promise kept”, and he talked about externalities of pollution. Let me ask about those externalities of pollution and the promises made around planting two billion trees, which he knows his government has not even come close to delivering.

He also talks about the affordability that Canadians have at this point in time, a point when inflation, according to Statistics Canada, is going up 5.7%. It is actually much higher. Debt is ramping up at an unsustainable pace. We are reaching an actual cliff point here where we will not be able to manage it anymore as a country. We are subsidizing industries in Canada more and more, and we are putting competitive industries out of business.

How does he see this path, economically, moving forward along these current lines?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague and more so a dear friend, the hon. member for Calgary Centre, for the question. There were lot of questions within that statement.

First, I very much look forward to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance delivering the budget next Thursday here in the House. I always like to see a budget that is full of measures that encourage business investment, encourage job creation and encourage productivity. That makes more efficient our tax system and our regulatory burdens on industry and on the private sector, and it ensures that we are good fiscal managers of the purse, which we have been to date and we will continue to be in the future.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Business of Supply

Today, we are talking about inflation. One aspect of the Conservatives' motion is about inflation.

I am sick and tired of hearing the Liberals say that they are listening and that they are helping seniors when they are leaving out an entire huge segment of seniors, those between 65 and 74 years of age, who make up more than half of the senior demographic. Those hardest hit by inflation are those on fixed incomes.

The government talks about the guaranteed income supplement and says it wants to increase it by 10% to help seniors 75 and up, but that is not enough. It is not just us saying this. Community organizations in Quebec need more help.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

[English]

We have taken care of the seniors in Canada, like my parents, from day one, since we reversed the increase in the eligibility for old age security and GIS from age 67 to 65. That was one of the first things we did. We increased the GIS top-up. During the pandemic, we instituted a number of measures to assist seniors, and we sent them funds during that time.

Yes, inflation is obviously on everyone's top of mind, as well as affordability. Much like all over the world, it has been caused by many factors. The heart of the matter is that for Canada's seniors rest assured we have their backs. We will continue to have their backs. I look forward again to seeing more measures in the upcoming federal budget that will assist those hard-working seniors that I call the greatest generation that is currently alive.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, here we are listening to Liberals, and today Conservatives actually want to go after seniors' retirement income. Together, they helped reduce corporate taxes from 28% to 15%. Meanwhile, people cannot even afford a place to live. We have seen how these tax breaks have worked out. I appreciate being heckled by the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend s): Can we allow the hon. member to ask the question without interruption?

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, BMO made a net profit of \$7.7 billion. It paid out \$2.74 billion in dividends to shareholders. Loblaws made a net profit of \$1.9 billion and paid out \$484 million in dividends. Suncor made a net profit of \$4.1 billion and paid \$3.9 billion to its shareholders. In the meantime, gas prices went up. Food prices went up. Bank fees went up.

Business of Supply

The corporate welfare needs to end. Motions like today's need to be defeated and instead the government needs to support our call to action, which is to charge 3% on the profits of those big corporations that have earned over \$1 billion so that we can actually get people the help they need now and make life more affordable.

• (1555)

Mr. Francesco Sorbara: Madam Speaker, I am in favour of all measures that encourage business investment and job creation. I am not for measures where we see increased regulatory burden or increased taxes on job creators, on companies. That is where I stand. I am in favour of job creation and business investment. That is what we must encourage. We must drive productivity in this country and improve the standard of living—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Calgary Centre.

Far too often, it is easy for us to sit in this symbol of democracy and lose perspective on what is happening within our constituencies. The affordability factor is real right now. What many people were saying was a transitory inflation period has actually become a state of permanent inflation, and it is affecting everything from gasoline to home heating.

The impact it is having on Canadians is very real, specifically in my constituency of Barrie—Innisfil. A little later I am going to be talking about some of the impacts that were told to me directly from people so that not only this place but Canadians can understand the real impacts inflation and the affordability crisis Canadians are facing today are having on my constituency.

Canadians have been resilient for the past two years dealing with COVID. There have been many government programs that have been implemented. As a result of that, we have seen increases in debt and deficit. The latest figures I heard were \$400 billion in deficit and \$1.3 trillion in debt. What we are saying, through this motion, is that there needs to be some semblance of getting back to a fiscal framework where we are not seeing those levels of increase in debt and deficit through unsustainable government programs.

There is no question some of these measures that were implemented needed to be implemented. They needed to be targeted. In many ways, Conservatives supported some of those measures, especially at the beginning of the pandemic. We are getting to a point right now where many Canadians, young Canadians, seniors and families, are losing hope that there is a prosperous future for them because of the fiscal situation they are in. This is a fiscal situation that has been exacerbated by government debt and deficit, which is leaving us vulnerable. We are starting to see increases in interest rates and the service level of that debt is going to have a profound effect on families with mortgages, lines of credit and credit cards.

However, it is even going to have a more profound effect on government as this debt piles up and the cost of servicing that debt increases. I would argue there is an attack on many aspects of revenue in this country. We have seen certain sectors of our economy, like the natural resource sector, the fisheries over the last several

weeks and other sectors, attacked through legislative and regulatory burdens. Traditional sectors that normally create revenue for the government have been attacked, and that is increasing the vulnerability of not just government revenues but the ability to pay for those increases in servicing costs.

Canadians are struggling more than ever as a result of inflation, which is now at 5.7% and is the highest inflation in a generation. It is the highest inflation rate in over 30 years. Canadians are being burdened not just by the inflation but by the level of debt. We saw just recently a Statistics Canada report that showed \$1.86 of every household income coming in is going toward servicing debt. Think about that. Just a year ago or two years ago we were at \$1.70. That number is steadily increasing and it is causing a problem. The amount that households have added to their debt burden has amounted to \$50 billion just over the last quarter. These are staggering numbers that really put at risk those working-class, middle-class and lower-class households in this country that have been struggling and will continue to struggle under this burden of debt.

What we are talking about today is at least attempting to get this fiscal house in order. History in this country has shown that previous Liberal governments like the Martin and Chrétien governments were very good at fiscal responsibility and social Liberal tendencies. This is where I would classify my politics. I believe we need to be responsible in our finances, but we also need to look after the most vulnerable.

• (1600)

It is the most vulnerable who are at the greatest risk as a result of this debt increase, this debt burden and this out-of-control government spending, debt and deficits. The social safety net programs that many Canadians rely on are at risk as a result of the servicing costs of debt. We really need to get to a point where we are focused on this fiscal framework and getting things aligned. It does not have to come from austerity and it does not have to come from cuts. I will speak about that in a couple of minutes.

We know that the government's spending is certainly out of control. Two-thirds of Canadians say that inflation and an affordability crisis are their top economic concerns. Canadians are requiring real solutions to skyrocketing inflation and the cost of living.

This is not just hitting households; it is hitting businesses. I just had a meeting with the Barrie Chamber of Commerce, and the increase of costs is a very a real and serious threat and concern to the economic recovery of businesses. A friend of mine who owns a local business just got his carbon tax bill, for example, and that bill alone was \$1,384. Businesses with tight margins of, say, 10%, have to come up with 13,800 dollars' worth of sales just to pay for the carbon tax. Again, businesses are getting to a point right now where they are becoming uncompetitive.

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Gas price is another significant concern. It is up 30% since last year. The price of gas in Barrie today is 167.9¢. Tomorrow the carbon tax is going to see a 25% increase, which means that the price of fuel is going to go up by 11¢. This may not be a problem in downtown Toronto, downtown Montreal or downtown Vancouver, but it is a problem in Barrie—Innisfil, where there are a lot of people who drive to the GTA. They drive for an hour and are filling up their tanks for over \$120. I have heard stories that it is costing \$120, whereas a year ago it might have cost \$65 or \$70. This is how much of an impact it is having on affordability for families, and it is taking away from other things. There are seniors who are no longer driving to places for fear that they will have to put gas in their cars, so they are limiting their social interaction at a time when they should be increasing it after the COVID crisis. It is becoming a real problem.

There is a story about the Innisfil Food Bank. It is seeing an increase in demand, but it is also seeing an increase in the costs of servicing that demand because of grocery prices. Here is what happens. When the prices increase and the carbon tax increases, the manufacturers and wholesalers pass that on and we end up paying a price for it at the grocery store. We are already seeing that day in and day out every time people go to the grocery store. The Innisfil Food Bank says that more donations will not be enough because as prices skyrocket, more people can no longer afford to buy groceries.

Just a month ago, I took advantage of the resources available to me through the House. I sent out a householder to my residents and asked this question: “How concerned are you about the rising cost of groceries, gas and heating your home?” I will give a sample of some of the responses that I heard from Barrie—Innisfil.

“I fear my children in their 20's will never be able to afford a home of their own. It's quite heartbreaking”, says Christine of Barrie.

“The price of living makes things extremely hard to live. The amount of taxes we pay is ridiculous. If you don't save while you're young, by the time you retire how will you survive? You work for 30 years in a job and just have a Canada pension”, says John of Innisfil.

In another one from Innisfil, Garry says, “\$6.00 increases in OAS. It's time to get something for seniors. We are staving.”

Robert from Barrie says it is “\$1.50 per a litre of gas”. That was last month. It is \$1.67 this morning. He says it is “\$255.00 for 1 month's heating bill. Housing prices + rent [are] out of control.”

Monica from Innisfil says she is “finding it difficult to advance and afford an adult life (kids) and keep up with bills even on a teacher's salary”. She is worried about inflation and says, “a recession will happen”.

Those are examples of what I am hearing.

How do we recover from this? We do not attack those sectors that produce. We make sure that it is about the power of businesses, the people who they employ and the products and services they produce in every sector and region of this country, and that Canada becomes competitive, not just domestically but internationally, so

we have the confidence for domestic investment and foreign investment. Let us make sure that we are firing on all cylinders. We have focused on the expense side of the ledger for the last two years. It is time we focus on the revenue side of the ledger, have a budget that Canadians expect, with no wild, out-of-control spending, and make sure that we do things right in this country.

● (1605)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been hearing speeches from Conservative members, and there is some convenient amnesia across the way. A short six months ago, they all ran on a carbon tax. Every single one of them ran on a carbon tax. Theirs was “the more you burn, the more you earn”. It benefited the wealthiest Canadians, whereas this government's price on pollution gives money back to Canadians. It benefits lower-income Canadians.

Why are they forgetting that fact and why do they not mention the rebates when they talk about a price on pollution?

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, that is a great question and the answer lies in the report of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. While the Liberals say that 60% of Canadians will get more back in the carbon tax, the Parliamentary Budget Officer says that 80% will receive less than what they pay in carbon tax. This is a fallacy that is spread by members of the Liberal government. They stand up here in the House and tell people things that are not exact.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer answered that question, and the people of Barrie—Innisfil are not getting back what they are paying in carbon tax. In fact, it is costing them more.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like him to comment on the fact that the Liberal government plans to increase oil production by 200,000 barrels in the very near term and gas production by 100,000 barrels.

Given that we all think that is incompatible with our desire to move away from fossil fuel production, what are his thoughts on increasing fossil fuel production like this?

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[English]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, it is not going to be a surprise to the hon. member that an attack on our natural resource sector is not what I believe in. I think the natural resource sector has clean, Canadian, ethical oil that has the best environmental standards. Natural gas, as well, has the best environmental standards in the world, the best labour standards in the world and the best human rights standards in the world. I think we should be supplying the world with clean, Canadian, ethical oil and gas. We have the fifth-largest reserves in the world. At a time when we are dealing with geopolitical crises around the world, like the one happening in Ukraine and Europe, we have the ability to meet that supply and demand with clean, Canadian, ethical energy.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

We agree to some extent on the analysis of the cost-of-living situation and the fact that things are tough for people, but unfortunately, we get yet another unsuitable Conservative response. We in the NDP have a crazy idea: We think we should go look for the money where it is. This year, the big Canadian banks made record profits of \$77.7 billion. That is a 39% increase over last year. It is indeed, when people are suffering and are having a hard time paying for groceries and rent.

Does my colleague not think it would be a good idea if we increased taxes on companies that make billions in profits on our backs and used that money to invest in people?

[English]

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I do not happen to believe that earning a profit is a bad thing. I also do not happen to believe nor share the view of the NDP regarding businesses earning a profit. Whether it is a small-town business in Barrie—Innisfil or a large corporation, they pay their fair share of taxes.

The NDP talks a lot about a 1% tax on the rich. That is going to generate about \$7 billion a year in revenue, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. We have a debt right now—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. John Brassard: Do not clap right now, because we have a deficit of \$400 billion, and \$400 billion minus \$7 billion is \$393 billion. Where are they going to get the rest of that money back? Where are they going to get the rest of the money to pay for that deficit? They are going to get it with an economy that is firing on all cylinders, not by picking and choosing winners, and by making sure that every sector in every region of this country is economical firing on all cylinders.

• (1610)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to debate the motion. There is a lot in here that is economically needed, and I think members on the other side of the House will appreciate some of the metrics we need to put on the page about what we do going forward.

I am going to start with a story. Eleven days ago, I hosted a town hall meeting in the community of Killarney-Glengarry in the riding

of Calgary Centre. I host these to hear directly from constituents about what their concerns are. Let me summarize what I heard: cost of living and paying bills or, in other words, inflation. I also heard about spiralling government debt and no indication that this is a problem for the government.

Here is a real touchpoint. A young woman with her first job was shopping for a home in her neighbourhood to buy with her mother. She recognized that house prices were beyond her reach. She wanted answers as to why and how house prices rose so high, so quickly. New homebuyers cannot afford homes. In case it is not glaringly obvious yet to the government, Houston, we have a problem.

Housing costs have doubled under the government's seven-year economy-destroying tenure. The best investment in Canada is a passive investment in housing, if people can afford it. It says a lot about the growth sectors that do not exist in the Canadian economy, for good reason. The government has penalized economic growth in Canada. Foreign investment has left Canada. Canadian investors have fewer choices. Canadian companies pursue growth opportunities elsewhere, and I will come back to that later. Canadian pension funds invest elsewhere.

