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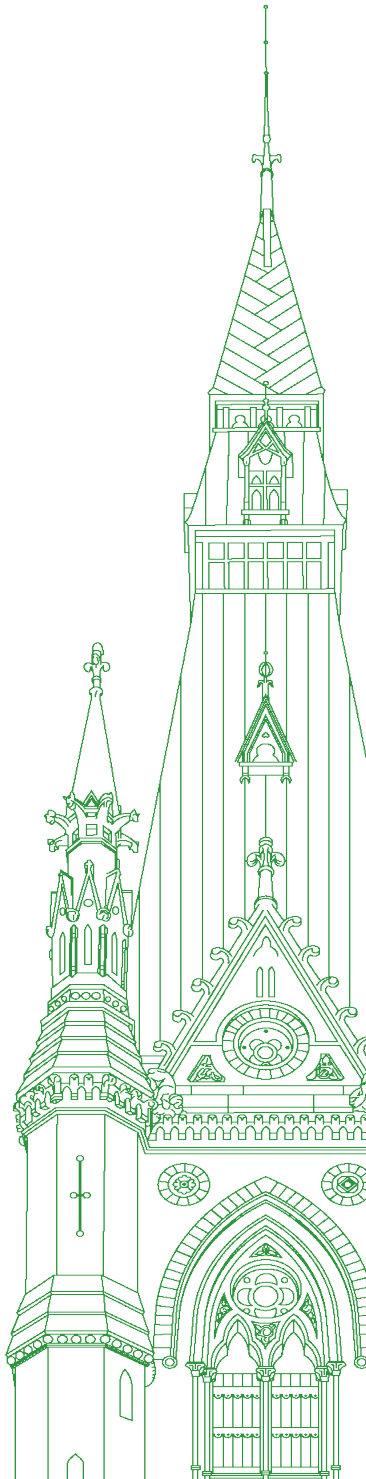

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, April 4, 2022

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1100)

[*English*]

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK ON CANCERS LINKED TO FIREFIGHTING ACT

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.) moved that Bill C-224, An Act to establish a national framework for the prevention and treatment of cancers linked to firefighting, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to thank the International Association of Fire Fighters and the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs. Through their efforts in lobbying parliamentarians, I learned a great deal about the challenges facing firefighters.

[*Translation*]

I also want to thank my friend, Chris Ross, the president of the Association des pompiers de Montréal. Lastly, I would like to thank my friend Jean-François Couture, a firefighter with the Service de sécurité incendie de l'agglomération de Longueuil, for sharing his story with me and helping me understand this important issue.

[*English*]

I am honoured to be standing today in the House to speak about my private member's bill, Bill C-224, an act to establish a national framework for the prevention and treatment of cancers linked to firefighting. Firefighters put their lives on the line every day to keep Canadians and our communities safe, but they also do so when the fire is out. We have a responsibility, all of us, to do everything we can to keep them safe as well. As the daughter and wife of volunteer firefighters, this is a responsibility that I take very sincerely. It is very personal and very important to me. My father Dave and my husband Chris are always going to be my heroes.

Over 85% of all duty-related deaths among Canadians firefighters are caused by occupational cancers, and a firefighter's cancer diagnosis may or may not be recognized as job-related, depending on where they serve across this great land. In doing research for my bill, I was shocked to discover the disparity in the number of cancers linked to firefighting recognized across the provinces and territories. That one province would only recognize six cancers while another recognizes 19 makes no sense to me.

The memorial grant program for first responders was established by our government in 2018 to provide compensation to the beneficiaries of first responders, including firefighters who died as a result of their duties. It defines line-of-duty deaths as any death attributable to and resulting from the performance of official duties, including death resulting from an occupational disease such as cancer.

A presumptive list of occupational illnesses and related years of service, based on established provincial and territorial practices, is established and maintained by Public Safety Canada. As there is no consistency among the provinces as to which cancers are linked to firefighting, the program itself is applied unevenly across the country. The research does not change when we cross into another province.

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

Exposure to smoke and toxic chemicals makes firefighters four times more likely to develop cancer than the general population.

[*English*]

Exposures can occur at any stage of firefighting, including during knock-down and overhaul and back at the station through contaminated personal protective equipment and equipment that may be off-gassing or through diesel exhaust. In fact, a 2017 study conducted by the University of Ottawa found traces of chemicals in the urine and blood samples of firefighters after a mere five to 10 minutes of exposure on scene, and that is with air masks on when nothing was actually inhaled.

As to female firefighters across Canada, while there may be few, only five of Canada's 13 provincial and territorial jurisdictions recognize that cervical and ovarian cancers can be caused by the occupational hazards female firefighters face in the line of duty. Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Yukon are the only jurisdictions in Canada that currently recognize that women's diseases, such as cervical and ovarian cancers, are linked to firefighting. Nova Scotia announced on March 22, 2022, that effective July 1 of this year, it too would add cervical and ovarian cancers and 11 other cancers, bringing the total numbers of cancers recognized in Nova Scotia to 19, the current maximum in Canada. Bravo, Nova Scotia.

While the number of female firefighters is quite low, the risk is just the same. Ill-fitting gear or personal protective equipment may expose women firefighters to a greater risk. How can a cancer diagnosis be considered occupational for a female firefighter in one part of the country and not be for another woman doing the same job and being exposed to the same hazards in another part of the country?

With regard to rural Canada, while Canada's major cities employ career firefighters, most rural areas of the country rely on volunteer fire services. The ability to share knowledge, tools and best practices is essential to helping protect all firefighters from preventable occupational cancers. While professional fire departments may have state-of-the-art decontamination and gear storage rooms, volunteer fire departments likely do not have those same resources.

I will give an example. Often a volunteer firefighter may have to keep their bunker gear with them and respond directly to a fire from their residence. After the fire is out, they may put their bunker gear in their trunk. They have now put that contaminated bunker gear in the trunk of their car where they put the groceries for their families. Not every firefighter knows they are putting not only themselves but their families at risk by having contaminated gear in their vehicles.

Let me be clear: A firefighter is a firefighter is a firefighter. Whether someone is a volunteer firefighter, a full-time career firefighter or a firefighter in the Canadian Armed Forces or in indigenous communities, the risks are all the same. Imagine if we could share information on best practices, like not storing that bunker gear in the trunk and washing off with wipes immediately after a fire to get the chemicals off the skin. What if we were able to share this data and the research so that all firefighters across Canada knew the risks and how to take those necessary precautions?

We need to promote awareness. We need to promote information sharing and education on best practices for prevention, and recognize that occupational-related cancers in firefighting do exist. That is why I have introduced Bill C-224. Cancer does not discriminate between our provinces and territories and nor should we. Federal and provincial collaboration and information sharing can facilitate this.

Bill C-224 would establish a national framework to promote the sharing of research, information and knowledge related to the prevention and treatment of cancers linked to firefighting. It would establish national standards to recognize cancers linked to firefighting as occupational diseases.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

Bill C-224 would promote education and awareness and designate the month of January as “Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month”.

[*English*]

Within the International Association of Fire Fighters, January is already known as cancer awareness month for firefighters.

I have consulted with the International Association of Fire Fighters Canada, the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs and l'Association des pompiers de Montréal. I have had countless local fire departments across the country, as well as members from across the aisle, reach out to me to voice their support for this legislation and its aim of ensuring we work together across all jurisdictions to improve the health and safety of Canada's firefighters.

I want to personally thank all the firefighters in my hometown who served at the Greenfield Park fire department with my father and husband. They talk to me all the time about this.

[*Translation*]

My firefighter friends at the Service de sécurité incendie de Longueuil do too.

[*English*]

I want to particularly thank the members from the Conservative Party, the NDP and the Green Party who seconded my bill, demonstrating that we can work together across party lines for firefighters and their families.

This is very clear: The purpose of this bill is to save lives. The research is there. We know that cancer in firefighters exists. Why do we need to continue to argue about how many when the information is there?

Bill C-224 is about increasing awareness. We are doing that today by debating it and by identifying January as firefighter cancer awareness month so that not only firefighters across Canada but their families and various stakeholders, including the medical community, know that cancer in firefighting is real. We need to share the research and the best practices, including, as I mentioned, not storing bunker gear in the trunk, making sure to wash the hood after every fire and trying not to be the dirtiest firefighter coming out of overhaul. When my husband and father were in the department, they used to do overhaul without a mask or the SCBA. That is unheard of now. It is so dangerous. We need to prevent cancer and mitigate the risk, and we need to provide support to those who need it.

Firefighters from the International Association of Firefighters are here in Ottawa today and tomorrow. They are meeting with parliamentarians to discuss issues important to them. I know they are watching, so I want to take the opportunity to welcome all the delegates here to Ottawa.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

I hope to see them soon.

[*English*]

I urge all members to meet with them to hear their stories. I have spoken with firefighters over the years since joining the House, and it is why Bill C-224 is here. Believe it or not, MPs do listen.

Firefighter line-of-duty deaths caused by cancer may not be as sensational as those caused by fire ground accidents. They may not make the same headlines, but the level of sacrifice is just the same. Firefighters and their families need to know what those risks are, how to mitigate them, what the best practices are and, should they develop an occupation-related cancer, that they have the supports they need.

I urge all members of the House to join me in supporting Bill C-224. Together, we can do what is right for our brave men and women in uniform.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the members of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. This legislation sounds like it is long overdue. I have one question, and perhaps I will invite my colleague to elaborate on it. I came from an occupation where post-traumatic stress disorder was something we saw in a lot of first responders, and I feel as though this is one step in recognizing the perils first responders really face.

Does the member have any ideas of where we may go in the future, in terms of helping our first responders? They put their lives on the line so that we can live as safely as possible.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, I am delighted to answer that question. In fact, I was the first member on the government bench to publicly support Bill C-211 from his colleague for Cariboo—Prince George. As many members of the House know, I have two sons and a daughter-in-law who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces, and a husband and a father who served in the fire department, so PTSD has a seat at the table in our house. This is something we need to support all of those who serve our communities, in terms of making sure that not only their physical health is taken care of, but also their mental health.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne went into great detail about potentially contaminated firefighter equipment.

Quebec's Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail, the organization responsible for labour standards, pay equity and occupational health and safety, has addressed this issue. Quebec has procedures, such as properly cleaning equipment by pressure washing it before sealing it.

Does that not suggest these issues are provincial matters? The provinces are already implementing policies to address these concerns.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, the practices used in Quebec are not necessarily in place in all provinces, which is why Bill C-224 is needed.

This is not only about best practices for prevention, but also about recognizing the various cancers that firefighters may develop as a result of their duties. Quebec, my home province, recognizes only nine such cancers, whereas Manitoba recognizes 19.

We therefore need to work together to recognize the cancers that exist and the research that confirms the 19 cancers that should be recognized and subjected to cancer prevention practices.

● (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member on her bill. She has the NDP's enthusiastic support, and we will always be there to support our brave heroes in the firefighting profession in every circumstance. I want to ask her specifically about a particular aspect. Toxic chemicals are commonly used as flame retardants in a wide variety of household products, such as upholstered furniture. They threaten the environment, but more importantly they affect the human body and cause numerous health problems, such as cancer.

The past chemicals management plan acknowledged the health risks posed by select chemical flame retardants and banned their manufacture, sale, import and use, but banning only certain classes opens the door to loopholes, and there are no regulations under the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act for residential upholstered furniture.

Does the member support the IAFF's call to work with the Minister of Health toward a complete ban on the sale, manufacturing, import and use of all chemicals that are used in flame retardants for upholstered furniture, given the toxic effects they have not just on firefighters, but on all Canadians?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Madam Speaker, absolutely. We heard very clearly from the IAFF that the toxic chemicals that are used in flame retardants, especially on sofas, is a problem, and I know that in 2021 our government announced the action plan to protect firefighters from harmful chemicals, including banning harmful chemical flame retardants, supporting the development and use of safe flame retardants, etc. I firmly believe that there is much more to do, and in collaboration we can actually get things done, so I am looking forward to working with the member across the aisle to make this a reality.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, to be perfectly honest, this bill puts me in an awkward position. In fact, if I were challenged to find one person who does not like firefighters, it would be impossible to find anyone.

I want to say right away that the Bloc Québécois will not be supporting this bill. However, this is not because we do not recognize the difficult and necessary work done by firefighters.

I will try to use a counter-example by way of introduction. If the Quebec government felt that our military personnel were not being sufficiently supported by the federal government, could it decide to establish its own standards for dealing with post-traumatic stress or soldiers who use chemicals that are hazardous to their health?

I am sure my colleagues in the House would be the first to point out that national defence is not a provincial responsibility. I therefore find myself in the awkward position of having to say no to a bill that could be described as being like apple pie, because it represents a consensus.

I know that my Liberal and NDP colleagues, who are often gripped by centralizing tendencies, will be quick to vote in favour of this bill. They are free to do as they see fit. However, I do not know if my Conservative colleagues, who have often claimed to be champions of the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, will vote the same way.

To my mind, this bill is a direct interference in provincial jurisdictions. I am afraid that although everyone likes firefighters and no one likes cancer, we will be voting against this bill. In short, let us say that the federal government is overstepping its jurisdictional boundaries with this bill.

The Bloc is against national framework legislation that goes against the standards and practices in Quebec and the municipalities. The Bloc Québécois believes that there needs to be more awareness and recognition of occupational diseases linked to exposure to cancer-causing particles and more research, but it is not for the federal government to order that. Quebec, the provinces and the municipalities know what to do and how to do it in the areas that concern them.

What is more, I would point out to my colleague that Quebec recently changed its practices and made it easier to access its labour standards, pay equity and occupational health and safety regime, which is overseen by a commission known as the CNESST, by adding provisions for occupational and oncological diseases. Quebec already has institutions that are capable of handling this problem.

The argument I am making is rather simple: The work of firefighters is not federally regulated. The municipal institutions that firefighters work for are the responsibility of Quebec and the provinces.

In Quebec, the department of public security is responsible for fire safety, and the Fire Safety Act establishes good fire fighting practices.

Quebec's department of public security is responsible for establishing general policies on fire prevention, personnel training, emergency preparedness and emergency response procedures. It must also issue certificates of compliance for fire safety cover plans, coordinate the fire safety actions of government departments and bodies, encourage its partners' fire safety initiatives, facilitate the formation of associations working in the field of fire safety, and help educate the public on fire prevention.

It is quite clear that everything to do with firefighters is actually under Quebec's jurisdiction, under provincial jurisdiction. As for municipalities, they have similar responsibilities.

I would still like to quickly mention the issue of workplace injuries. In Quebec, the CNESST deals with workplace injuries through its laws and regulations and compensates workers who have work-related illnesses.

● (1125)

As of April 2016, the CNESST recognizes seven types of cancer linked to firefighting. They are kidney cancer, bladder cancer, laryngeal cancer, lung cancer, mesothelioma, multiple myeloma and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. This work has already been done in Quebec.

If I am not mistaken, my colleague said earlier that Manitoba recognizes more than eight types of cancer. It goes without saying that there are differences. A firefighter who fights fires in the oil and gas industry may face a higher level of risk. We need to keep that in mind. However, it is certainly not up to the federal government to intervene in this area of jurisdiction, as it is too far away from this reality.

After the CNESST made changes, the municipalities changed their practices, partly to respond to a complaint that my colleague raised about the need to protect workers from contaminants. To summarize, in Quebec, the CNESST now requires that equipment be decontaminated via brushing and rinsing and that it then be sealed until it is cleaned, even if the equipment does not have any obvious traces of contaminants. My colleague spoke a lot about equipment being stored in vehicles. That no longer happens in Quebec. The CNESST resolved that issue.