I said that housing prices have doubled in Canada in the government's seven-year tenure. What else has doubled? It is the amount of federal government debt, now at \$1.3 billion and growing. How about that now-sacred debt-to-GDP ratio? From less than 30% and declining seven years ago, it is more than 50% now, and that supposed fiscal anchor is flexible.

I do not think members of the government even understand that metric, let alone how to calculate it. There is one GDP, or gross domestic product, in Canada. There are layers of mounting debt: federal debt, provincial debt, corporate debt and personal debt. Which of these did not increase significantly over the past few years? All of these increased significantly, putting Canada's debt-to-GDP ratio among the highest in the world.

How does the government facilitate this massive infusion of cash into Canada's financial system? It is by monetary measures, which the Prime Minister told Canadians he pays no attention to.

First, it dropped interest rates to a level close to zero, as in 0.25%, encouraging borrowing and spending. However, at 0.25%, inflation was recently at 5.7% according to Statistics Canada, which always understates this measure. We are, by Canadians' experience, at a higher rate than the 7.1% inflation rate calculated in the U.S.

Second, there was quantitative easing. When market forces will not buy the bonds the government issues to print cash, well, we just buy them back and put them on the balance sheet of the Bank of Canada. Canadians own the debt more than once. The mispriced assets on the balance sheet of the Bank of Canada will increase the debt going forward.

It is as if the government does not know that all these economic indicators are connected. Deficits lead to higher debt, and higher debt leads to higher debt service and the need to increase taxes to pay just the interest on the debt. Lower interest rates lead to asset price inflation by definition. The government has therefore intentionally raised housing prices and priced new homebuyers out of the market. There is another possibility, though: The government does not really know what it is doing. It is either intentional inflation and the trickle effect destroying the savings of Canadians or incompetence.

• (1615)

I am going to talk about the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board. This year, the deductions for the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board went up 10% both for employees and employers, yet the CPPIB reported that it had enough assets on its balance sheet to cover its liabilities for at least the next 75 years. Some would ask why there was an increase.

When members say in the House that the CPPIB is postpaid compensation, they need to ask the government why it includes the Canada pension plan in its debt-to-GDP ratio as a government asset, if it belongs to the people. It also includes the Quebec pension plan as a government asset against the government's debt, yet it is supposedly postpaid compensation. Was this why deductions were raised 10% this year? Was it to make its balance sheets look a little better, even though it is supposed to go to Canadians going forward? By the way, employment taxes are the most regressive form of taxes. They destroy jobs because they are applied both to the employee and to the employer, so they again increase the cost of doing business in Canada.

Perhaps this is what the government is trying to give Canadians as an indication of what to expect with respect to inflation going forward. An illusory 5.7% is marginal compared with the 10% the government has indicated in its CPP deduction increases. Is this what we need to expect from inflation as Canadians? Canadians have their first taste of the effects of the current government's economic mismanagement. The government's dismissive narrative is starting to unravel, with reality hitting really hard.

There are many ways in which the government has marginalized business in Canada so that it can no longer pursue the projects that have to be done in order to increase the capital stock of Canada. We no longer invest in Canada. We no longer provide the environment to invest in Canada.

How many of my colleagues across the way have touted all these investments that have come into Canada? They are predicated upon a government-run subsidy program that continues to drain Canadians of their savings and puts it into all kinds of programs that are somewhat chosen, yet we do not know the actual effects of that, going down the road. We continue to destroy actual tax-producing sectors while we continue to give money to sectors we do not yet

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know the effect of, going forward. This is economic micromanagement at the government level, and we do not know the outcome yet. The government is choosing winners and losers here. It is not necessarily going to be any good for the Canadian economy, and it is a bad taste we are getting across the entire Canadian economy.

Canadians are finally getting their first taste of the inflation they should have expected when the government started running up over half a trillion dollars in debt over the last few years. Half a trillion dollars in debt means our dollar is going to be worth less at the end of the day, so our houses will be worth more but we will not be making any more money. If we did not have houses beforehand, we are not going to be able to buy one. We are not going to be able to save for our RRSPs, and we are not going to be able to put away enough money so that our kids can go to university. I am sure there will be some kind of program going forward to take care of that. At the end of the day, we are just draining the piggy bank of every future generation of Canadians. It is something we need to keep our eyes on here very closely.

I am asking the government to start pursuing measures that look at these metrics, and to bring some forward-looking perspectives to the future of Canadians because they are dealing with the present. The government is spending and spending. We have to get this under control and make sure we balance our opportunities with our future. It is time to get Canada's economic fiscal house in order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I reject the notion that CPP and EI are taxes. They are not. They are called "source deductions", as related to the manner in which businesses collect them.

This member's concept or notion, that somehow just because it is on a balance sheet means it is a tax, is inaccurate. If I have a business and I contribute and collect a benefit for an employee, that will show up on my business in the asset column and my obligation to that employee to pay it out later on will show up as a liability. Therefore, it is entirely correct from an accounting perspective to list the CPP as an asset, especially if there are billions of dollars in there that the government is essentially managing for the people who that money is owed to, later on. It will show up as an asset and it will show up as a liability.

• (1620)

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I did hear what my colleague said, and I want to tell the member very clearly that he is in over his head with his comments. That is not the way it works in business. Businesses do not keep those on their balance sheets. They actually remit them to the government right away and the government puts them over to another organization called the CPP-IB, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, which invests that on behalf of Canadians for their retirement. That is the way it works in Canada. To continue to have these on the balance sheet of the Government of Canada when it does the calculation on what it calls its debt-to-GDP ratio is completely facetious, and I will maintain that.

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The member also talked about this being a source deduction versus a tax, with respect to one versus the other. If source deductions are going to be postpaid compensation, they should be taken off of the balance sheet of the Government of Canada. That is all we are saying here.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague from Calgary Centre, this motion has me thinking.

Are we not quietly forgetting to reach out directly to the oil companies and ask them how they might also contribute to further funding the treasury and to balancing Canada's budget? Is there no way to get more money from them instead of giving them a free pass?

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, the oil sector contributes nearly \$25 billion annually to the federal, provincial and municipal governments. It is one of the sectors that contributes the most in Canada, and I think that it is the largest sector in Canada to pay taxes. Some other sectors do not pay any taxes, like those that receive government subsidies.

[English]

Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member was talking about government interference, and the government picking winners and losers. Without true government leadership, in terms of closing tax loopholes and in terms of strengthening and expanding social programs to create the equality and equity that we seek in our society, they are picking winners and losers. The winners are Scotiabank, with net profits of \$10 billion; BMO, with net profits of \$7.7 billion; and Loblaws, with net profits of \$1.9 billion.

That is the creation of winners and losers. The losers are taxpayers. They are everyday Canadians. What I cannot understand is why the member across the way continues to believe that the status quo that is hurting everyday Canadians must continue.

Mr. Greg McLean: Madam Speaker, I do not know where my hon. colleague on the other side of the aisle believes that I think the status quo is helping Canadians. I think the status quo is a disaster for Canadians. Yes, we do need to change the status quo considerably. There are sectors that have been protected during the pandemic by the government in charge of this. That sector needs to kind of make sure that it steps forward.

All kinds of corporate welfare have been doled out through this \$560 billion of debt that the government has built up over the last handful of years. That has to change considerably. That is what I am after here. I will tell the hon. member on the other side of the House again that we need to stop this corporate welfare. This is what we mean by winners and losers. Who is making these choices, as far as giving Canadian taxpayer dollars to their own friends and relations on the other side of the House?

• (1625)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, although I do not take particular exception to being told that I do not know what I am talking about, I will tell the member for Calgary Centre that I have been collecting and paying

EI, CPP and WSIB on behalf of employees since 1997 and turning them over to the government.

To his point, what I said was that if I were to collect a benefit and hold on to that, which would later be turned over to that employee at another point, what I was holding on to would have been considered an asset. I did not say paying those source deductions would be considered an asset, which is the way he characterized the answer to my question.

Nonetheless, I am thrilled to have the opportunity today to talk about this particular motion. I want to congratulate the Conservatives for bringing forward a motion once again that actually has substance. This is the second time I am saying this within two weeks. Yes, they deserve to applaud themselves for that, because quite often what we see coming before the House are grandiose motions that really just look to paint individuals into a corner and to put people in a certain negative light. This is actually talking about substance, so I can appreciate their interest and I can appreciate that they have actually brought something forward.

This is an issue of whether or not we agree with this concept. I will explain where my issues lie with the motion. I am going to start by addressing some of the premises that the motion is based on.

I have been listening to the discussion. Earlier today, I heard the member for Brandon—Souris say that only a Liberal government could increase tax on those making over \$200,000 a year and bring in less revenue. I would say in response to the member that only a Conservative MP could not understand the very simple logic of empowering the middle class that moves our economy forward. It is giving the middle class a break, which is what we did and what he was referring to, that has driven forward the economy. That has given us one of the best economies, if not the best economy, in the G7 over the last six years. It is what has delivered us to the point of being able to have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

As a matter of fact, as I mention the debt-to-GDP ratio, I would note that Canada is currently in the best position among our G7 partners. It is very interesting. I sound like a broken record, I realize that, and I know the Conservatives think that I do, but I hear them once again go back to discussing the debt, and how much debt there currently is, and how this government is running a deficit.

I would tell them, and I have told them many times in the House before, that Brian Mulroney never ran a surplus. He ran a deficit. Stephen Harper had one surplus. That was when he was first elected. That was actually Paul Martin's surplus, but whatever. Then Mr. Harper did "balance" the budget just before the 2015 election. How did he do that? He slashed veterans' services and sold off GM stock at bargain prices. Yes, he got himself to a position where he could say that he balanced the budget, if that is what we are measuring success by, but I would argue that was only to run in that 2015 election so he could appease his base who were pushing him in that direction.

Why do we do that? Why do we run deficits? Why do governments run deficits, typically speaking? They do it because they are looking for opportunities and they want to make sure that we can continue to invest in our economy, because they know that if the economy is growing at a faster pace than the deficit, we are actually generating a net positive at the end of the day. That is why all of the OECD countries are always pinning themselves against the debt-to-GDP ratio. At the end of the day, that is what matters.

What did we do? We brought in meaningful programs before COVID hit. We brought in programs that asked the top income earners, the 1%, to pay more. Yes, we did. We gave a tax break to middle-income Canadians, because we knew that they fuel the economy.

• (1630)

What did we see out of that? We saw economic activity grow at an astronomical pace in Canada. We were among the best in the world for a domestic economy.

Then what happened when COVID hit? COVID hit and instantly everything came to a halt because people were understandably concerned. They were not aware of what was going to happen and there was a great pulling back in what people were willing to spend their money on and invest in, and I am talking about businesses specifically.

Afterward, we made sure that the supports were there to give businesses and Canadians, and quite frankly those investing in the Canadian economy, the confidence they needed to know that the Canadian government would be there for them to get them through this and out on the other side.

Within five weeks, we were the first to deliver supports to Canadians. When I say “we”, I want to give credit where credit is due, because the Conservatives voted in favour of that. Had they not come forward and said, yes, they would give unanimous consent to spend this money immediately, it would have dragged the process down and it would have taken a lot longer to get the supports. A lot more doubt would have been put into businesses and Canadians.

Conservatives should take the credit for that, the credit that they are rightfully owed, in terms of their participation in that.

That is what gave the confidence and the economy the confidence it needed to continue going. Where have we found ourselves afterward, as we have started to come out of COVID? We have started to see that we are rebounding back. We have recovered 114% of jobs lost since the pandemic. We have the best GDP in the G7 right now.

The economic infrastructure in the beginning put things in the right place. Because of what we did during the pandemic, we are going to reap the rewards coming out of this. We are in a better position than our counterparts throughout the globe and as a result Canadians, Canadian businesses and those that invest in Canadian businesses will be the net beneficiaries of that.

The motion talks about a path to balance. This party ran in an election six months ago promising to spend more than we were spending. The member for Durham, the leader of the official oppo-

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sition during that election, and maybe this is why they got rid of him, said that he would balance the budget in 10 years.

That was the member for Durham. That was his commitment, to balance the budget in 10 years. I understand the frustration of some members, perhaps those that are responsible for this motion, and where they are coming from, because maybe they did not agree with that, but the reality is that this is where this particular political party, the Conservative Party of Canada, was less than a year ago, only six months ago, during that election.

One of the problematic parts of this motion is specifically with respect to item (ii). I know it has come up a couple of times and that NDP members have raised it, as well as members from this side of the House. I have asked a couple questions on this, and section (ii) is where it refers to the Canadian pension plan as a tax.

If this was just about semantics, and if this was just about terminology and payroll taxes and source deductions meaning the same thing, I would be totally fine with it. The problem is that they explicitly refer to it as a tax and then later on they say “no new taxes”. What they are basically saying in here is that CPP will not go up.

It is ironic, because the member for Barrie—Innisfil just stood there and was reading clips he had received from constituents. One of them, and I do not know if he had read them in advance, but I wrote it down when he said it, was from a gentleman by the name of John. John wrote and complained about the costs of living right now, saying that the only thing he would have to survive on later was his measly CPP.

The member for Barrie—Innisfil read that out less than 40 minutes ago right in the House. Meanwhile, his motion is calling on reducing the contributions toward CPP.

• (1635)

CPP is paid for not just by the employee but also by the employer. It is a well-regarded, well-respected plan that has been in this country for a long time. I understand the previous speaker from Calgary Centre, and I understand that he has an immense background in business. I can truly and genuinely appreciate that his logic or his position on the way that businesses should operate, in seeing only its value and thinking that a business will make a decision to leave Canada or start reducing payroll employees just because of a CPP increase.

I would suggest to him that our economic environment, our country and our social fabric represents so much in this country in terms of why businesses want to be here. Businesses are not just here because of taxes. I know that from when I was the mayor of Kingston. Quite often we would have businesses trying to come to Kingston and they would say they wanted to talk about how much we charge for water or they wanted to talk about property taxes.

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At the end of the day, even though we were more expensive than Brockville or Belleville and a number of other locations, they saw the value in establishing their business in our community. I would offer to the member for Calgary Centre that businesses do not just look at what it is going to cost from a strictly monetary perspective. They also look at employee retention. People loved setting up businesses in Kingston because they knew that the employment base was there. They knew that there was a labour force there that was ready and willing to work.

If we can make sure that we have the right programs in place to make sure that throughout Canada we have the right employees who are trained properly and willing to work, I would suggest to the member for Calgary Centre that the increases in the CPP will be looked at as an investment in people, not strictly a cost of doing business, as he suggested.

I also want to talk about was price on pollution. I will also correct the member for Barrie—Innisfil on something he said earlier. Again, I was listening very closely, as I try to do with everyone when they are speaking. He said the cost per litre was going to go up by 11¢. That is not true. The cost is currently 8.8¢ and will go up to 11¢, so the cost is only increasing by 2.2¢. I will give the member for Barrie—Innisfil the benefit of the doubt. He probably said it very quickly and did not realize what he was saying, but it is important for people to know that it is not an increase of 11¢, as he said earlier.

More importantly, pricing pollution is such a widely accepted and regarded policy. Half of the G20 countries have some form of pricing pollution. The former leader, the member for Durham, ran on pricing pollution. I know it was not exactly the same plan. The member for St. Catharines referred to it earlier as a plan that said the more that is burned the more that is earned. That is true because it was a plan that basically said, if someone spends x number of dollars on their version of carbon pricing, they would get some form of credits, Air Miles or something, where they could then go to a boutique somewhere, I imagine, and start buying these green products.

I do not understand how these members who ran on this just six months ago cannot understand that this is exactly what we have now. The only difference is that we are not encouraging people to go out and spend more so they could get more Air Miles. We are encouraging people to look for ways to spend less and pay a smaller price for carbon. If we do that, then it will drive people to actually spend less, but they will have a net benefit because the amount to be redistributed is equal.

• (1640)

I just want to say—

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order, the member across the way seemed to refer to the Air Miles program. I believe that is a copyrighted program, and I am really quite certain that was not part of the Conservative plan. I think the member probably should correct himself on that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The member is correct. There are certainly copyright issues.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, although I am pretty sure we can refer to trademarked or copyrighted material in the House, he is correct. I am being facetious when I call it “Air Miles”. What were they calling it? I believe it was the carbon rebate program, where people stacked up points and got neat prizes. Whatever it is called, it is what it is.

I was going somewhere with this. I want to congratulate the Conservatives because they are finally at the point where they are able to have the words come out of their mouths that acknowledge the fact that money is being given back to people. They raise important questions.

They brought up a couple of times lately during question period about how much money is going back, whether is it eight out of 10 Canadians or six out of 10 Canadians and who is benefiting from it. Those are the conversations we should be having in this House, because at least those conversations start from a point of factual accuracy. They start from a point of understanding the concepts before we start engaging in the discussion. Now I can have a discussion with them. Now we are going to discuss whether the math is lining up and whether the money is going to the right places, as opposed to just obtusely ignoring the fact that the money is distributed to Canadians in the first place. I am really thrilled.

I particularly want to mention the member for Kenora, who was willing to talk about that in his speech, and I heard at least one other Conservative member talk about it as well. At the end of the day, when it comes to this particular program, I am in favour of the model that has been created. It is important to point out that not all provinces have the price on pollution that was implemented by the federal government. In many areas, it can be done by the provinces.

The Province of Quebec does it, as we heard earlier from the Bloc. As a matter of fact, a member brought it up earlier, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who talked about the program in Quebec specifically. He talked about how it was a deal that was set up with California. He is right. I know this because my father was the environment minister in Ontario when that was put in place. Ontario was actually in that same program with Quebec and California, but, unfortunately, on day one, Doug Ford bailed and got rid of Ontario's participation in cap and trade. That is why the federal government had to implement its program, as it has had to do in several other jurisdictions, such as Alberta, which had a program in place that was removed.

I am glad that we are talking about an important issue today. I am glad that the Conservatives seem to be taking seriously their role as it relates to bringing forward motions of actual substance. This is a good discussion to have. I do not agree with a lot of what is in this motion. I will not be voting in favour of it, and I do not think I am surprising anybody by saying that. Nonetheless, I appreciate the position that Conservatives are taking, and hopefully we can find compromise on something else.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is great to have such a high-minded debate on such an important issue, and on this side of the House, we appreciate the member's comments referring to so many of our colleagues who made some important points about this motion. I thank him for repeating what we have said here.

Business of Supply

I am going to correct him with regard to CPP. CPP payments from the employers and employees are going up 10% and the payouts are staying the same, in case he does not realize that about CPP either.

When are we going to get to balance? We talked about the amount the government has spent in the last couple of years, which is \$560 billion, and the Parliamentary Budget Officer has told us that over \$170 billion of that was not necessary at all for the pandemic. It is excessive government spending that was not required in order to get us out of the hole the pandemic put this country in. Before a pandemic, \$170 billion was the most that has ever happened. This will be the highest deficit in Canadian history.

The member talked about all kinds of stuff. If he does not think it is because of the regulatory burdens the government is throwing on their backs, including the payroll taxes that are rising without benefit to the employees, why are companies leaving Canada?

• (1645)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, there is a lot to unpack in the question.

However, specific to the member's comments about CPP, it is a program that people are investing in for the long term. In theory, the people who are investing in it today will not be making withdrawals from it for several years, depending on how far they are from retirement, and we need to make sure that the investments continue to remain up so that when those individuals look to retire 20, 30, 40 years from now or whatever it might be, they have an opportunity to have economic security when they retire.

The member brought up a couple of other points that escape me right now, but perhaps one of his colleagues will ask them and I will be able to answer them then.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his fine speech. However, we are discussing the budget. He spoke about several very important aspects.

We cannot talk about the economy without talking about the workforce. There is a serious labour shortage in my riding and throughout the regions of Quebec. Emploi-Québec has estimated that 1.4 million positions will need to be filled in Quebec between now and 2028. The vast majority of these jobs, 81.2%, are positions that will be left vacant by baby boomers retiring en masse.

Creating a tax credit for young graduates and immigrants in the regions is a good way to fill those positions, as is calling on experienced workers, especially those who are 65 and older and want to return to work.

In addition, transferring to Quebec—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Could we have the hon. member's question, please?

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I remember one of the comments from the member previously, and it was about the path to balancing a budget. I would say to the member for Calgary Centre that the most important thing is to be aligning ourselves in a favourable position as it relates to our debt-to-GDP ratio, because that is what is important. That is what signals the ability we have to repay that debt, and that is so much more important, as previous Conservative governments themselves signalled through their budgets.

On the member's question specifically about how we deal with the challenge as it relates to lack of employment, yes, it is a big challenge that we have. My understanding is that in 2021 alone, half a million new immigrants who came to Canada became permanent residents. I think that is one of the ways, quite frankly, that we are going to deal with this.

My parents came to Canada in the 1950s, post World War II, in search of new opportunity. Their parents looked at Canada as a shining light in the world; as a place to become prosperous and a place to set up new roots. I think we can do the same thing now to make sure that we keep growing our economy so that we can take care of baby boomers.

Ms. Lindsay Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to put something on the record to clarify it, because I know that my hon. colleague for Kingston and the Islands would appreciate this point of clarification.

The member was talking about Conservatives and balanced budgets and the myths that go along with it. I would like to remind the House that in the time of the Conservative government when the Conservatives did try to balance the budget, it was because they raided the EI fund; those deferred wages from taxpayers and from those workers. Of course, when they raided that EI fund, they learned from the best, the Liberals, who had done it three times before them to the tune of over \$50 billion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would certainly agree with the first part of what the member said.

The reality is that I do not think that running deficits is coming from a place of not properly managing a budget. Conservatives, as the member rightly said, did it, and in 16 budgets between Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper, only two were either balanced or ran a surplus. I talked about those in my speech earlier.

The important thing here is that people understand, and governments know, that the most important thing is growing our economy faster than we are taking on debt. That is how we end up paying for it. That is how developed countries throughout the world are doing it. Conservatives know that. It is a great talking point for them, because they know it resonates well with people out there. I do not blame them for doing it, but the reality is that they should know better than to speak like this, especially the member for Calgary Centre who—

• (1650)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock.

Business of Supply

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, does the hon. member think that the inflation we currently have is a problem?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, 100% I think it is a problem.

According to the Conservatives, a year ago the Prime Minister was incapable of doing anything right, and now they are suddenly giving him credit for being able to affect global inflation.

Inflation is a global problem. For this Conservative member and for many other Conservative members to stand up and try to suggest that inflation is only a Canadian-made problem means they do not get out and look around or read a newspaper to see what is going in the world. This is a global problem. This is not a uniquely Canadian problem.

Do I think it is an issue? Absolutely. Do we need the proper tools and policies in place to deal with it? One hundred per cent we do, and I am very confident that this finance minister will come forward with those.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have talked a bit about the price on carbon pollution. What I am curious about is if the member would like to share with me his thoughts about the price of pollution. There is an actual price on our economy and on individuals.

I know I have heard about it from people in my community. The price of insurance is going up, and there are other issues like that. Perhaps the member might want to comment on that aspect.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, absolutely, there are those prices that people are seeing right now, today, as the parliamentary secretary mentioned. Insurance costs are rising as a result of more flooding and various other issues.

There is also the price that future generations will pay. The less we do now to fight climate change and to put the right policies in place, the more we will make our children deal with later on. I know that Conservatives are very concerned about what our children will have to deal with later on. They bring it up all the time, but they only bring it up in a monetary perspective, in a dollar value. There is also the value of the quality of life, the quality of the environment and the planet that we are leaving children decades from now.

I want to make sure that my children, the parliamentary secretary's children, all members' children and all Canadian children have the best possible shot at having the best possible lives when they get older.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Health; the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam, Persons with Disabilities.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bills: Bill C-15, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022; and Bill C-16, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023.

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL BUDGET

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Souris—Moose Mountain, who I know has a dynamic speech members are going to want to hear right after mine.

The member opposite made a comment just now. He said that the more we do now in climate change, the less our kids will have to do when they get older. It is a good comment and a true comment, but it also applies to many other things we do here in government, and that includes fiscal and financial responsibility. It means saying we are going to take responsibility for how we spend our money now so that our kids do not need to make difficult choices of the kind we had to make in the nineties.

I thought I would take a trip down memory lane on what happened in the nineties, because some of these members need to understand exactly what that was like. Even going back into the eighties, I can remember coming out of high school looking for a job, and I and 30 other kids were applying at McDonald's. I remember thinking that would have been a great job, because that was all that was available.

I remember high inflation rates. I remember buying my first house in the nineties and being excited about getting an interest rate of 14%. I was excited at 14%. Now if I cannot lock it in for 3%, I am really upset. How things can change, and how things can change back.

In the nineties we had former finance ministers Ralph Goodale and Paul Martin under Chrétien, who were faced with a situation that was very, very dire. There had been 27 years of unbalanced budgets, 27 years of mismanagement and overspending. All of a sudden we had foreign bankers and bondholders telling this country what we could and could not do. They were basically putting the thumbs to us and saying that we needed to balance our budget or the IMF was going to come in. I know former prime minister Chrétien said that this was not going to happen and took responsibility, and I credit him for doing that.

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Those were tough times, and I do not want to see our kids having to make the same decisions. Let us look at the cuts they had to make. When we look back to 1993-94, we see that basically the transfers to the provinces were just stifled. In fact, it took about 15 years to get the amount of money that was cut to health care back to where it was.

I remember times when I had grandparents who were looking for surgery, and all of a sudden there was no surgery. I remember people screaming that we needed more health care funding, but there was no money for it. I can remember people saying that we needed to have more social services, but there was no money for those social services. We did not have it. We had wasted it.

In 1995 The Wall Street Journal called Canada a third world country. That is where we were in 1995. According to Edward Greenspon and Anthony Wilson-Smith's 1996 *Double Vision*, Jean Chrétien's three priorities in 1993 kept the IMF out of here. That is because he made some really tough decisions. He had to take extreme measures and cut government spending in real terms. He cut as much as we had ever seen since before World War II.

Chrétien got rid of a lot of the grants. He got rid of a lot of the things people took as staples. In fact, he cut the CBC so badly that the president of CBC resigned the next day. That is what can happen when we let spending get out of control. That is what can happen when we do not have a balance in place, and that is what is really concerning about the government at this point in time.

As we go into new spending, there are things I would love to see. I would love to see a dental care program. I think it would be wonderful, if we can afford it. I would love to see a pharmacare program, if we can afford it. You bet I would love to see a national day care program, if we can afford it. What bugs me in this situation is that we possibly could afford it if we did not keep shooting ourselves in the foot.

If we would allow our resource sector to actually do what it does best in the world, we would actually make a difference and be able to pay for a lot of these things. If we let the oil actually get to market, we would have the royalties at the provincial level and the federal level so that we could transition our economy in a way that would not be burdensome to our kids. We would not have to borrow money to do it. We could actually pay cash for it. What an amazing idea: paying cash for something. There is nothing wrong with that.

I was listening to members across the aisle talking about every country being in deficit and having inflation. Who cares? This is Canada. This is what Canada needs to do. Canada has inflation so Canada needs to worry about its inflation. Canada needs to worry about its own spending.

I do not worry about U.S. spending; the U.S. can worry about its spending. I do not worry about European spending; they can worry about their spending. They can let their kids figure out how they are going to pay for it. I would rather to take care of things in my own house here in Canada so I know my kids have a great standard of living, so I know my kids can get surgery when they need it, so I know my kids can get EI and CPP when they need it.

• (1655)

That means we need to be responsible. It means we need to show respect for taxpayer dollars here and now, not 10 years from now, because what I am seeing right now is that fact. We just spend it.