The Association des pompiers de Montréal, the city's firefighter association, has launched an occupational cancer awareness campaign among its members and is calling for the CNESST to recognize more cancers. This is something that will absolutely need to be done, maybe not in this chamber, but within Quebec institutions. This is in no way a federal government issue.

A number of associations in Quebec, such as the Association des chefs en sécurité incendie du Québec, which represents Quebec fire chiefs, and the municipal affairs section of the Association paritaire pour la santé et la sécurité du travail, a joint occupational health and safety association, have since held awareness campaigns to help their members reduce the risks associated with fire contaminants. There is clearly some public education to be done here, but we do not need federal legislation to do that.

Chris Ross says that the challenge for Quebec is not to get the CNESST to recognize the issue, but rather to make sure that workers who develop cancer are not required to prove that the cancer was caused by their work. The list of cancers recognized by Quebec also needs to be expanded.

On September 30, 2021, the Quebec National Assembly passed Bill 59, an act to modernize the occupational health and safety regime, which contained a number of amendments to make it easier for workers to access the regime, including the creation of a scientific committee.

Earlier, my colleague pointed out that studies to identify other types of cancers are required to ensure that firefighters are better protected. Quebec has already mandated the creation of a scientific committee on occupational illnesses, the updating of regulations on diseases, and the creation of a committee on oncological diseases.

I will close by saying that cancer is cancer. Everyone agrees with that; no one likes cancer. Whether it is a cancer affecting a firefighter or a cancer affecting a person working in an environment where they must handle chemicals, cancer is cancer. If we want to address the issue of cancer, the best way to do so is to have a robust health care system.

At present, COVID-19 is causing immeasurable delays, and the way to address them may be to have access to more resources. All stakeholders in the health care field are asking for health transfers to be increased to cover 35% of costs.

This morning, the Journal de Montréal published a letter signed by all the major unions in Quebec, including the CSN, FTQ, CSD, CSQ, FIQ and others, as well as several associations of medical specialists. All of them are asking for health transfers to be increased to 35%.

Last week, the federal government reluctantly acknowledged that there is a health care funding issue. It put up $2 billion to try to deal with wait lists. If the government acknowledges that there is problem, it should listen to all of the stakeholders, including the Conference Board of Canada and the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is not, to my knowledge, a Bloc member.

All of these people say that the solution is to boost health transfers to 35% to ensure the system's long-term viability. That just might help us treat occupational cancers more effectively.

● (1130)

[*English*]

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, it truly is an honour to stand here today. I am going to do my best to get through my speech in support of Bill C-224. I really had a remarkable and emotional weekend, diving into and having so many conversations with so many colleagues from the past.

I congratulate the member of Parliament for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne for bringing this bill forward. Before yesterday I had never spoken to the member. In a short phone call, one quickly finds out someone's personality or where their heart is at, and I found out how alike we actually are. I send my congratulations to the member, and I thank her very much, not only for asking me to second the bill, but also for the opportunity to speak to this today.

Preparing for this speech brought back a ton of memories. It should be the easiest speech for me to make, but it is one of the toughest. The first thing I would say is that the service of the House, serving the people who sent us to the House, is completely like firefighters serving the people of their communities, in that just as firefighters run to put out a fire, so do the people of the House. It is truly all about service and not about the job.

I was a firefighter from 1995 to 2002. It is in my blood, being badge number 70. Some of my fondest memories were at the fire hall. In fact, the day I was married, I was dropped off at the church in a fire truck, and I wore these very same dress blues, but I will not lie to the House and say that they have not been taken out a little at the hips.

At my wedding, I was surrounded by many of my colleagues wearing their dress blues. I could not be much prouder to be standing here today, and I would not be standing here today if it were not for some of the amazing folks that allowed me the opportunity to get there.

I need to acknowledge Chief Sunderland, who hired me; Deputy Chief Dawson, who was a role model; Station Captain Kratz; Station Captain Brando; Captain Rankin; Captain Allsop; Captain Carther; Captain Stannard; Captain Boughazale; and many other fire department friends, the firefighters who I served with.

I would be remiss if I did not thank the member for Cariboo—Prince George. I really truly believe that his hard work moving this bill forward in the last Parliament got it to where it is today. I thank him very much for all his dedication and hard work.

I also want to thank the member for Barrie—Innisfil, who also was a firefighter, who gave me help in giving me an opportunity to speak to this. Of course, I have to acknowledge the IAFF, the International Association of Fire Fighters, as they are in Ottawa this week for their conference.

Just yesterday, I spoke to Chief Quennell. He is the fire chief for Kingsville, Ontario. I said, “Chief, give me some thoughts. Talk to me about what is going on.” He said that firefighters are too proud to let others know when they are suffering, so oftentimes, specifically in the times of cancer, we find out about their passing afterward. How true is that?

What they really care about is knowing that their family will be taken care of after they are gone. The advocacy to let their families know there is support and benefits for them after their death is vital. He also spoke specifically about the awareness, and, as was very eloquently said by the member who introduced the bill, that could be as simple as bunker gear.

We as volunteers take our bunker gear home with us. We leave it in the back of our vehicles. Our kids put our fire helmets on, and we wrap them up in our fire jackets, not even thinking about the carcinogens that may be in them.

● (1135)

At the end of the day, I think about one specific fire I was at with many of my colleagues. It was a plastics fire. The smoke was just above our heads, and there was no wind. It was stagnant. Some suggest a firefighter can wear SCBA, a self-contained breathing apparatus, for hours on end while fighting a fire, but it is quite frankly not doable.

We understand, as firefighters, everything that comes with the job and the consequences that come with the job. This bill will raise that awareness that Chief Quennell spoke about from the very beginning.

This is going to be a tough one for me, but I will get through it. I would like to talk about firefighter Darrell Ellwood. First and foremost, I thank his family for allowing me to share this story.

Darrell Ellwood was a Kingsville firefighter who then went on to serve in the city of Windsor. Darrell lit up the room everywhere and anywhere he went. He lived at the fire hall with his wife Kelly, who was the dispatcher. I remember many evenings sitting around what we called the Achilles, which is an inflatable boat, long after the fire was out. He would be making jokes and bringing us all to tears with his laughter and his smile.

I spoke to his daughter Jenny on Saturday. It was emotional for me and she was the tough one. She said, “Dad will be with you when you speak. I know this. He has shown himself to our family since his passing.” If Darrell is here, I would like to welcome him to the House of Commons.

In the fire department world, we have something called the right-hand rule or the left-hand rule. When opening a door, depending which way the door opens, we follow the left hand or we follow the right hand because the smoke is so thick and the fire is so hot, we do not want to lose our way. With that rule, we always put a hand on the shoulder of the person ahead of us. I know Darrell's hand is on the shoulders of firefighters across North America and, quite frankly, the world today.

He loved his job, but mostly, he loved the people who he worked with. Jenny told me he was a passionate champion for health and safety. Is that not ironic? He passed away from multiple myeloma on Christmas Day of 2011. He was laid to rest on January 14, 2012. He was young at the age of 50. I will be 46 pretty soon, and I keep that in perspective.

His celebration of life brought firefighters from many departments to say goodbye. I know because I was one of them. Ironically, this bill also calls for January to be named firefighter cancer awareness month. Darrell left behind his parents Bud and Marie, his wonderful wife Kelly, and his children, Jenny, Ian and Adam. His legacy lives on through them.

I also want to state that the spouses of firefighters are our support. I have a few last thoughts. Jenny also told me on Saturday that her father was asked, if he had known he would pass away at the age of 50, would he have done this job again? His very emphatic, simple answer was yes.

In closing, I want to recite the Firefighter's Prayer:

> When I am called to duty, God, whenever flames may rage;
> Give me the strength to save some life, whatever be its age.
> Help me to embrace a little child before it's too late
> Or save an older person from the horror of that fate.
>
> Enable me to be alert and hear the weakest shout,
> And quickly and efficiently to put the fire out.
> I want to fill my calling and to give the best in me,
> To guard my every neighbour and protect his property.
> And if, according to your will, I am to lose my life;
> Please bless with your protecting hand my children and my wife.