When we see a bank making huge profits of \$6 billion or \$7 billion, what do we see the coalition government here say? They say that is bad. Where does that money go when they make revenues of \$6 billion or \$7 billion? It goes to Canadian shareholders. It goes to pension funds. It goes to groups that distribute it back into the economy. What do those people do? They pay taxes. Let us look at what the banks are also doing. They are lending to small businesses, to farmers and to medium-sized enterprises and big companies. They are actually providing the capital for them to operate so they can hire people. That is how capitalism works.

If they want to go to communism, let them ask Venezuela how that works or ask Russia or USSR how that works. It does not work. Let them ask Cuba how it works. It does not work. Big government does not work. The more we can get our fiscal house in order and the more we can take responsibility, make responsible decisions and be proactive in deciding what we are going to do moving forward, the better this country is going to be.

We have a few examples of what happens when the government is not proactive. I will just take the war in Ukraine right now and how ill prepared Canada would be if Russia had decided to come to Canada instead of Ukraine. We are naive. We think that will never happen and that the U.S. would protect us. Really? Ukrainians might have thought the same thing until 2012 when it happened. Then they thought it would never happen again. Well it happened again. People in Poland are certainly second-guessing that right now.

Are we prepared? We are going to buy 88 jets, it sounds like. That is a good thing. We could have bought them eight years ago, though. We would have been prepared then.

They have a habit in the current government of actually waiting to dig a well until we are thirsty. Then it is too late. Can we not be proactive? Can we not do things ahead of time? Can we not anticipate things? Can we not look at things and say, "This is what we need to do"? Can we get beyond just one focus, which is the environment? The environment is important. I am not criticizing that, but what I am saying is that we can do that and do three, four or five or six other things at the same time. They can link together and they can actually work in harmony and, again, leave a better country for our kids.

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There are some serious structural problems happening here in Canada. I hear it every day in my meetings with different groups and organizations. There are the vineyards, for example. The wine association people were talking this week about the excise tax escalating. They have repeatedly told the government it is a problem that is driving them out of business and that, if the government drives them out of business, all those small grape producers do not have a home for their grapes in Ontario. The winemakers actually gave notice to the grape producers this week that they will not have a home for those grapes. Therefore, that sector is going to die.

I go to the manufacturing sector and talk to Canadian manufacturers and exporters. They say their costs of production are too high and they cannot compete anymore. They say, "We have all these free trade agreements and all this market access. It is wonderful and I am glad we have it, but if I cannot produce it in Canada what good are they?" Why do we not look at how we get those costs of production down and get the manufacturing to cost?

If we want electric vehicles to be in Canada, then make it an attractive place to build them in Canada and do not chase the manufacturers to the U.S. and other jurisdictions. They should look at Canada and say it will be great building here because we have a good labour force, a good cost of production and market access right around the world. We have a stage that is set to be successful. However, we are missing pieces of that equation, and the current government is not addressing any of those items.

When companies do come here and invest, members might notice a certain characteristic: government subsidization in order to get them to come here. We have to give them money to get them to locate here. Why not give them a good environment to do business in? Why not give them a good educational force? Why not give them the benefits that Canada historically has had all along? We have given up those historical advantages because we have overspent. We do not have anything left to give.

There is a D-Day coming. There is a day when all of a sudden somebody is going to come in and a bondholder is going to drop our rating and we are going to say, "Oh my god, we have to correct things." Probably our kids will have to make some very difficult choices like the Liberal government in 1993, 1994 and 1995 had to make. We will see health care cuts. We will lose our social benefits programs. That is coming.

We can stop that if we show some responsibility and show some awareness of what our strengths are and take advantage of those strengths and help transition our country into being the next country in the next generation that can be number one throughout the world. Let us quit worrying about everybody else in the world. Let us worry about Canada.

● (1700)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was very interested in listening to this speech. One of the things I kept hearing the member say is that we are not getting the votes of confidence from business here in Canada, but we see time and again that is not true. I believe only a couple of weeks ago we saw a \$5-billion investment from LG and Stellantis, creating jobs in Windsor in our auto sector.

That is a very significant investment based on the new future economy, a low-emissions economy. The other piece, thinking from Alberta's perspective, is that I believe Amazon chose to build a plant out in Alberta near a solar farm so it could make sure it had clean, renewable energy.

I wonder if the member could speak to the economic opportunities of making sure we have the economy people want for the things they are going to need to build for the future.

● (1705)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. Why does the government have to subsidize them to come here in the first place?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: We didn't.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Yes, we did, Madam Speaker. The Ontario government subsidized it. The federal government subsidized it. What was also promised into the future to get them to locate it here in Canada? Why did we have to do that? Why did we not just say that we have the critical resources and all the things we need to make a great battery here in Canada, plus the labour force, the tax base and infrastructure to do that? We do not have that because it is not developed.

I find it really interesting that the trade minister was in the U.S. talking about electric vehicles when build back better is coming on and her selling point was that we have the critical minerals in Canada. We do, but they are in the ground and the regulations the Liberals have in place will keep them in the ground.

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to see that my colleague and the entire Conservative Party care about Canada's economic balance.

I believe that we can find solutions, but if we were to stop spending and invest in oil, we would be digging ourselves an even deeper hole.

Does my colleague agree that we must first help the least fortunate, those who are most in need and who have been most affected by the pandemic? I am talking about seniors and low-income families who need social housing. There is a housing shortage. It never ends. It is getting worse and worse every week. Should we not do more to help these people?

If we want to permanently fix this problem, we need to decrease our dependence on oil and petroleum and develop new green energies, such as wind and solar energy.

Does my colleague agree that we need a permanent, stable and sustainable recovery?

[English]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for a great question, and I agree with him 100%. Coming out of a crisis, we need that physical capacity to take the decisions we have to make. We had that fiscal capacity because we balanced our budgets in 1993, 1994 and 1995 and we maintained budgets, so that in 2008 when the great recession hit Stephen Harper had a buffer zone so he could spend money, keep the economy going and then balance the budget again in 2015.

The current government needs a plan to balance its budget now so that, if we need to help people out as they come out of the crisis, we can help them. If we want to get to a green environment I am saying let us move there if that is where the world is going to go, but let us not take and throw away all the benefits we have right now that could pay for that changeover. Why not embrace them, take the royalties from oil and critical minerals, and use them to plan accordingly and build up our green energy infrastructure?

I find it interesting that we would subsidize a car but not tell people how they are going to plug it in. We do not tell them where they are going to have to plug it in. We do not tell them that if they have a condo built in the 1970s there is no power grid that they can plug in to. Those are the things we need to solve and we need the resources—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have time for one last question.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, the first line of the Conservative motion today cites, “excessive government spending has increased the deficit, the national debt, and fuelled inflation to its highest level in 31 years,” but does not mention that corporate tax cuts have gone from 28% to 15%. It is like the Conservatives have become the no-revenue party. The big banks, big oil and grocery stores have had record profits that have paid out record dividends. How is that playing out for everyday Canadians? We are seeing cuts in services. We have seen an absence of the national housing strategy over 25 years. There were cuts to Veterans Affairs and cuts to services for Canadians. The corporate welfare is out of control and I think this motion fails to address that.

Does my colleague agree that those big corporations that have profited throughout the pandemic should pay their fair share so that they are not leaving the burden and shouldering of all tax debt on everyday Canadians?

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, I have a few points. First of all, I do not believe in picking winners and losers, so as far as the corporations getting subsidized by the federal government goes, we should be getting out of that. I agree with him on that. As for their paying dividends, that is a good thing. Their making profit, that is a good thing. To have a low tax rate so they are located here, that is a good thing.

I will say that the NDP joined this coalition, like lots of provincial NDP parties when they form government, but they now have to show responsibility. What they say and what they do means some-

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thing because they are now a part of government. When they are in opposition—

• (1710)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Prince Albert for his fantastic and riveting speech, which not only brought us back in history but also focused on Canada and not what the rest of the world is doing.

Today’s debate is an extremely important one, not just because of the upcoming federal budget but due to the fact that this issue has been a major concern for my constituents for a number of years now. I would like to thank my Conservative colleagues for their tireless advocacy on behalf of the Canadians who are being negatively impacted by the government’s financial mismanagement, both now and in future generations.

The government continues to fail to recognize that it has doubled the national debt from \$612 billion in 2015 to over \$1.2 trillion today, and who knows what that magic number might be, if announced at all, next Thursday. It seems that we, on this side of the House, are the only ones who truly understand the long-term impacts of a federal government that racks up debt and deficit without a second thought. On top of that, inflation, which we know is at 5.7%, is the highest it has been in 31 years, so it is impossible to stay silent, especially knowing that next week’s budget will likely contain even more reckless government spending that will only push our country further into debt.

The last two years have been extremely difficult for Canadians across the country, with many still trying to get back to some sense of normalcy. With that said, the government continues to forget that any money produced comes from the people of this great country. It comes from the taxpayer. It comes from them now and it will always come from them. We need to respect that.

Small businesses were hit particularly hard, especially those in the service industry. Some who did not have the luxury of working from home had to be laid off or lost their jobs completely. The last thing they need to be concerned about right now is a government that will impose even more taxes on them than they are already pay, which is the equivalent to kicking them when they are down. Canadians deserve, and quite frankly, need, a break from the skyrocketing cost of living that we have been experiencing lately.

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In my riding, one of the biggest and most pressing issues is the carbon tax. As members know, the carbon tax will increase from \$40 per tonne to \$50 per tonne on April 1, which happens to be tomorrow. I wish I could say this is a poor attempt at an April Fool's joke, but it is unfortunately a reality we must face. Life has already been made significantly more expensive because of the carbon tax, and instead of helping Canadians who need it, the Liberals are only making things worse.

While I do not expect the Prime Minister to know everything about my riding, my constituents and I would certainly hope that he knows what rural means. In rural Canada, we do not have access to public transportation through things like bus systems or light-rail transit. If we cannot reach a place by foot, by bicycle or horse, taking a car is the only option. The increased carbon tax, increased food costs and escalator taxes, combined with the astronomical gas prices, have put a heavy additional burden on Canadians who have already struggled through the pandemic.

Small businesses will continue to suffer under these increases, especially those who work in transportation. One small trucking company in my riding is now paying tens of thousands of dollars more to fuel its fleet of vehicles than it was paying before the carbon tax came into effect. This is not including the increase happening tomorrow or the increase in gas prices due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Furthermore, this business employs a number of people in the community it is based in, and if it has to shut its doors because it can no longer afford fuel, jobs will be lost and the trickle-down effect will certainly have negative ramifications for the community as a whole. If we add inflation into this equation, the outcome is even worse. How are small business owners supposed to stay afloat when they are constantly being taxed left, right and centre?

These inflationary prices are throughout the economy. In fact, I just read today that Dollarama, which sells its stock for one dollar a piece, will be increasing up to five dollars for the sale of its wares. That is a huge inflationary increase.

I received a letter in February 2022 from a constituent who owns a small Home Hardware business with his wife. He states, "I have an item in my store that in July last year sold for \$52.99. That same valve this week now retails for \$144.99. It is nearly three times that retail in six months. This is by no means the only item. We have been advised that over 7,500 items are facing this increase in just the next couple of months."

• (1715)

Those figures are absolutely outrageous. To think that any small business could weather a financial storm of that magnitude is unconscionable. The government needs to find some way to provide relief for Canadians when it comes to inflation and taxes or local economies will suffer: not just the businesses, but consumers as well.

He goes on to say, "The concern is that I am a fairly new corporation: under six years old. I live paycheque to paycheque as it is. I cannot and do not have the funds to invest more money into the business to even maintain the inventory level I have now. I have just over \$1 million in inventory. I am now looking at needing \$3

million in inventory just to stay where I was. I just can't do it. We don't have any more money to give. Our mortgages are maxed. So in addition to mass shortages and massive delays in getting inventory, I am having to greatly reduce my inventory quantities just to stay in budget. This cannot continue, or I will be out of stock and business in months, possibly before summer."

The closure of a business is a scary thing.

He continues, "The current policies and mandates are destroying the businesses of our country. I am unsure as to how much longer any of us with moderate to high debt loads can continue. I have spoken to many business owners, and even those that are 30-, 40-, and 50-year-old businesses are considering selling off and closing their doors forever. I have been in this business for almost 34 years and absolutely love it, but I can't afford to stay in business like this."

This is a real tragedy. These businesses have been institutions in their local communities, some for generations, and the government's inability to take control of inflation, on top of its incessant and relentless taxation, will be the death knell for these businesses.

Canadians want to see real, practical solutions and a meaningful plan from the government, but instead they are being left behind. They are scared of a new hidden or escalating tax to further eat away at them from a government that does not understand how to work a business.

Canadians have had enough of this parasitic approach of the Liberal government that puts up a front while eating away at them internally.

I think the ending of the letter will resonate with many small business owners, not just in southeast Saskatchewan but all across the country.

He says, "More and more mom-and-pop shops have started working six days a week up from five, just to try and make enough to make ends meet. I am looking at downsizing staff and closing Sundays as it isn't feasible and I have to cut costs somewhere. We have already gone from 25 staff a year ago to 18, and may have to go to 14 or even 12 to maybe survive. I don't even know if I could make the current business work with 12 to 14 staff. I would have a lot of land not making any money to help pay bills. I would have also about \$400,000 dollars of equipment to try and sell in a downhill market. I would have a loss here as well. I am unsure how to get this across to the Liberals and their buddies, but it is getting real ugly, real fast financially, for most of us."

Unfortunately, whether it be from a lack of understanding or a lack of care, this issue is clearly not getting across to the Liberals. Canadians want to see a plan for growth, with targeted investments in the places that need them the most. We need a concrete plan to fight these inflationary pressures. Taxing Canadians even more is not the solution.

We all know most seniors also live on a fixed income and many have no additional source of revenue outside of their CPP and OAS. I regularly receive correspondence in my office from seniors who express just how tight their budgets are, as well as their concerns about future government decisions that will negatively impact them going forward. One constituent of mine who is now retired stated, “I’d like to bring to the attention of our Prime Minister and the governing members of our country what it is like to live in rural Canada. We are so tired of hearing how easy it should be to use public transportation and not rely on natural gas. All these things are available to large city dwellers, but not in my community.”

This senior also brought up the fact that he has no choice but to travel long distances to attend medical appointments. These have a huge impact on his family.

My constituents have completely lost faith in the government’s ability to fiscally manage our country. Excessive government spending, increased taxes and record high levels of inflation are symptoms of poor fiscal management and a lack of responsibility. As I see my time is quickly ending, I call upon the government to ensure that next week’s budget contains no new taxes and outlines a much-needed plan to balance the budget. Canadians need, and certainly deserve, a break.

• (1720)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate hearing comments about what is happening in the member's local community. One of the things I have been struck by is that we talk about concerns about the price of food, for example, and things like that, yet we are seeing right now, with floods, wildfires and increasing droughts because of climate change, that it is only going to get worse, based on the IPCC reports and what we see.

Will that not impact these businesses that need to order food to sell to people, and impact his constituents who want to have affordable food? All of those pieces are together. Are they not feeling the costs of climate change, and do they not want to see us take action to make sure they are more climate resilient and also to stop, where we can, right now, further degradation of our climate?

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's question points me to what the biggest problem in this country is. It is the fact that Canadians do not understand what rural Canada is.

Rural Canada is the breadbasket of our food. Our farmers out west and throughout the industry have been sequestering carbon for years, and they get no credit for the fact that they sequester that carbon. They sequester it with every crop that they grow. They do tremendous things with land resources and what they grow. That is not to mention that the unfortunate part of this present government is that it has not invested in things that would invest in such things as carbon capture and storage, for which we have the only working plant in my riding. It is there, yet the government continually scares away investment. It is leaving: It is going to the States and other parts of the world instead of investing here, where we can do these environmental things that will improve and assist this great country.

Business of Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a real pleasure to hear about rural life in the House and, more importantly, to hear about it in a good way.

I agree that talking about rural life can be awkward at times. There is a sense that Canada is built around the needs of Toronto and its suburbs, which is very frustrating.

For example, back home, the Témiscamingue RCM has had to stand up to Canada Post because Fabre and some other municipalities are no longer able to receive services. It is absurd.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers has an interesting solution. It has suggested electrifying Canada Post's transportation fleet, which would make it perhaps one of the largest commercial fleets in Canada. Charging stations could be installed in each of Canada Post's centres, especially in rural areas.

This would be a real tool for economic development for the regions of Quebec and would help us to achieve a real energy transition. The energy transition in Quebec's regions could serve as an interesting budgetary proposal to get our finances back on track.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, I believe the member is from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, and I appreciate his comments about rural Canada, because it is very important. It is nice to see that people recognize that aspect of things.

His comment is very pointed, in the sense that I get the fact it is nice to see these electrical vehicles and these transit lines happening, but as I have said to many in my constituency, we are not going to see a transit line or an electric vehicle that is going from Maryfield, Saskatchewan to Regina. I have many constituents who need to get to their doctors, and those doctors, who are cancer doctors, diabetes specialists, etc., are not available. They have to go from Maryfield, for example, to either Winnipeg, Manitoba or Regina, and that range is not there. It is not going to happen. As much as we may want it to happen, when we have 100 people in that area, they are not going to do it. Yes, it is beneficial, but where are those systems, and who is going to pay for them?

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned Dollarama. I will ask him a question with regard to the pandemic and the costs that some companies are now passing on. Dollarama made over \$600 million in profits during the pandemic this past year, and it is increasing its shareholders' return by 10%, so if someone is not a shareholder of Dollarama, they are going to go there soon and have higher costs. There will be higher prices at a time when Dollarama has record profits and is giving record dividends to the shareholders, who I can guarantee most likely are not shopping at Dollarama.

Business of Supply

• (1725)

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the member possibly does shop at Dollarama, because of the great things it does and the great work it provides. That is providing work for people to actually do a job, and it is great to hear that he continually wants to support businesses—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to have five minutes to talk about a very important issue: this government's approach to spending.

It is 2022, but we need to look back in time a little. Back in 2015, the sunny ways era, this government made a campaign promise to run three small \$10-billion deficits and said that the budget would then balance itself. Surprise, surprise, in 2019, the deficit was over \$80 billion. History has made it very clear that budgets do not balance themselves. Quite the contrary.

That has been this Liberal government's track record ever since. With the arrival of COVID-19, it has added over \$600 billion to our existing debt. Our debt now represents approximately 47% of our gross domestic product, our GDP. When the Liberal government took office back in the 1980s, it was about 25% or 28%.

This is an extremely important matter. The budget will be tabled next week, on April 7. By the way, that is a Thursday. The following day, April 8, is a Friday and the last sitting day before members are away for two weeks. I remember the years when the Liberals accused the Conservative government of disrespecting the House of Commons. Today, I believe it is the Liberals who are disrespecting this chamber with their decision to present a budget before a Friday, on the eve of a break that we will spend in our ridings.

Of course, I am going to come back to the GDP. We have a debt-to-GDP ratio of 47%, and I am wondering how much more the Liberals will add to the deficit in the coming years. The two words “balanced budget” are not part of the Liberals' vocabulary. That is absolutely unconscionable and unacceptable.

In a country such as ours, a balanced budget is extremely important. I used to be the mayor of La Pocatière, and in Quebec, we were required by law to balance our budget. I do not see why this could not apply to a federal government that should be mindful of its spending. The problem with this government is that it spends money hand over fist, without considering the medium-term effects and especially not the long-term effects.

Interest rates are going to increase, and in fact, it has already started. The Bank of Canada predicts that interest rates will increase to at least 1.5%, maybe 2%, within a year. We can imagine what impact that will have on Canadian households that have gone into debt because of the cost of living and because inflation is at 5.7%, nearly three times the Bank of Canada target of 2%.

House prices keep going up and have doubled in the span of 10 years in Canada. For last year alone, that represents 30%. Let us not forget the price of gas. When I bought my car in 2009, it cost me \$32 to fill up the tank. Last week, a full tank cost me \$120, a fourfold increase in the span of 11 years.

All these things end up having an adverse effect on people's quality of life, especially for the most vulnerable, whose expenses far outweigh their income.

I will stop there because I could go on for hours. I often have people in my riding call our offices to tell us about the trouble they are in because of this government.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion.

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

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, November 25, 2021, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, April 4, 2022, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:45 p.m. so we can start Private Members' Business.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to see the clock as 5:45 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:45 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY ACT

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.) moved that Bill S-214, An Act to establish International Mother Language Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: This is a time when our nation is weathering some very formidable challenges that some would use to draw out our differences, namely to challenge that most fundamental Canadian value, the one where we care about and act in the common good. Canada is too valuable in the world to have this value damaged, so I am here today with an opportunity, one that reflects, in a small way, the solemn obligation we have in this place, indeed one that we must accept as our imperative, to promote and achieve unity through respect, understanding and dialogue. It may be a small offering toward that goal, but Bill S-214, the call to designate every February 21 as mother languages day across Canada, is intended to raise our awareness of the value of honouring and protecting the cultural and social richness of the languages many of us brought to Canada, or, which is very important, the languages that have been spoken in our land since time immemorial.

An important point to note is that the bill does not propose the creation of a statutory holiday. It simply opens up opportunities for people in every community to celebrate the unique aspect of their culture and history. It is that unique aspect that comes with the language they brought to Canada and maybe still speak at home with their children to keep that heritage alive.

It is a unique honour to sponsor Bill S-214 in the House to hopefully make real the dream of people in our British Columbia community to create a moment for all Canadians to reflect, in yet another way, on an essential aspect of our nation that makes it the place where so many in the world want to live. It is a fact of this country that we are stronger because of our differences, not in spite of them.

I can relate personally to this point because back home in Fleetwood—Port Kells and Surrey, we enjoy an incredibly diverse community: 30.3% of us in Fleetwood—Port Kells are of European heritage and 30.1% of us are from South Asia. This statistic is maybe a year old, and I have a very strong feeling that this ratio has now reversed and that our South Asian community is indeed the largest in my riding.

We have a healthy range of cultures and languages in those two large groups, but we have to add Chinese, at 13%, and Filipino, at almost 10%. There is also Korean, Japanese, Croatian, Latin American and African, and measurable populations of many other cultures. We also absolutely must shine a light on the thousands among us in my riding, in Surrey and indeed right across Canada with aboriginal heritage, who are in urgent need of help to keep their ancient languages alive.

This diversity is highlighted in many ways. It is highlighted in the arts, in the way we worship, in the sports we play, in the ceremonies we celebrate, in the cultural events that we hold in our communities for ourselves and for our neighbours and, to add a personal favourite, in our food. I am delighted to hear that we are going to

Private Members' Business

be celebrating Filipino food just in time for my going back home to Fleetwood—Port Kells. I can tell the Filipino restaurant in my riding that my staff and I will be there to celebrate the food and enjoy its hospitality.

Then there are the languages with the symbolism and idioms that reflect the heartfelt values and character of each community within our community. Long ago, in work to communicate public services and policies, which included invitations to participate in their development and delivery, I grew to appreciate the power of relating to people with the words that carried the meaning and context that delivered the necessary message in a way that promoted the understanding they needed and the engagement they had an opportunity to provide.

Doing this is not just a simple matter of translation. We do not just take a word in a language and find the English word that tries to mean the same thing, because there is more to words than just the bare, fundamental meaning.

• (1735)

We need instead to transcreate, which is to adapt thoughts in one language to something that delivers the clear intent of the communication. Our excellent parliamentary translation services staff are well experienced with this.

The opportunity to celebrate our mother language opens the way to share the words and phrases of one language that may have no equivalent in another, and in doing so we learn something about our neighbours in this country of ours. Here are some examples.

In Brazilian Portuguese, we have the word *saudade*. No single English word can do justice to the emotion it communicates, emotions of longing and nostalgia. In Brazil, they have the *beija-flor*, or the kisser of flowers, a name that creates such a beautiful image of the creature we call the hummingbird.

In Chinese, the expression *meng die* captures a similarly beautiful sentiment, while the English equivalent “dream to be a butterfly” offers only a glimpse of a much broader picture than one might imagine when that word comes up in conversation.

Thousands of people in Fleetwood—Port Kells speak Punjabi, and they have a short, very precise expression, *raula*, which I am told means “a really messed-up situation”, so I will be listening for that one. My Punjabi is very rusty, as members will hear in just a second. There is another Punjabi saying, *Suno sab di, karo apni*, which offers the wisdom to “take advice from everyone but do what you think is best.”

To be called a *Bayani* in the Filipino community is high praise. That one word describes a hero, and not just any hero but a patriot who uses their bravery, courage and kindness to further the human race or the cause of the community.

Private Members' Business

Of course, we have indigenous languages. Coincidentally, this is National Indigenous Languages Day in Canada, an important reminder of the work we must do to protect and preserve the languages that may well be extinct without our intervention. Our government has made that a priority with an allocation in the 2019 budget of \$334 million over five years, and there was more in the 2021 budget to fund these efforts.

In B.C. alone, funding through the Indigenous Languages Act provided the First Peoples' Cultural Council additional funding of \$6.86 million last November to increase investments through grants for projects that had not previously been funded or that needed additional funding to complete their work. This one measure is covering immersion strategies, language planning, resource development and more to support the revitalization of the 34 first nation languages that we have in B.C. This brought the total federal support for the First Peoples' Cultural Council to \$14.6 million, an investment in preserving our history to be sure but also in enriching and strengthening our indigenous culture today, which can be shared right across our diverse communities.

That sharing, by the way, sets up some amazing events. I will never forget a huge gathering of our Sikh community a few years ago in Bear Creek Park. I was up on the stage looking over a sea of turbans of every colour, and there they were enjoying the *Red River Reel* as performed by a Métis band. This happens only in Canada.

Bill S-214 represents a unique and truly timely opportunity. Establishing every February 21 as Canada's annual opportunity to observe and celebrate mother languages day is something our culturally diverse communities can, as they see fit, use to bring their neighbourhoods closer together in the spirit of what it truly means to be Canadian, and as a way to remind us and remind so many thousands of us why it was they worked so hard to be here with us.

Speaking of events, I should add that as part of this government's pandemic supports, \$200 million was dedicated to fund festivals and cultural events because of the fundamental value that they add to the community over and above the enjoyment of each other's cultures.

● (1740)

In closing, I must recognize three of the many people who have worked so hard for years to see this day created. First is the vision and energy of Mohammad Aminul Islam, who has held Mother Language Day events in Surrey for a number of years, at least before the pandemic, and discovered the equity that the celebration he sponsored built between communities when they gathered in the spirit of sharing, discovery and enjoyment.

Second is B.C. Senator Mobina Jaffer, who tried more than a few times to get this bill through the Senate, where she was successful, but getting it through the House of Commons was a bit more of a challenge. The machinations of government held it back more than a couple of times, but her persistence and passion for the idea of creating this day were the catalysts for the steps being taken—once again, in the other place—that we have here before us this evening.

Finally, I want to thank my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City, who took up this cause in our

42nd Parliament and who was generously ready, willing and able to second Bill S-214 on this occasion.

These people and so many others have seen the importance of promoting, protecting and preserving the languages that flavour our cultural diversity. Appropriately, on this National Indigenous Languages Day in Canada, there is one word from our Coast Salish peoples that perfectly fits their efforts and our opportunity with Bill S-214. The word is *tsetsuwatil*. It is one word that takes five in English to convey. It means “working together for the common interest”.

Mother Language Day is an observance that can really take root in any and every community across our nation, and I call on my colleagues here to help make its success a reality now and to help Canadians be ready to celebrate it on February 21, 2023. I give my thanks and gratitude for this opportunity.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for introducing such an important bill. He spoke very well on the importance of making sure that we have a diversity of languages. However, a very important point is the lack of translation. In Canada, we are used to a system of English and French, and oftentimes our indigenous languages, like my language in particular, Cree, which is a native language in Canada, have been almost put into the ground and diminished. We have seen that time and time again through government intervention.