To my brothers and sisters, and their spouses or partners, we thank them, we respect them, we support them, we love them and we salute them.

● (1140)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank my hon. colleague from Essex who just spoke so passionately and powerfully. I thank him for sharing his experience and for his service. He is a tough act to follow.

Firefighters risk their lives every day to protect our communities. They have our backs when we need it most. In turn, we have a responsibility to take care of Canada's firefighters.

Cancer is an epidemic in Canada's fire service and by far the leading cause of line of duty death. New Democrats stand with firefighters in the battle to extinguish occupational cancer and all occupational hazards they face. We must take immediate action to reduce the risk of cancer for Canadian firefighters through improved awareness, prevention, screening and treatment, so this bill has our hearty support.

Bill C-224 provides for the development of a national framework designed to raise awareness of cancers linked to firefighting and to support improved access for firefighters to cancer prevention and treatment. I would like to take a brief moment to comment on the comments from my Bloc Québécois colleague. I will point out that having a national framework is not only constitutional but is also required in this country. There should be no barriers whatsoever, nor should we as parliamentarians let any barrier get in the way of taking measures that save lives and protect firefighters.

This bill also designates the month of January of each year as firefighter cancer awareness month.

The national framework does a number of things, but it must include measures to do the following: explain the link between firefighting and certain types of cancer; identify the training, education and guidance needs of health care and other professionals related to the prevention and treatment of cancers linked to firefighting; provide for firefighters across Canada to be regularly screened for cancers linked to firefighting; promote research and improved data collection; promote information-sharing and knowledge-sharing; and, establish national standards to recognize cancers linked to firefighting as occupational diseases.

By way of background, occupational cancer is now the leading cause of death among firefighters. We know firefighters are regularly exposed to concentrated carcinogens in the air, such as soot and tar, at a fire ground. A recent study by the University of the Fraser Valley, which drew on a decade of data from worker compensation boards, found that 86% of all firefighter workplace fatality claims were due to cancer, with an annual rate of a shocking 50 fatalities per 100,000 firefighters.

Firefighters are killed by cancer at a rate about three times higher than the general population, and cancer rates among firefighters increase dramatically with age, with the 35 to 39 year age group accounting for only 1% of workplace fatal cancer claims among firefighters and the 60 to 64 year age group accounting for 17%, while those 65 years of age and older making up nearly half the claims.

Unfortunately, there is inconsistent recognition of the occupational cancers of firefighters across Canada, which is why I think we need this bill so desperately. A firefighter's cancer may or may not be recognized as occupational depending on the province or territory in which they live. According to the International Association of Fire Fighters line of duty death database, 408 Canadian IAFF members died in the line of duty as a result of occupational cancers in the 10-year period between 2012 and 2021.

These were members whose cancers were formally accepted as job related by their respective provincial workers compensation boards, and in most cases, by presumptive legislation. However, the true number of firefighter cancer deaths among Canadian firefighters during that timeframe is no doubt higher, considering that not all provinces and territories formally recognize all the same cancer types as occupational among firefighters. Quebec recently enacted presumptive legislation for its firefighters, becoming the last province to do so, but it only recognizes nine types of cancer as occupational, when we know that there are at least double that.

I want to take a moment to speak about what I consider to be the best firefighters unit in the country, which is the Vancouver Fire Fighters union, IAFF Local 18. I want to give a shout-out to some of the finest Canadians I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with. These include Gord Ditchburn, Rob Weeks, Lee Lax, Chris Coleman and Dustin Bourdeaudhuy. These men are not only leaders in their workplaces, some of the finest firefighters in the country, and superb advocates and representatives of their firefighter sisters and brothers in the labour movement, but they are also excellent human beings, who give of themselves in every way, in the community, the workplace, the provincial legislature and the House of Commons.

● (1145)

Here is what they have explained to me over the years. As IAFF Local 18 has been a leader in the promotion and achievement of cancer presumption legislation here in British Columbia, I want to pause to say exactly what this legislation is. A presumption means, if a professional or a volunteer firefighter develops one of the listed cancers after a certain period of employment, it is presumed that the cancer arose from their employment. The firefighter is then eligible for worker's compensation benefits without having to provide evidence that the cancer is work-related, which can often be extraordinarily onerous, time consuming and especially hard on a firefighter and their family at a time when they are battling cancer.

B.C. first recognized certain cancers as occupational diseases for firefighters in 2005, very much due to the leading work of Local 18. In 2017, the B.C. government moved forward with an amendment to the firefighters' occupational disease regulation under the Workers Compensation Act to add presumptions for breast cancer, prostate cancer and multiple myeloma as occupational diseases for firefighters. At the time, cancer presumptions for firefighters were already recognized for the following cancers: brain, bladder, colorectal, kidney, ureter, testicular, lung, esophageal, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and leukemia.

In 2019, the B.C. NDP government introduced Bill 18 to extend presumptive conditions to forest firefighters, indigenous firefighters and fire inspectors, allowing them to more easily claim coverage for work-related illnesses like cancer, heart disease and mental health disorders. This is an example of what labour and a very active and informed firefighters union, working in concert with a government that is concerned about occupational health and safety, can accomplish. Once again, this leading situation in British Columbia is not the reality for firefighters across this country. That is why I think it is critical that we provide a national framework to lead all provinces and territories to achieve the same kind of progress made in B.C., recognizing of course that the job is not done even here.

I want to just shift for a moment to something that is a very practical step that we can and should be taking. The NDP caucus wrote a letter to the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Health last year. What that letter did was it expressed the IAFF's serious concerns over toxic chemical flame retardants in upholstered furniture and flammability testing standards for consumer products. Toxic chemicals are commonly used as flame retardants in a wide variety of household products such as upholstered furniture. They threaten the environment but, more importantly, they affect the human body, causing numerous health problems such as cancer.

Firefighters are at a greater risk of harm from chemical flame retardants because they encounter them in a combusted state and accumulate higher levels of exposure over the course of their careers. In the past the chemicals management plan acknowledged the health risk posed by select chemical flame retardants and banned their manufacturer, sale, import and use. However, banning only certain classes of flame retardants opens the door to loopholes and only facilitates their continued use. Additionally, there are no regulations currently under the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act for residential upholstered furniture. This leave the onus on industry to choose how to meet flammability requirements.

The letter that we sent, generated by the IAFF Local 18, called for firefighters to be included in the classification of vulnerable populations when assessing chemical safety; called for regulatory and risk management initiatives involving chemical assessments to consider occupational standards like fire and emergency services when evaluating chemical safety; called for the introduction of regulatory measures that will prevent industry from replacing toxic chemicals with other similar chemicals that are just as harmful; and called for a complete ban on the sale, manufacturing, import and use of all chemicals that are used in flame retardants for upholstered furniture, given the toxic effects they have not just on firefighters but all Canadians. It also called on the federal government to investigate concerns about open flame testing while considering the merits of smolder resisting standards, and to include the IAFF on any future tests during chemical management consultations.

Let us pass this bill. Let us also protect firefighters by enacting protection against cancer-causing flame retardants immediately.

● (1150)

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this important discussion on Bill C-224. I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, for sponsoring the bill, and I would like to thank all firefighters in Canada for serving our communities and for risking their lives to keep us all safe.

Firefighters face dangers and risk their lives to protect us and our communities. The hazards they face go beyond the bravery and self-sacrifice of running into burning buildings to save lives. Firefighters also put themselves in harm's way from exposure to toxic chemicals such as certain harmful flame retardants in upholstered furniture, mattresses and electronic devices, among others, when responding to fires.

While firefighters wear personal protective equipment for a level of protection, exposure to these harmful chemicals either through skin contact or inhalation are known to increase the risk of certain types of cancers and lung disease and to cause other adverse health effects.

That is why last summer the government announced a comprehensive action plan to protect firefighters from harmful chemicals released during household fires. Today, I am pleased to tell the House about the action plan and the measures already under way to protect these first responders in their life-saving work, but also to speak about why I feel this framework is so important as we move forward in the protection of our firefighters.

In the Government of Canada's firefighter action plan, the plan aims to protect firefighters from harmful chemicals with a particular focus on chemical flame retardants that are found in many household items, like upholstered furniture and electronics. Chemical flame retardants can save lives by slowing the ignition and spread of fire. However, they can also cause harmful health effects like cancer or impaired fertility when burned and inhaled.

The plan lays out five key areas of action. First, the government will prohibit harmful chemical flame retardants in Canada. To date, we have assessed over 150 flame retardants and have restricted or phased out those that are harmful to human health or the environment. Fourteen more chemical flame retardants are currently undergoing assessment, with even more to be assessed within the next two years to determine if they are harmful and require further actions.

Prohibiting or restricting harmful chemical flame retardants can help minimize firefighters' and other Canadians' exposure to these chemicals and their adverse health effects. I am really pleased to see the government has made this progress, because when I was on the environment committee, we looked at this issue under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. It is good to see that work is happening but more work needs to be done.

Second, we are working with industry to promote the use of alternatives to chemical flame retardants to comply with fire safety standards. To support the move away from harmful flame retardants, the government has updated five industry guidance documents on flammability requirements in consumer products. These updated materials emphasize ways that industry can comply without using chemical flame retardants and encourage manufacturers to design products differently such as using inherently flame-resistant materials like wool.

Third, our government is working with universities and firefighters to advance research on the health effects of chemical flame retardants and to monitor firefighters' levels of exposure to harmful chemicals. Monitoring the levels of these chemicals in firefighters, combined with new research data, provides important information that will help regulators target harmful chemicals. We will continue to share results of this research and monitoring with the scientific community and with the international community of firefighters to advance broader efforts to protect firefighters.

Fourth, we are going to use results of this research and monitoring to inform best practices for firefighters to help reduce their exposure to harmful chemicals. Our government has collaborated with universities and firefighters to research existing strategies, including personal protective equipment that reduces exposure to chemicals to determine their effectiveness. This important work will help improve existing best practices and identify new measures that can be implemented at the local, national and international levels.

Finally, we will continue to increase transparency and promote information sharing to raise awareness about the use of chemical flame retardants in products available to consumers. Empowering consumers to make informed choices can reduce exposure to harmful chemicals for Canadians, including firefighters.

Our government is committed to enhancing supply chain transparency and strengthening mandatory labelling of consumer products. To this end, in March, the government launched a national consultation asking the public to help identify, develop, prioritize and test innovative solutions for improving transparency about chemicals in products. This consultation will inform the government's future work on a broad strategy for labelling toxic chemicals in consumer products, including flame retardants in upholstered furniture.

These strengthened measures and increased awareness will make a tangible impact for firefighters. This is particularly true in my community where only 13 cancers in British Columbia are listed as work-related.

● (1155)

Last week I met with representatives from Surrey, Township of Langley and City of Langley firefighters who either have or know a colleague who has suffered from an occupational cancer. Richard from Station 1271 in Surrey told me that, in his 18-year career, he has seen nine occupational disease line of duty deaths. Of the nine, six have tragically lost their lives to occupational cancers, including Deputy Chief John Watt, battalion chiefs William Robertson and David Rivett, and captains Patrick Glendenning, Randy Piticco and Leslie Dionne. Most of these members worked at the same fire hall for most of their careers. Sadly, we know there will be more Surrey and Langley members added to this list.

One thing has stayed with me since speaking with firefighters locally. Richard told me that, in the case of occupational cancers, “If it is on you, it is in you.” This has never been so true.

Dan Gray from the City of Langley and Jordan Sparrow from the township also shared their insights, and all shared the hope that work will move ahead to continue creating national consistency in identifying occupational cancers across Canada.

The government's action plan is a comprehensive approach to protecting firefighters from harmful chemicals released during household fires. Significant progress is being made in its implementation through banning harmful chemical flame retardants and supporting the development and use of safer alternatives. As part of the firefighters action plan, the government is also conducting research, monitoring levels of exposure to chemicals and identifying practices that could protect our firefighter population from long-term harm. Lastly, the government is sharing information to help raise awareness about the presence of chemicals, including flame retardants, in consumer products.

All these reasons are why the government has done so much work, and I think we need to be aware of the work that has happened and that there is more work that needs to be done. That is why I so proudly stand here today in support of Bill C-224 and the work we are doing to identify a national framework for firefighters.

● (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We only have two minutes left for this debate.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, how do I sum up my support in two minutes?

This bill has to pass. We need to do more for our firefighters, for those who stand as our silent sentinels, for those who run into burning buildings and who run towards danger each and every day, for those who put their lives in jeopardy so that our families can sleep safely, be safe and be sound.

I will save the rest of my time for the next time this bill is up.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have nine and a half minutes the next time this matter is before the House.

[*Translation*]

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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL UPDATE IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2021

The House resumed from March 28 consideration of Bill C-8, An Act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update tabled in Parliament on December 14, 2021 and other measures, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, while the housing crisis is national in scope, regional spikes like the one in Ontario are the reason so many are actually calling Saskatchewan home now. I know of many retirees who cannot afford to remain in Ontario.

One couple, for example, planned a short visit to Saskatchewan but ended up staying permanently. Then they invited their children to bring their families to Saskatchewan. They had six months to live with their parents while they found employment and a new home. Others have also come to Yorkton—Melville from British Columbia and Quebec. Nonetheless, prairie affordability is being threatened by growing inflation, incredible debt and a punitive carbon tax that is definitely costing rural Canadians far more than they are getting back.

Although I love my province and the amazing people who live in it, I do not desire to see other areas of the country suffer from the poor choices of the national government. I want to see Canadians, regardless of financial ability, free to settle anywhere in this beautiful country, but let us face reality: Canadians now have a new majority government in Ottawa.

The survival of the old Liberal government, which initially tabled Bill C-8, now officially relies on the support of a party that has even more reckless intentions to run up debt and does not care how much money it has to print to do so. Unless this political love affair falls by the wayside, Canadians are stuck with this new reality for the next three and a half years.

Despite indifference on the other side of the House, Conservatives will be present ever day to offer solutions to this affordability crisis. For example, Bill C-8 proposes a 1% annual tax on the value of vacant or underused residential properties that are directly or indirectly owned by non-resident non-Canadians. In Calgary, I personally know of a family that rented in a subdivision that is completely owned by a Chinese investor who has never set foot in Canada. Conservatives would have banned foreign investors who are not living in or moving to Canada from buying homes for two years. We also proposed encouraging foreign investment in purpose-built rental housing that is affordable for Canadians. We will also continue to push the government to remove the gatekeepers to development and get shovels in the ground.

Canada's housing crisis is fuelled in large part by the choices of the federal government. It can choose to let the builders build or it can continue to stand in their way. It can choose to rein in spending and lower taxes or continue to allow inflation to spiral out of control.

The government is letting down young Canadians. The new generation of first-time buyers is not looking for flashy slogans, hashtags or photo ops; it wants concrete action from this new NDP-Liberal majority government to address the crisis. The first logical step would be to withdraw this irresponsible bill, which would only put the Canadian dream of ownership further out of reach for young Canadians.

● (1205)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was wondering if the member could expand on affordability. I know I hear from my constituents, almost on a daily basis, of taxes increasing. We know we just had the carbon tax increase here on Friday, and also the excise tax on alcohol. I was wondering if she is hearing the same thing from her constituents on the other side of the province of Saskatchewan about affordability and the cost of living and how it is affecting them.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, absolutely I hear about that constantly every day. The thing that frustrates my constituents so much is that the government absolutely refuses to listen to the truth about the circumstances they are facing. The increase in the carbon tax, and inflation especially, is causing everything to go up. Of course, the ability to afford a home has become a scenario in which people are house poor if they do take that step and spend so much of their income on a house that is really, truly unaffordable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, like the Bloc Québécois, the Conservatives often champion Quebec's and the provinces' jurisdiction and generally oppose federal interference in areas under their control.