Would the member agree that when we are ensuring that we understand mother tongue languages, we make a special place and a special recognition for the native languages of this land as extraordinary to the contributions of languages across the world?

● (1745)

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Speaker, I totally agree with my hon. colleague. In fact, just yesterday it was interesting to see news from Elections Canada that it intends to prepare material for elections in the local indigenous languages. Again, the idea is to generate understanding, engagement and participation, and we do that by communicating in a way that our audience will understand. It absolutely makes sense. Above and beyond the respect and the cultural diversity that a mother language day would promote across the country, it would also help to unite us in common understanding of what is going on.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, certainly in Canada we have a great cultural mosaic of people who come to this country from around the globe, from every corner of the earth, and bring their languages and their culture with them, including, most importantly, those from Ukraine. Certainly we are seeing a great outpouring of support right now in Canada.

Would my colleague comment on how we can use the culture that we have here in Canada of so many Ukrainians who have come here over the past century to welcome and embrace refugees from Ukraine and perhaps even encourage visa-free travel from Ukraine to Canada to this welcoming atmosphere here in Canada?

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Speaker, I spent my youngest days in Edmonton, where the Ukrainian community there was large and vital and heavily engaged. Those Ukrainian folks came over as farmers, and the prosperity that Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba particularly enjoy is in no small measure thanks to their efforts over the years.

In bringing our Ukrainian refugees here, I think that the mechanism of visa-free travel is certainly one that could be used, but I understand that the process that has been put in place would actually work much more quickly and much more effectively to make sure that we are welcoming the best of the best here in Canada and those who really, truly need our protection for the next few years.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech on the bill.

I look forward to hearing from the member for Riviere-des-Mille- les, especially in a context where we are truly committed to the principle of protecting linguistic diversity and, more importantly, with the number of people reporting French as their mother language in decline. The influence of people whose mother language is French is declining in Canada.

I would like to hear his views on the importance of recognizing these mother languages, particularly French in Quebec.

[English]

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Speaker, I absolutely agree with the sentiments of that comment.

After the 2015 election, my wife and I decided that we would buy a home here. It was strategic. After a day at the office, I get to go home and spend some time with my wife, which I would not be able to do back home in Fleetwood—Port Kells because it is very busy any moment we are there. We bought in Aylmer, across the river in Quebec, and we are just absolutely delighted with that community and the richness that it enjoys.

I would also say, and I do not mean this in any kind of derogatory way, that last weekend we rescued a dog on the Quebec side. The dog only understands French, so it is an incentive for us to improve our French at home because this new boy of ours really needs to be understood.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House to speak at second reading on Bill S-214, an act to designate February 21 of each year as international mother language day.

The bill also includes the greater clarity line, which confirms that this does not result in the date of February 21 being a legal holiday. It is not a statutory holiday and would not provide a day off work for those working in federally regulated industries. That is an important point to make at the outset of this debate.

Private Members' Business

Language, especially one's mother language, is an important part of an individual's personal story and identity. While it is a significant part of who we are personally, it also contributes to who we are as a collective society and a country as a whole. Canada is home to many different groups of people, including indigenous peoples, new Canadians and the children and grandchildren of immigrants. Mother languages, or the first languages learned, are important to each and every one of these groups.

• (1750)

[Translation]

Canada has two official languages, French and English. They are by far the most common languages in Canada and they have special legal status dating back to Confederation.

In the British North America Act, 1867, the Constitution recognized the importance of ensuring that French and English are preserved and that the rights of French Canadians and English Canadians are protected if we want to succeed in creating a strong, unified nation. That is why section 133 of the Constitution Act, 1867, is written as follows:

Either the English or the French Language may be used by any Person in the Debates of the Houses of the Parliament of Canada and of the Houses of the Legislature of Quebec; and both those Languages shall be used in the respective Records and Journals of those Houses; and either of those Languages may be used by any Person or in any Pleading or Process in or issuing from any Court of Canada established under this Act, and in or from all or any of the Courts of Quebec.

The status of French and English was strengthened in the Official Languages Act, which, in its preamble, notes many important points regarding our language in Canada, including that:

the Constitution of Canada provides that English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and government of Canada.

The preamble also states that:

the Government of Canada recognizes the importance of preserving and enhancing the use of languages other than English and French while strengthening the status and use of the official languages.

French and English are the official languages of Canada, as established in our laws and culture. It is important for current and future governments to recognize this fact and to try to ensure that the special status of both official languages is preserved in future.

We have the opportunity to celebrate the French language in Canada. Whether in Quebec, with its majority francophone population, or in New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual province in Canada, the French language is one that perseveres through adversity. That is especially true in official language minority communities throughout the country. We must acknowledge the challenges faced by these communities, including Franco-Ontarians, Franco-Manitobans, Franco-Albertans, and others in every corner of our country.

In my own riding of Perth—Wellington, I am always pleased to hear about parents who are anxious to register their children in French immersion at a young age. It is something that we must continue to celebrate and promote.

Private Members' Business

[English]

There are also languages that have been spoken on these lands for millennia, the languages of indigenous peoples. I find it appropriate that we are debating this bill today on National Indigenous Languages Day, as these languages hold a special place in our history and should hold a special place in our society as well.

As it states in the preamble of this bill, more than 60 different aboriginal languages are spoken in Canada. These include Cree, Inuktitut, Dene, and many, many more. Sadly, however, many indigenous languages are at risk of extinction following a long period of discouraged use, disrespect and, sadly for far too long in our history, outright hostility. We must recognize the shameful parts of Canada's history that include the efforts to eliminate indigenous cultures, and as part of that strategy, the efforts to end the use of indigenous languages, especially through the dark history of residential schools.

Moving forward, we must ensure these languages are not only preserved but also celebrated. The Government of Canada has a role to play in promoting their use so they can be passed down from generation to generation. That is why the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2015 stated, "Aboriginal languages are a fundamental and valued element of Canadian culture and society, and there is an urgency to preserve them." We must listen and act on these calls to action. Symbolic measures are important, but we must also act.

Canada is home to many people who have come here from every corner of the Earth, some to escape violence and persecution, some to reunite with their family, and some to seek new careers and economic opportunities that were not available to them in their homeland. With them, they bring parts of their culture, including their language. It enriches our nation by building on the diversity and multiculturalism we all benefit from. According to Statistics Canada, 7,749,120 people in Canada consider a non-official language to be their mother tongue.

Today, as we see Ukrainians fleeing their homeland to escape the Russian invasion, I must point out a government report from August 31, 2017, entitled, "Linguistic diversity and multilingualism in Canadian homes". The report indicated that 110,580 people in Canada consider their mother language tongue to be Ukrainian. Canada has a vibrant Ukrainian population. In fact, as we welcome Ukrainians to Canada, it is like welcoming family home.

The government should listen to the recommendations provided by the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and provide a fast and simple process to bring these victims of Vladimir Putin's unlawful attack safely to Canada.

In the other place, this bill had a fulsome debate, which included comments from my Conservative colleague Senator Salma Atallahjan, herself an immigrant from Pakistan. During that debate, she said, "As a country with multilingualism at its core, we need to recognize and understand the importance of preserving all mother languages."

She went on to say, "I know first-hand the correlation between my mother tongue and my identity. Speaking Pukhto, or Pashto, is more than a means to communicate; it connects me to my ances-

tors; it allows me to understand the literature, art and poetry of my homeland."

I believe the senator's words are a beautiful example of how someone can be proud to be Canadian and also proud of the culture and the language from which they came. Mother languages matter. Indigenous languages, official languages, and non-official languages that have come here through immigration all matter. I thank the House for its time today, and I look forward to continued debate on Bill S-214.

• (1755)

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, this evening we are debating Bill S-214, an act to establish international mother language day. Specifically, the bill would designate February 21 of every year as international mother language day in Quebec and Canada. This bill originated in the Senate and was sponsored by Senator Mobina Jaffer, an independent senator from British Columbia. This bill is at second reading here in the lower chamber.

The Bloc Québécois very much supports Bill S-214 because what it ultimately does is protect linguistic diversity on a global scale. This issue is an integral part of the Bloc Québécois's cultural and linguistic vision, which is why we support this bill.

I think it is worth repeating the prophetic words of well-known sovereigntist Pierre Bourgault who said, "when we defend French here in Quebec, we are defending all the languages of the world against the hegemony of one."

Pierre Bourgault was a friend of my father, Antoine Desilets. He often stopped in at our house to have a drink. At the time, I was 8, 9 or ten years old, and my room was beside the kitchen. On the evenings when Pierre Bourgault came to visit my parents, I would leave my door ajar because I liked to hear him talk. I would do that until my mother came to my room and shut the door because it was time to go to sleep.

At the time, I did not understand much about this man's eloquent speeches on power, the economy, language or independence, but I was completely mesmerized by his voice. His diction was perfect and his vocabulary and syntax were exceptional. We listened intently, and despite my young age I would gulp down every word just like a thirsty man who discovers an oasis in the middle of the desert. In my opinion, there is no doubt that Pierre Bourgault was the greatest orator in the history of Quebec.

Very few members know it, but I myself have written a few books. For me, writing is the expression of a passion for this language. I suspect that my love of the French language was strongly inspired by the evenings spent secretly listening to Pierre Bourgault through the crack in the door to my room. As a photographer, my father played with light. As a result of my love of the French language, I learned to play with words.

Whenever he spoke, Pierre Bourgault always, or frequently, made the connection between Quebec's quest for independence and our national language, the mother tongue of our people, French. The only thing a people must do to ensure its cultural vitality and freedom is protect, care for and cherish its mother tongue. What better way to convey the identity and culture of a people, any people? My leader, a trained anthropologist, will have a lot to say about this.

What would the Basque independence movement be without Euskera? What would Catalonia's independence movement be without Catalan? What would Quebec's independence movement be without French?

A few years ago, a columnist for *The Economist*, who was anglophone, obviously, wrote, and I quote: "Forget Chinese or Hindi. If you want to learn a language which is truly global, learn French".

Despite being a minority in America, Quebecers, along with Canadian francophones and Acadians, are lucky to speak French because it is indeed an international language. French is in fact the fifth most common language in the world based on number of speakers, and it is the only language besides English that is spoken on all five continents. French is recognized as an official language in 29 countries. According to the *Observatoire de la langue française*, in 2022, 321 million people in 112 countries and territories are capable of expressing themselves in French.

● (1800)

The nice thing about that statistic is that French is not necessarily all those people's mother tongue. For many, those born in the Americas, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and Oceania, French is a second or even a third language.

French is not a hegemonic language. It is widespread and a major contributor to the richness of the great human cultural mosaic. We all benefit from the bridges built between the peoples of the world. Cultural exchanges bring people together and are a force for peace in a world where universal peace has obviously not yet been achieved.

For cultural exchanges to be possible and fruitful, the different cultures need to be thriving. They need to be robust, and the transfer of knowledge, the passing on of memories, traditions and heritage from generation to generation must not be obstructed by the imposition of a single culture, a culture of globalization.

I am extremely proud of my mother tongue. I know that this pride is shared by my fellow Quebecers. However, I cannot—we cannot—continue to ignore the elephant in the room. In Quebec, French is in decline at every level.

In 1996, 81.5% of Quebecers reported French as their mother tongue. In 2016, it was 78%. Statistics Canada predicts that number will drop to 70% by 2036. We will therefore have gone from 81.5% in 1996 to 70% in 2036.

On the Island of Montreal, the percentage of people whose mother tongue is French dropped from 53.4% in 1996 to 48% recently. It is clear that within 15 years, there will be as many people in Montreal with a mother tongue other than English or French as with French as their first language.

Private Members' Business

I concede that people's mother tongue is not the only indicator of a language's vitality, but French is the only official language of Quebec, and it should not be declining.

Earlier this month, the Liberal Party introduced its new version of the reform of the Official Languages Act, in which it completely disregards the Bloc Québécois's requests. We support some of the provisions in that act, notably the one concerning the promotion of French in the other Canadian provinces, but we are very disappointed by the rest of the bill.

Only a Quebec language law such as Bill 101 should apply in Quebec. The idea of entrusting the fate of our national language to another nation is totally inconceivable and ridiculous. This is especially true when that other nation overwhelmingly denies visas to francophone foreign students, dithers and drags B.C.'s francophones through the courts, supports and tolerates people like the CEO of Air Canada, and pledges not to take away any of Quebec's seats in the House of Commons, only to turn around and ultimately diminish its political weight.

To sum up, I will repeat that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the bill to establish international mother language day. When the Bloc Québécois fights in the House to defend and preserve French, it is protecting all languages from the hegemony of one.

● (1805)

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank all those members who spoke previously in regard to this very important bill. Today happens to be National Indigenous Languages Day, a moment for all of us to truly reflect on what that really means.

Before I get into the proposal for a national mother language day to be established on February 21, I really want members to reflect on what indigenous languages truly mean in Canada. The previous member just spoke about the importance of the French language to the Québécois and how important our languages as indigenous people are, not only to our identity and to who we are as people but also to our future ideas of self-determination. It is rooted in our language. It is rooted in our culture. It is in our society.

However, Canada has a deep history of suppression of languages, whether it is the French language or indigenous languages. This is a reality facing cultures across Canada. Some indigenous people have had their languages completely annihilated. We can think of nations that in some sense, especially during the early 1800s, have been wiped out by famine and by war and in particular by actions by governments.

Private Members' Business

The United Nations estimates that a language disappears every two weeks, taking with it an entire culture and intellectual heritage—every two weeks. Let us think about that. Every single time, twice a month, a whole language is gone from our planet. Thousands of years of incubation and cultural exchange create something that is truly unique to our species, which is our ability to communicate, our ability to understand one another, and also our ability to make sure we understand our environment around us.

To put that in perspective, the Cree language, the language of the *nêhiyaw*, meaning Cree people, has a much more profoundly poetic understanding in that language. It actually means “star people”, people from the stars. It tells a story, and that story, if ignored, diminishes all us.