Bill C-8 would see the federal government claim a piece of the property tax pie, which is under municipal jurisdiction. That kind of interference is new. What are my colleagues' thoughts on the Liberals' interference in areas under municipal jurisdiction?

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, the truth of the matter is that the current government is very self-serving in the way that it is choosing to work with our provinces. It takes advantage of the provinces' need for funding and truly is putting them in a place where it is either the government's way or the highway. This is not acceptable. I am very proud of Saskatchewan and its government in its ability to run our province in its own areas of jurisdiction, and we certainly, as Conservatives, support that.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saskatchewan for her speech. In her riding, like mine, the carbon tax is an issue that many Canadians are talking about in terms of affordability and the cost of living.

One of the things I would like the member to comment on when we talk about the government's economic record and its fiscal plan, albeit from this fall looking ahead perhaps to the budget even this Thursday, is the Parliamentary Budget Officer saying that this tax disproportionately impacts rural residents more. It has cost them out of pocket and it is costing families and businesses, and that ripple effect is adding to an already difficult cost-of-living issue here. Could the member take this opportunity to perhaps share the context in her part of the country? Whether in my riding in eastern Ontario in the city of Cornwall or in some of the more rural parts, what I think I am going to hear is that we have very similar challenges and similar frustration on the part of many Canadians.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that observation and that question.

One thing I have learned as a member of Parliament that means a great deal to me, and I share this with my constituents here in Saskatchewan, is that the majority of the GDP of this nation is created in rural Canada. We are rural, and the issues faced by members of my communities who are facing this carbon tax resonate completely with rural Canadians across this country.

This government does not understand that dynamic, and the punitive measures it has put in place are not revenue-neutral. Certainly I know that my constituents are paying far more into this carbon tax than they are getting back, and it is more punitive towards rural Canadians.

● (1210)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an absolutely wonderful opportunity to be able to rise today and deliver some remarks on Bill C-8, the economic and fiscal update implementation act, 2021. It is kind of ironic, as I was reflecting on this over the weekend, that I am delivering remarks on the fall economic statement in the spring, but calendars are clearly difficult, and perhaps calendars are hard for the government as well.

Many of my colleagues on this side of the House have highlighted challenges. I want to thank the member who spoke just before me, my colleague from Yorkton—Melville, who really highlighted some of the struggles that are faced in rural Canada when it comes to pricing. That is something that is very true, and I would expand it to not just rural Canadians; it is a major struggle for anyone who lives outside of a major centre.

In my riding of Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, we do not really have a choice, in many cases, to stay home. I was talking to a few of my colleagues. In my world, everything starts at three hours. It takes three hours to get from Fort McMurray to Lac La Biche and another two and a half hours to get from Lac La Biche to Edmonton, so that is five and a half hours. It takes four and a half hours to get from Fort McMurray to Cold Lake and it takes a couple of hours to get from Cold Lake to Edmonton, so it really does not matter whereabouts we go: It is at least a few hours. That is not even including the more isolated communities in my riding, such as the community of Fort Chipewyan. That is one that I am going to talk about in a bit more depth.

Fort Chipewyan is a truly stunning place. If anyone has not had an opportunity to go to Fort Chipewyan, I highly recommend they take a trip. It is truly breathtakingly beautiful. It has the Canadian Shield, the great and powerful Athabasca River, Lake Athabasca and so many opportunities to explore the outdoors. However, it also has some struggles, because it is primarily without roads. It relies on ice roads through the winter as its main supply line. That means that a lot of organizations have to get their groceries and all their supplies for the entire year delivered in a short window of time while the ice road is open. Otherwise, they are relying on barges or flying equipment in. As members can probably imagine, all of those options are quite expensive.

When we have a government that continually raises the carbon tax, such as the one we have, one of the struggles is that the cost to transport those goods rises, and then the cost to sell those goods has to rise. Otherwise, the business owners or the organizations have a shortfall. They can only operate under a shortfall or in a deficit for so long before it has some major impacts. I know that the government does not necessarily understand that reality when it comes to budgeting, but most Canadians understand that they really do need to balance their budget or there will be some long-term complications.

In Fort Chipewyan, as inflation is going up and the carbon tax is going up, people are seeing substantially higher grocery costs, which is making it quite a struggle for many of the families to get healthy food options. Unfortunately, as members who have travelled through the north might be aware, it is the perishable goods and healthy food choices, including fruit, vegetables and dairy, that tend to be the most expensive in those communities. Therefore, when it comes to anything that is perishable, the inflationary cost is substantially higher because of the additional time to get there, and the community is really having to struggle. In fact, just last week some of the indigenous leaders in the community talked about the global food crisis having a huge impact on the residents in the community of Fort Chipewyan.

● (1215)

It is not just an issue in Fort Chipewyan. We see this as an issue in most of our rural, isolated communities. Further away, the communities of Conklin and Janvier are at least 90 minutes from a grocery store. There are convenience stores in those communities, but to get to a real grocery store, people in Janvier have to go at least 90 minutes to Anzac or 90 minutes to Lac La Biche. As fuel prices continue to skyrocket because of the carbon tax, those families see fewer opportunities to get to the grocery store and to buy those healthier food choices. What they are also seeing is that it is having a huge inflationary impact.

In fact, the PBO, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, recently said that it appears that the rationale for the additional spending initially set aside as stimulus no longer exists. What we are seeing is just the continuous spending of money. The government is spending and spending without actually looking at what this increase in spending is doing to average Canadian families.

This is part of the struggle. Families in my riding are finding it harder to make ends meet. There have been reports that have come out saying that the average family of four will see an additional $1,000 added to their grocery bill. I was thinking about this over the weekend because when I come to Ottawa, even if I go to the most expensive grocery store around, groceries are still less expensive than at the cheapest grocery store in Fort McMurray.

I was really thinking about this. We keep repeating, on this side of the House, the fact that groceries are going up by an average of $1,000 for a family of four, but now I am really curious. I am going to try to do some calculations on my end, because I would not be surprised if the average family of four in my riding actually saw a substantially higher amount because of the inflationary impacts and because of the inflation of food prices. These are coupled with more carbon tax, and all that ends up doing is raising the cost of everything.

One of the big challenges I think members opposite do not necessarily understand when they raise the cost of carbon taxes on so many of these goods is that, in communities such as Fort McMurray or Fort Chipewyan or other communities throughout most of northern Canada, we cannot just put goods in a warehouse. We have to heat the warehouse, because otherwise the food will freeze and then it will no longer be nutritional and healthy and safe for families.

On the flip side of that, we have midnight sun in many northern communities, so we need to have air conditioning through the summer. Otherwise, we will have a struggle where the food will go bad: It will spoil.

As the cost of heating and cooling buildings increases, so will the cost to have those business owners get to a place of balance. I think this is one of the big challenges that we face right now.

The government continues to spend money, but it is not really looking at how this is impacting families in the north and how this is impacting families in isolated communities all across Canada. It is so much larger than just the families in my riding. It impacts any family that has to travel for anything. I know many members on this side of the House, and I would assume many members on the other side, have to travel a couple hours or more in order to get to doctors' appointments, children's sports competitions and different pieces along those lines, or just to visit friends and family. I think this is one of those challenges that, as we see gasoline prices continuously increasing, families cannot necessarily cope with. They do not have the opportunity to print money like the government does.

Those real impacts and those real choices are really a struggle. As a fun piece, I think it is something that our communities really need to understand, and we need to make sure we are doing what we can to have families be able to afford nutritional food. This is especially true throughout the north.

I would welcome all members of the House to vote against the bill, because all it is going to do is raise the cost of everything.

● (1220)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I have heard my colleague speak before, clearly and evocatively, about the travel distances within her riding. We had an exchange some time ago about bus service, and she mentioned that Red Arrow is still servicing communities within her riding.

I am particularly interested to see, in the budget on Thursday, a commitment to help rural and remote communities have access to affordable, reliable and safe public transit, even in remote areas. This was required in the recommendations of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry.

Does she share those concerns?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising that issue. She highlights the fact that a huge disparity exists between rural and urban Canada, in this and so many other ways. One of the things we have not seen from the Liberal government to date is that recognition and understanding that rural Canadians have a host of different challenges. Rural Canadians need to be supported because rural Canada is where we create the wealth for all of Canada. I often say that when Fort McMurray works, Alberta works, and when Alberta works, Canada works. That is so true, but I would expand that a bit further. It is all of northern Canada. We contribute to the GDP of Canada at far higher rates, and we need to have our just part.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, this economic update is a masterpiece of vacuousness. There is not much in it.

As members of the Bloc Québécois have said many times, however, it does contain a major development worth noting, and that is an attempt by Ottawa to meddle in property taxes, something that it has never done before. That is extremely serious, even though we must admit that real estate speculation is a real problem and that something must be done about it.

I think that the real problem with real estate is that more investments are needed. Ottawa has backed away from the construction of social and affordable housing in a big way. Do our Conservative colleagues believe that more money needs to be invested in the construction of such housing?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, I believe my colleague pointed out one of the problems that we have here in Canada, specifically the fact that we do not have enough affordable housing. However, we cannot build more affordable housing when it is more expensive to build.

Inflation is having a real impact on people who are already struggling to make ends meet. We need to work together and really figure out what is important. One thing that is extremely important is controlling inflation.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the critical points around the challenges people face in northern Canada. They are very similar challenges to what the people in my communities, and where I come from in northern Manitoba, are facing. I know that so many people where we are feel that they are paying more than their fair share of taxes and that they are contributing more than their fair share, yet they are looking at the richest among us in our country get off without paying what is due. The reality is that the Conservatives have not sided with us in calling for the rich to pay their fair share of taxes. That money would then be reinvested in our communities.

How does the MP feel about the fact that the Conservatives refuse to make sure that the richest among us are paying their fair share?

● (1225)

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, effectively, on this side of the House, we believe that Canadians need to be able to afford to make ends meet. Right now, with inflation at a generational high, families are having a hard time making ends meet. We have asked, time and again, for simple solutions to help families make ends meet, whether reducing the GST on gasoline, removing the carbon tax increase or doing other simple things that would make a difference in average Canadians' lives today or tomorrow. However, the government, and the NDP partners in their marriage of time, have voted against those common-sense solutions time and again.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, as we have been hearing over the last couple of weeks especially, across the country, Canadians really are feeling the squeeze. Their budgets are being stretched further and further, and for too many, their pocketbooks simply cannot keep up. Inflation has ballooned to record levels and costs are skyrocketing.

Canadians need some financial relief, and this is something that we on this side of the House have been saying and asking for on their behalf. However, those who are desperately looking for a break will not find it here in the legislation before us. The Liberal government is asking Parliament to approve significant spending through the bill. In fact, in all, the fall economic statement and the fiscal update add $70 billion of new spending to the books, which will, in turn, fuel inflation in this country and send it to even higher levels.

This government's tax-and-spend agenda hurts our economy and it hurts Canadians. Just last Friday, we know that Canadians were hit with the latest Liberal tax hikes: The escalator tax on alcohol went up, and the failed Liberal carbon tax went up by 25%. That is an extra 2.2¢ a litre, bringing the carbon tax to 11¢ a litre. Of course, that is on top of the already high gasoline prices. The carbon tax is adding to the costs of groceries, home heating and everyday essentials that Canadians need and rely on. It is contributing to the inflation in this country, and in doing so it is actually punishing all Canadians. It is even more punishing for Canadians on fixed incomes who, frankly, can afford it the least.

I hear from my constituents on this issue all the time. I have received countless copies of energy bills from my constituents, who are anxious and distressed about the impact on their bottom line. Simply put, my constituents cannot afford this Liberal carbon tax, and they certainly do not accept this Liberal government's tired old talking points that they will receive more money back than they pay through the climate action incentive rebate. This government's math simply does not add up, and my constituents know that.

We also know that the Bank of Canada recently revealed that the carbon tax alone has increased inflation by nearly half a percent. That is, in essence, an additional tax on everything, and this government cannot simply ignore it when it is considering the cost of a carbon tax on Canadians. In fact, we all know now that the Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that, contrary to what this Liberal government says, most households subjected to the Liberal carbon tax will, in fact, see a net loss. What is worse, this tax punishes Canadians while failing to accomplish anything for the environment. On top of that, it is even more punishing for rural Canadians, such as my constituents in Battlefords—Lloydminster. Farm families and farm businesses know that all too well. Their bottom line has taken a massive hit specifically from this Liberal carbon tax. The cost of business is going up, but they cannot pass those costs along. It is shrinking an already very slim profit margin.

While this legislation might seemingly acknowledge some of the hardships that are faced by our farmers, it fails to actually acknowledge the Liberal government's contribution to these hardships. The bill also fails to deliver a common-sense solution of simply exempting farm fuels from the carbon tax.

The reality is that our farmers are always looking to improve the efficiency of their operations. The agricultural community has developed and adopted modern technologies to reduce their carbon footprint and to protect our environment, which takes investment on their part. We know that the carbon tax is not accomplishing anything for the environment, and it would go a lot further to leave more money in the pockets of our farm businesses so that they could reinvest into what would work best for their own operations.

As our farmers face massive carbon tax bills on farm fuels including propane and natural gas, typically used in grain drying, I had hoped to see a full exemption on farm fuels in the fall economic update, but surprisingly that is not what is contained in the bill. Fortunately, a private member's bill to that effect has been brought forward by my colleague, the member for Huron—Bruce, and I hope that all members of the House will stand up for our hard-working farmers and support Bill C-234. Our farmers, as I have said, make tremendous contributions to our environment, our food security and our economy. We cannot take that for granted.

● (1230)

We need to ensure that the economic agenda of our country is working toward opportunity and a prosperous future for all Canadians. That is what is problematic with this legislation, and more generally, I would say, with the fiscal mismanagement of the Liberal government. This many years later, it really does seem like the Prime Minister still thinks and believes that budgets will balance themselves. However, we cannot dig ourselves out of a hole.

The Liberal government continues to spend money that is not there to fund its partisan-driven agenda. We know that since the start of the pandemic, the Liberal government has brought in $176 billion, not million, in spending that is completely unrelated to COVID-19. Our national debt is over $1 trillion. The Liberal government rarely talks in millions anymore and announcements in the billions have become more commonplace.

The finance minister certainly does not talk about what Canadians are paying to service that debt, nor does she acknowledge her government's contribution to rising inflation. Unfortunately, ignoring these factors does not negate their existence. With the federal budget set to be released later this week, I think Canadians would be right to brace themselves. They have been left to wonder what the new NDP-Liberal government will cost them and their children. The budget will likely give us our first glimpse of what an economic agenda driven by the NDP will cost. An ideological and activist-driven agenda that cripples our economic drivers and spends massively could only lead to higher taxes and more debt, and it is Canadians who will be left holding the bag, as usual.

The ease at which the government continues down this road shows just how out of touch it is with the reality of everyday Canadians. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has told Parliament that the rationale for the government's $100 billion in planned stimulus no longer exists. The government needs to start reining it in. If the government was serious about growing our economy, it could start by abandoning its policies that are crippling our economic drivers. It has chased away countless projects and investment dollars in our Canadian energy sector, a sector that has contributed so much to our Canadian economy and that could contribute so much more. That is not to mention its potential to contribute to the stabilization of global energy security.