If we think about Canada and we think about indigenous languages, particularly on this day and in light of this proposed bill, we remember that there are 3,000 indigenous languages today that are endangered and at risk of extinction globally. That is 3,000 indigenous languages endangered globally. Why are they endangered? We often do not answer this question. Why? We do not need to look too far behind us in the history of not only this country but the history of imperialism, in particular European imperialism, across the world. This has truly affected how we understand culture, language and heritage across the globe.

By recognizing this day, we are welcoming diversity and inclusion to be embedded in our system and our society. I agree with the hon. members who spoke previously in support of this bill. We need to do far more, though. It is one thing to recognize the languages of cultures. It is one thing to celebrate them. However, it is an entirely different thing to ensure that we put resources, capacity and protections in place, not just here in Canada but across the globe. We have to recognize Canada's international role in the harm that we have done, the legacy of imperialism in Canada, the legacy of imperialism across the globe. It has truly done a great disservice to thousands if not millions of people across the globe.

On May 16, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution called upon member states “to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world”.

As an active member of the United Nations, Canada has an obligation and responsibility to commit to this promise. I am very pleased to see that after many attempts to have this bill recognized and have this work truly done in Canada, I agree, as was mentioned by a previous member, that now is the time we must do this. Now is the time we have to understand these implications. However, we have to go far beyond these recognitions.

● (1810)

We truly have to partner with indigenous people. We have to partner with other languages. We have to understand their needs. We have to understand how the community organizes, and we have to be there as true partners.

It is especially important in Canada to recognize mother languages. Indigenous people form the nations of this land. Everyone else has come from a different place. Indigenous people, their languages, their perspectives and their culture are rooted in this territory and in this land. A person cannot go anywhere in Canada with-

out encountering a piece of land that indigenous people have stewarded. There is no group that has come from overseas that can claim this from us. This is indigenous people's land. This is indigenous people's right and we will not allow these languages to die. We will not allow our people to continue to lose so much of what we have survived on and how we have understood this world. We are not going to give up what we believe to be our vision and our self-determination for our future.

Not only does celebrating different languages promote multiculturalism and diversity, but it also encourages a rich development of oral history and a knowledge base that benefits generations to come. Western European societies often rely on intellectual institutions we call libraries, universities and colleges. Sure, those are good institutions. Indigenous people, in particular, and other nations around the world use oral tradition: oral stories. We pass on this knowledge. We pass on these traditions to our young people in a large, unbroken cycle of knowledge.

My grandparents, my *kokum* and *moshom* for example, would tell us stories about the residential school. My father would tell us stories about how afraid he was to speak his mother tongue. Can members imagine if, overnight, every single person in this country lost their mother tongue, regardless of what it was? That would have a catastrophic cultural impact on our mosaic here, but this is the true fact that is facing many indigenous nations today. They do not know whether the next generation is truly going to have the tools, the resources or the human alliance that is required of all humans to protect this diversity. If we do not take this seriously, we will lose something for the world: a perspective, a history and a reality. This is what is truly at risk when we are talking about languages.

As a proud, indigenous Cree-Métis person, I especially understand the importance of making sure we preserve oral history, and its importance in making sure our young people have a true future they can recognize themselves in. Being of this land and having indigenous cultures present in all of our communities is a good thing. Whether it is in Quebec, Ontario or British Columbia, indigenous people have marked every single inch of this territory. We cannot continue to neglect that.

Although our official languages may be English and French, they are not languages of North America. They are not from Turtle Island. They come from Europe. That is a fact. We have to recognize that true fact and preserve the identity of North America. We have to preserve our ability to understand this land and the indigenous people who have occupied it, protected it and ensured that it continues.

Today I call on all communities, here in Canada and globally, and all my fellow members of Parliament to take special pride in the linguistically rich and culturally diverse place we all live in. It is truly a gift.

I want to be able to thank my hon. colleagues for their support of this bill. I support this very critical piece of legislation and hope to see it passed swiftly.

Private Members' Business

• (1815)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour today to rise and speak to this private member's bill that has been through the Senate. I understand that it has been introduced a number of times. I think this is the third attempt. After being passed by the Senate, it has been brought over to our chamber for debate to see if we can get it passed here to establish February 21 as international mother language day.

I think this bill perfectly illustrates and speaks to what Canada is about. I truly appreciate the comments that were made by my NDP colleague prior to this. He so passionately laid out the realities of our country. However, unless someone is of indigenous descent, we have all come to Canada over the last couple hundred years. For whatever reason there may have been at the time, whether to escape war, to seek out a new place to establish and grow a family or to seek refuge from other incidents that were happening throughout the world, Canadians have come here over the last couple hundred years, unless they are of aboriginal descent.

I think this is such a uniquely Canadian bill. We are not the only country that welcomes people from other parts of the world. A lot of people immigrate to the United States. A lot of people immigrate to other countries. However, what makes Canada unique is that when people come here, we make a point of trying to embrace cultural differences.

To go back to the comments that were so passionately and well put by my NDP colleague, we failed miserably as it relates to those who were here before European settlers started to come here. There is no doubt about that, and I think everybody in the House knows we have a tremendous amount of work to do on reconciliation. However, the idea that we embrace culture and that we look to celebrate it truly is uniquely Canadian, in my opinion.

We can look at particular parts of the United States where a lot of people come. There is this concept or idea that they have to conform to American culture. However, when we look at Canada in particular, we embrace this idea of celebrating that diversity, because we recognize that our diversity is what makes us stronger. By building tolerance, building acceptance and encouraging people to be part of Canada, they never forget where they came from. I think when we look at what this bill is attempting to do by designating one day every year specifically to celebrate our unique mother tongues, it is a way and an opportunity to continue to grow and foster those historical and heritage links we have.

I think of my parents, for example. They both immigrated post-World War II in the 1950s. My mother is from Italy and my father is from Holland. They both come from war-torn countries that were trying to rebuild after the Second World War. In both cases, their parents said they were going to move to Canada to look for a new way of life. However, when they came here, as was the case with so many European settlers at that time, they brought their unique mother culture and mother tongue with them.

I have a unique situation in that, if we look at my mother's side of the family, there are seven children and the majority of the children married Italians, so Italian was spoken quite a bit in the household. With the exception of my mother and one other uncle I had,

they all married Italians. In my household there was a Dutch father and an Italian mother, so we did not really get to experience the rich culture the way we might have if both parents had come from the same part of the world.

• (1820)

We would look for opportunities. In Kingston, we had Folklore, which was very popular in the 1980s and early 1990s, where different pavilions would be established throughout the city on a weekend as an opportunity to showcase Ukrainian culture, Italian culture, Portuguese culture and various different cultures that were established. It was a way to celebrate their roots. Unfortunately, as time goes on and children are born and generations pass, people end up in a place where they start to lose that link and forget about the rich identity that their grandparents or great-grandparents brought to Canada. The bill gives us an opportunity to look toward how we can re-establish those roots and make sure that they live on for generations to come.

I would be remiss if I did not also talk about the incredible indigenous cultures that we have throughout Canada. Unfortunately, a big stain on Canadian history is that, although we were so willing to embrace cultures from other parts of the world, particularly, as I referenced, European immigrants in the 1950s and more recently Asian immigrants, we did an incredible disservice, an incredible hardship, in trying to eliminate the cultures of indigenous people in Canada.

Although this might be just one tiny step toward that reconciliation, because that reconciliation involves so much, I am really pleased to hear the member who introduced this and indeed just about every member who spoke to this today talk about the importance of using this tool, this opportunity to celebrate those cultural differences, in the context of lifting up indigenous culture as well. As I look back to the 1980s and 1990s, and talk about Folklore in my community, I do not ever remember any indigenous pavilions. They were largely forgotten or at least pushed aside to the point where they did not have the opportunities to continue the culture.

A lot has changed since then. Every March we have Maple Madness in Kingston, it is an opportunity for people to see how maple syrup is made. In recent years there has also been an exhibit on how indigenous people used sap from maple trees. It is by making sure that inclusion is there that we will properly tell the story of Canada, a story of not just over the last couple of hundred years, but the story that goes back thousands of years.

I very much welcome the bill the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells has brought into the House. I understand that it has already passed the Senate. As I indicated, this is the third try. I am certain that the third time will be the time that it passes, having had the opportunity to come before, but in any event, I want to congratulate the member on bringing forward such an important bill that, although it might just talk about establishing one day, if indeed people utilize this properly, it could be an incredible resource and an opportunity for generations to come to showcase the incredible differences that we have and the incredibly various parts of the world that we came from.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1825)

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to private member's bill, Bill S-214, an act to establish international mother language day.

International mother language day is a worldwide annual observance held on February 21 to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and to promote multilingualism. Mother language day is part of a broader initiative to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by people around the world. Beginning in Bangladesh, then East Pakistan, the idea to celebrate international mother language day was an initiative to fully recognize the Bangla language.

As we all know, our nation has a rich cultural heritage that is cultivated by indigenous peoples, European settlers and immigrants from every corner of the globe. This is succinctly demonstrated in the first three lines of the preamble to Bill S-214:

Whereas English and French are Canada's official languages;

Whereas more than 60 different Aboriginal languages are spoken in Canada;

Whereas Canadians speak a multitude of languages that greatly enrich Canada and its culture;

If culture and tradition are the branches of the tree, then surely language is the trunk. Without supporting the base of the tree, the branches suffer, wither and fall.

According to Michael Krauss, then head of the Alaska Native Language Center in Fairbanks, who published "The world's languages in crisis" back in 1992, some 600 languages had fewer than 100 surviving speakers. Half of the world's languages were kept alive by a fifth of 1% of the entire global population. Of the 7,000 existing languages, only half were being taught to children, so Canada mirrors the global language crisis. Of the 60 or more indigenous languages in Canada, just three, Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibwa, are stable and viable. They account for nearly two-thirds of the nearly 229,000 Canadians who claim an indigenous language as their mother tongue and who regularly speak that language in the home.

Of the 12 major language families once solidly established here in the country, nine are today the linguistic expression of a mere 6% of the indigenous population. There are 50 languages spoken by first nations with fewer than 3,000 members. Even among indigenous communities where the loss of language is widespread, language revitalization is a powerful aspirational goal linked to reconciliation and the preservation of culture.

My own riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock boasts 63 different languages spoken as mother tongues. This is also recognized in the Conservative Party of Canada policy document, section 133, "Recognition that language is an integral part of one's culture and heritage should form the basis for decision-making relating to its cultural and artistic community."

We encourage the government to recognize the diverse cultural nature of Canada and its shared history and to take these into account when working to strengthen opportunities and accessibility in both the domestic and international markets for our creative success.

I want to close by saying I support mother languages.

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have six minutes left the next time this matter is before the House.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, I begin my remarks by recognizing the good people who live in the Ontario riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for their confidence in me as their federal member of Parliament.

As the Prime Minister should be aware, February in Canada is Black History Month. I gave the Prime Minister the opportunity to join Conservative members of Parliament to condemn the racist act of wearing blackface. This opportunity was given two days after he cried wolf, invoking the Emergencies Act. It was important to do so at that point, since the Liberal Party decision to refuse to meet with members of the "freedom convoy" led to the firing of Ottawa's first Black police chief, Peter Sloly.

There is no doubt the dog whistle comments by the Prime Minister to his party trolls were inflaming a situation in Ottawa that Chief Sloly was dealing with in a non-aggressive manner as a professional police officer. I take this opportunity on behalf of all Canadians to thank Chief Sloly for his service to Canada as the police chief of Ottawa and for standing up for the right Canadians thought they had of peaceful protest.

During Chief Sloly's time as head of police, Canadians could feel safe walking the streets of Ottawa. With children playing, bouncy castles, outdoor barbecues to feed the homeless and Canadians proudly waving Canadian flags, some remarked this was the Canada Day they had been missing for years. This was not the image that the Prime Minister wanted for a backdrop as he manoeuvred with his deputy, the Minister of Finance, to find any excuse to declare a so-called emergency.

As he had purged strong women from his party, like former justice minister, Jody Wilson-Raybould; former health minister Jane Philpott; and, Black woman member of Parliament, Celina Caesar-Chavannes, who stood up to the Prime Minister, it was obvious that a scapegoat was needed. Chief Sloly had to go.

Adjournment Proceedings

Black History Month was the appropriate moment for the Prime Minister to tone down the hate-filled divisive language, which had not stopped coming out of his mouth since the unnecessary election called five months previously. It is everyone's responsibility to carefully say who and what they are platforming. It was time to stop being so angry and start acting like a true leader of a civilized country. Instead, the Prime Minister used the backdrop of Black History Month to cause the firing of Ottawa's first Black chief police officer.

The trucker strike was driven by widespread resentment of hysterical reporting throughout the pandemic by the Liberal bought off media and the attempted cancellation of anyone who dissented over the mandates, whether on scientific or civil liberties grounds. With the declaration of the Emergencies Act, Canada got noticed but not for the right reasons. Addressing the Irish upper house, Ireland senator, Sharon Keogan, spoke up against the unjust and excessive force used against the peaceful protest. Ireland, Canadians embarrassingly remember, was elected to the seat on the United Nations Security Council for which the government spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars unsuccessfully campaigning. I quote Senator Keogan:

We have had calls in this House to address serious human rights abuses occurring in all places over the world, from China in the East, to here in the West...

I find it odd that we have heard nothing of the well publicised, high profile, peaceful protest being violently suppressed and dispersed by armed government forces. Ranks of uniformed and armoured military figures, stripped of their badges and [ID] tags, converged on protesters, an officer on horseback trampled over a disabled woman, [around] 200 arrests were made and over 60 vehicles...seized by the state. [It] sounds like something [you'd see from] Russia...but instead this is happening in the supposedly liberal democracy of Canada....

• (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Canada has been supporting Canadians. Our goal has been to minimize serious illness and overall deaths with minimal disruption to society. With the recent emergence of the BA.2 variant, we are seeing rising cases and differing levels of severity in regions across the country. This reminds us that COVID-19 is still circulating.

The Public Health Agency of Canada provides guidance and advice on recommended public health measures. This is done at both individual and community levels. The agency's guidance has been informed by scientific evidence, expert opinion and established public health practices. It aims to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health and safety of people living in Canada. Across the country, there is variability in how jurisdictions are assessing risks and adjusting approaches. However, we continue to recommend using individual public health measures, such as wearing a mask in indoor public settings, as the COVID-19 situation evolves. We expect recommendations for these measures, of course, to change.

Vaccines and therapeutics continue to be important cornerstones of our pandemic response. We are fortunate that vaccination coverage rates in Canada are high, but there are still more opportunities to enhance our protection.

Vaccine-related requirements and restrictions have helped keep Canadians safe. They have supported safe working conditions and spaces for federal public service workers and travellers on federally regulated transport. They have also been a tool to support vaccine uptake to help prevent serious illness and to help prevent our health care system from becoming overwhelmed.

With vaccines widely available and higher levels of immunity due to prior infection, Canada is in a much stronger position now than we were at the beginning of the pandemic. Our best advantage going forward will be maintaining a state of readiness. This includes all of us keeping our COVID-19 vaccinations up to date and getting a booster dose when eligible. Canadians should also continue to make informed personal choices to protect themselves, their families and their communities based, of course, on their local situations and personal circumstances.

Using individual public health measures in a layered approach and, along with vaccines and therapeutics, results in fewer hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19. Provincial and territorial governments and regional local public health authorities will continue to make decisions about when it is necessary to maintain, ease or reinstate public health measures. In doing so, they will consider indicators of readiness, the most recent evidence, the current situation and other factors.

As Canada moves forward with its ongoing pandemic response, a risk- and evidence-based approach will continue to be used across jurisdictions.

• (1840)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Madam Speaker, I will continue with Irish Senator Keogan's quote. She said:

Not being satisfied with merely dispersing protestors, the state froze the finances associated with certain individuals and companies believed to be involved in the protests. These are people who committed no crime and have not been convicted lawfully in court but who the Government decided to punish because they might have been connected with a protest that was inconvenient to the government. It was an unprecedented act by the state against its citizens, which should be roundly condemned.

Senator Keogan called upon the Irish Upper House to write to Canada's ambassador to Ireland in order to condemn the excessive force used by the Canadian government as well as the state's overreach in punishing its citizens.

A day of reckoning will come.

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, on that ominous note, the Public Health Agency of Canada and its provincial and territorial partners are working together and planning for an approach that is sustainable as we address the ongoing presence of the BA.2 variant.

Adjournment Proceedings

Canada's response has been and will continue to be based on scientific evidence and expert opinion. We will continue to take into account the evolving scientific evidence related to the virus and its characteristics as well as the epidemiology. We will also consider emerging variants of concern, the value and impact of public health interventions and the impact of vaccination and vaccine effectiveness as we move forward.

Thanks to the people living in Canada who have adhered to public health measures and have gotten vaccinated, our outlook for the future continues to improve.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise tonight not really as the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound representing my constituents, and not even really as a Conservative member of Parliament. That is the privilege I have to be able to rise. I rose and asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs a question last week in reference to a quote that she made, where she stated that Canada “is not a military power.”

As I stated in that question, I have had the privilege of leading some of Canada's finest warriors in Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq, and I would like to educate the minister. That was the point I made in that question about how the strength of our Canadian Armed Forces personnel and our Canadian military is based upon the fact that we are a military power.

It was a simple question to the minister, and that is why I am here tonight to give the minister the opportunity to put it officially on the record, to all our combat veterans across this great nation of ours, that she will acknowledge that the Canadian Armed Forces personnel are among the best in the world and that we are a military power.

Let me expand a little bit, just because there are a lot of myths out there about Canadian Armed Forces personnel and what we have been doing throughout the history of Canada. I think this is even more important as we are approaching the 105th anniversary of Vimy. That is where, really, Canada became a great nation because of our military power and because of our victory on Vimy Ridge, 105 years ago next week.

In my own experience, I turned to my first platoon warrant officer when I was in Oscar Company of the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment. We were in Bosnia, but before we got there, I was talking to my platoon warrant officer, and he explained that when he first rolled in from Germany down to Bosnia and Croatia, during the conflicts of the mid- and early 90s, he got into a situation where he got into a roadblock. He was being held up. He took that opportunity to push back with those forces that were trying to oppose his soldiers and say, no, they could not do their job of keeping the peace. He was able to point up to the ridge line and that anti-armour TOW system that was geared up and pointed directly at that roadblock, and that military power allowed him to do his job of keeping the peace over there.

What disappointed me very much in the response was that the minister chose to go partisan. As I said, my question had no context and no partisan angle to it. I was not asking as a Conservative. I

was asking as a veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces, and she said that the question was rich coming from the Conservatives.

I served from 1993 to 2019. I started under Chrétien's government and I lived through the decade of darkness under that Liberal government. I lived under the Harper government, when we got Chinooks, we got strategic lift and we got tanks delivered to us. I even served under the current government.

In the end, all I am asking for the minister to do is to acknowledge that we have some of the best military personnel in the world in our Canadian Armed Forces and that we are a military power.

• (1845)

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member opposite for giving me the opportunity to speak about Canada's role on the international stage. I know that all members here today have a profound respect and admiration for the work our military members do and for the dedication and sacrifices of all who have served. I will start by sincerely thanking those currently serving, as well as veterans, for their service. I would also like to thank the member opposite for his service to Canada as a member of the Canadian Armed Forces.

For over 100 years, members of our military have served in some of the most difficult and dangerous circumstances imaginable: the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the harsh seas during the Battle of the Atlantic, and protecting the skies in countless air operations during wartime and peace. From the liberation of the Netherlands to the Battle of Kapyong to combat operations in Kandahar, Canadian soldiers have been on the front lines of some of the most significant conflicts in modern history. When disasters have struck here at home, they have deployed time and time again to help their fellow Canadians when they need it the most.

Right now, we are seeing the impact that the Canadian Armed Forces' efforts have had in Ukraine. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian security forces are leveraging the training they received through Operation Unifier as they fight for their country's right to freedom and self-governance against Russia's horrific invasion. While all the credit goes to the people of Ukraine, we are proud of the training work that the CAF has undertaken with their personnel.

As the member opposite said in the House last week, Canadian Armed Forces personnel are among the best in the world. I think we can all acknowledge that they are some of the most highly skilled and professional armed forces personnel there are. From counterterrorism missions to training and capacity-building to helping enforce UN sanctions, the Canadian Armed Forces play a central role in upholding international peace and security.

Adjournment Proceedings

When the now Deputy Prime Minister outlined her vision for Canada's foreign policy approach back in 2017, she noted that "Principled use of force, together with our allies and governed by international law, is part of our history and must be part of our future." Simply put, having a strong and capable fighting force is critical to Canada's diplomatic presence internationally, and that is why our government has been making critical smart investments in our forces, in addition to increasing spending by 70% between 2017 and 2026, to ensure our armed forces have the right people, the right equipment and the training to do the difficult tasks we ask of them.

As part of these efforts, the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence have indicated that they are exploring options to further increase our investment in defence. We are proud of Canada's reputation across the globe as a source of stability and a significant diplomatic presence. At the same time, we know that having a robust, well-funded and well-supported military helps us maintain our seat at the table. The Canadian Armed Forces are a vital part of Canada's efforts abroad. I know our allies and partners are grateful for the support of our people in uniform and I know Canadians are proud of them as well.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, first off, my thanks to the parliamentary secretary. I take his words to heart. I know he is a strong advocate for our Canadian Armed Forces and our veterans, having sat on the veterans affairs committee with him in the last Parliament.

However, I am actually disappointed. My question was directed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The whole question was directed at her actions. It was not to the government and not to the parliamentary secretary, but to her specifically, as to whether she will recognize how good our Canadian Armed Forces personnel are.

I will ask the parliamentary secretary to take that message back. Other Liberal MPs have apologized on her behalf; I want her to actually state in this House how good our military personnel are.

● (1850)

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, although military intervention must always be a last resort, we know we need robust and well-equipped armed forces to keep our country and Canadians safe, to show solidarity and support to our allies and partners, and to deploy, in the direst of circumstances, where peace and prosperity feel far out of reach. Canada's military power supports our work in diplomacy and international development.

The reverse is also true. By staying engaged with like-minded partners off the battlefield, we are better prepared to mount a united front against destabilizing and dividing forces and share important knowledge, skills and resources. Our diplomatic and military efforts are inseparable, and together they are vital to upholding Canada's peace around the world.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am here to express again the frustrations of people with disabilities as they continue to wait for a Canada disability benefit act to be tabled in the House. We know they face too many challenges in what is clearly an unequal world. COVID-19 has exacerbated the obstacles people with disabilities face every day, and with

the addition of immunity risks, just going out in the community for food or medical appointments is no longer an option for some. The government must act now. It has an obligation to uphold the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and ensure dignity and full equality for all.

Last week, during question period, and again at committee, I asked about the dire financial circumstances that too many people with disabilities are living with. I let the minister know that they feel they have been abandoned by the Liberal government. I ask again for the Canada disability benefit act to come to the House immediately.

In the minister's response to my question, the disproportionate impact of COVID on people with disabilities was acknowledged. The minister also shared that getting financial relief to them was difficult based on logistical challenges of federal data systems. It is beyond time for the government to do better for the disability community.

Following up on my question last week on the Canada disability benefit act and on eligibility for the imminent tabling of it, the minister spoke of government systems not allowing for the easy identification of persons with disabilities to get them the benefits they need. It was said that persons with a disability are not as easy to identify as seniors and parents are. Why not? The reason appears to be priorities. People with disabilities need to be prioritized. They have waited too long. The fact that they cannot be easily reached to receive income supports needs to be corrected immediately.

The government has the opportunity this tax year to begin to codify persons with disabilities, based on receiving provincial supports as an indicator. This will give the government a head start on administering what I trust is the imminent Canada disability benefit when it becomes law.

Royal Assent

Since forming government in 2015, the Liberals have spoken about the importance of lifting people with disabilities out of poverty, yet their actions to delay bringing a CDB bill to the floor and having inadequate information systems to reach potential beneficiaries do not make sense. I am asking today that the parliamentary secretary explain this disconnect. In addition, I ask if the upcoming budget has included the necessary funds to begin a Canada disability benefit to improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities. I would also like to hear from the parliamentary secretary about all the ways that the government plans to finally uphold its commitment to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for full realization of all human rights.

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam for raising this important issue. I would remind the hon. member that we introduced legislation to establish the disability benefit, Bill C-35, on June 22, 2021. We originally notified Canadians of our intent to introduce that legislation in budget 2020. There is no doubt that the government remains committed to the reintroduction and implementation of a Canada disability benefit act. The Canada disability benefit would support hundreds of thousands of Canadians with disabilities, lifting them out of poverty.

In addition to this legislation being a Liberal Party campaign commitment during the 2021 general election. The government's commitment to introducing this legislation is clear when looking at the mandate letter for the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion. On December 16, 2021, the Prime Minister instructed the minister to design, introduce and implement a Canada disability benefit act and create a Canada disability benefit for low-income working age persons with disabilities. That is an explicit commitment and one that the minister is moving purposely but carefully to fulfill. I say carefully, because we recognize the leading role that provinces and territories play in providing supports and services to Canadians with disabilities.

It is important that we engage with them in developing federal benefits and supports. In fact, federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for social services and disabilities met to discuss the proposed new benefit and this work continues. In the spirit of “nothing without us”, we are also consulting and engaging with persons with disabilities and the disability community directly. Yes, the government is working on a permanent solution with our partners and stakeholders. We are still working on the details, but I can tell my colleague this. The benefit is part of the larger disability inclusion action plan, which will provide a whole-of-government approach to achieving a disability-inclusive Canada.

In addition to the proposed benefit, the disability inclusion action plan will include a robust employment strategy for Canadians with disabilities and a better process to determine eligibility for federal disability programs and benefits. A cornerstone of the action plan will be the Canadian disability benefit. It will improve the financial security of persons with disabilities and reduce poverty. It will do this by supplementing, not replacing, existing federal and provincial or territorial benefits.

The financial security of persons with disabilities has always been a priority for the government and continues to be so. Since

2015, we have taken historic steps toward building a disability-inclusive Canada, but sadly we know that the pandemic has hit Canadians with disabilities hard. It has highlighted and exasperated the inequities they face. The Canadian disability benefit would address these inequities head-on. The Government of Canada believes that no one should live in poverty.

Again, I thank my colleague for the question and for her advocacy on behalf of her constituents.

• (1855)

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for the words and I truly hope that we are almost there.

My question remains, and the disability community is asking me. When will the government table the legislation for the Canada disability act?

Mr. Bryan May: Madam Speaker, the harsh truth is that Canadians with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty. The COVID pandemic has only intensified that pressure. The Canadian disability benefit is a priority for the government, and it will be a key component of Canada's first-ever disability inclusion action plan. The benefit will have the potential to help hundreds of thousands of working age Canadians with disabilities and their families.

As we work with our provincial and territorial partners and other stakeholders to develop the best possible benefit, I want to remind colleagues that the Government of Canada has been there for persons with disabilities throughout the pandemic. We funded a one-time payment of up to \$600 to help persons with disabilities weather this crisis, and Service Canada issued payments of this benefit to 1.75 million Canadians for a total value of \$815 million.

Again, I thank the member for her advocacy on this incredibly important issue.

* * *

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

ROYAL ASSENT

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Royal Assent

Rideau Hall

March 31, 2022

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Richard Wagner, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, in his capacity as Deputy of the Governor General, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 31st day of March, 2022, at 6:22 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ryan McAdam

Chief of Staff of the Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill C-15, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the fed-

eral public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, and Bill C-16, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023.

The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:02 p.m.)

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