The government's policies push Canada to the sidelines while leaving demand to be filled by other countries with lower environmental and human rights standards than we have here in Canada. Canada finds itself at a disadvantage with nothing really gained. This is particularly devastating for my constituents, many whose livelihoods have been taken away or threatened while the cost of everything continues to go up.

When considering this legislation, we cannot simply ignore the inflation tax. Inflation is eating into the paycheques of my constituents and those of every single Canadian. A dollar today does not go nearly as far as it used. The government's spending is only pouring gasoline on the fire, leaving so many Canadians behind. Canadians need real solutions in the immediate term.

On this side of the House, the Conservatives have proposed a number of common-sense and practical solutions to help Canadians, but the Liberals have rejected each and every one. With record high inflation and skyrocketing costs of living, it is time to give Canadians a break. We need real solutions, tangible solutions, to alleviate the inflationary burden on Canadians. We cannot keep going down this risky and expensive path that is leaving far too many Canadians behind.

● (1235)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I heard the member say that government policies "push Canada to the sidelines". I will ask her to explain to me what she means by that. We have the best GDP among G7 countries. We also have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio among G7 countries, which means that we are best equipped to deal with the economic challenges right now. We have recovered 114% of the jobs we lost during COVID, and when we compare Canada with the United States, we see they are so much further behind and have not even come close to getting all their jobs back.

Could the member please explain to me what she means by government policies are pushing Canada to the sidelines, with the exception of how this relates to oil, which the Conservatives like to talk about all the time?

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, when I said the quote the member pulled out, I was referring to our Canadian energy sector. I represent mothers and fathers who have lost their jobs because of bills like Bill C-69 and Bill C-48, the tanker ban. Oil companies have moved from Canada to other places in the world. Why are we buying oil from those places? Why are we supporting them when we have the most ethical human rights and environmental regulations in the world? I am sorry, but when I have parents contacting my office saying they cannot afford to put food on the table to feed their children, it is because the government took away their jobs through its policies.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague was extremely critical of the carbon tax, which does not apply in Quebec, I must point out. The question I have for my colleague is therefore out of a genuine interest in understanding the Conservatives' position.

I have heard several Conservatives talking about abolishing the carbon tax, calling it unnecessary and even harmful. Then again, I have also heard one prominent Conservative, Jean Charest, say it should not be abolished, but rather capped and not increased immediately.

I am really trying to understand what the Conservatives' position is. Do they want to abolish the tax or cap it?

[*English*]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I am of the mind that we should respect provincial jurisdiction. In the province I come from, Saskatchewan, Premier Scott Moe has presented two plans to the Prime Minister and the Liberal government on carbon pricing. It is reflective of our local economies, which are energy an agriculture, and takes into account that Saskatchewan is a carbon sink, especially with all the work that our agricultural economy and regions are doing there. I am of the mindset that we should respect provincial jurisdiction. It is disgraceful that when our premier in Saskatchewan presented not one but two plans to the Prime Minister, he said it was his way or the highway and imposed his own.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my Conservative colleague, who gave a good analysis of how Canadians are struggling these days, since housing is so expensive and groceries are getting increasingly expensive.

Why not look at where the money is, in order to help people? The banks made record profits last year, totalling $60 billion, an increase of nearly 40%. While so many are struggling, we have CEOs earning $8 million, $10 million or even $16 million a year.

Why not be bold and courageous, and find some money by going after the superwealthy and the big corporations, like the banks, which are making obscene profits?

● (1240)

[*English*]

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member that everything is more expensive and Canadians cannot afford another tax, especially a tax on a tax. It is why I spoke about the federal carbon tax that has been imposed on the residents in Saskatchewan. I have a gas bill here from a constituent of mine named Trevor. His bill was $419. Of that, $96.55 was carbon tax, and the GST on that tax, the tax on a tax, was an additional $4.83. That is over $100, or 25% of his energy bill. Where is it going? We do not know because there is no accountability and it does nothing for the environment. Affordability absolutely needs to be top of mind for the Liberal-NDP government.

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak once again to Bill C-8, an act to implement certain provisions of the economic and fiscal update from December, which is now before us at report stage in the House of Commons.

In February, during second reading debate, I questioned the previous Liberal minority government on its leadership in governing our country during these times of crisis. It turns out that since then, the Prime Minister now feels he needs the help of the NDP to retain the confidence of the House. With the support of his NDP coalition partners, this may in fact be true in this place, but my constituents and Canadians across the country had lost faith and confidence in the Prime Minister and the Liberal government a long time ago. A recent public opinion poll conducted by Ipsos found a majority of people, 53%, listed “help with the soaring costs of everyday needs due to inflation” as one of the top three priorities they had. That is quite a departure from the so-called Liberal-NDP ideological “build back better” agenda, which has not made life better for Canadians. In fact, it has only made life harder and more expensive.

In my February speech on Bill C-8,, I asked the government where its plan was to get Canadian lives back to normal after more than two years of Canadians having to endure this pandemic. Two months later, I still do not have an answer. Meanwhile, federal mandates continue to inconveniently plague Canadians and delay them from returning to their normal lives.

Since February, Canada's Conservatives have called on the federal government to lift all federal pandemic restrictions in order to protect the jobs of federally regulated employees, to enable Canadians to travel unimpeded, to ensure Canada's tourism industry recovery and to allow for the free flow of goods across the Canada-U.S. border. However, the NDP and the Liberals have outright rejected our efforts, even in the face of provinces and territories pivoting toward reopening their economies after two long years of government-forced closures and lockdowns.

Since the onset of this pandemic, we have also raised the importance of vaccines and rapid testing, and have called on the government to make these essential tools more readily available for Canadians to use. However, as seen throughout this pandemic, federal leadership has been either delayed or missing. It has taken a back seat to wedge-issue politics, the politics of division and, most recently, the politics of convenience, which we see with this NDP-Liberal coalition that Canadians did not vote for. I would suggest that this is an abdication of leadership not befitting the needs and wants of Canadians.

For instance, over a year ago, the federal government purchased 52 million doses of Novavax. Meanwhile, the details of the $126-million Novavax production plant in Montreal remain in question. On February 17, 2022, I was pleased to see Health Canada finally approve the Novavax vaccine for use. After two years it finally happened. In theory, this vaccine lets Canadians choose a more traditional protein-based vaccine to protect against COVID, as opposed to those who simply do not want an mRNA vaccine. However, as we speak, Novavax is still inaccessible to many Canadians.

Just last week, a constituent contacted me. She is a federally regulated worker who was concerned about losing her job if she continues to be unvaccinated. Despite her vaccine status, she is eager to get vaccinated and wishes to receive the Novavax vaccine. She has contacted local pharmacies and public health in Niagara and Hamilton, but she has had to be placed on a waiting list with no firm timelines for when she will receive Novavax. My constituent is trying her best, and we need the federal government to try harder to make these critical health care tools available to Canadians. It disappoints me greatly that the Prime Minister and his NDP partners are delaying access to critical health care tools that can give all Canadians greater freedoms and choices, especially as they pertain to managing their personal health care and family well-being.

In the limited time I have today, there are two additional issues I want to raise, both of which significantly impact my riding of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie.

The first major problem is the continued mandatory use of the ArriveCAN app at our Canada-U.S. border crossings. In my riding alone, we have four international bridge border crossings. We rely on these bridges for trade, travel and tourism, and not only in Niagara. They are the gateways to our country's broader economy. The summer of 2022 could be our third straight pandemic summer. The great people of Niagara are hopeful that this summer will be a more normal event than the previous two, but that hope will quickly be dashed if the NDP-Liberal government continues to use this flawed mobile application.

● (1245)

Recently the general manager of the Buffalo and Fort Erie Public Bridge Authority wrote Niagara MPs and municipal politicians. He noted that, while it is positive that Canada is lifting the COVID testing requirements at the borders as of April 1, their analysis shows that "continued mandatory use of the ArriveCAN app will result in much longer processing times and very lengthy border waits, which will significantly depress cross-border traffic at a time when we are moving into the 2022 summer tourist season." He further wrote that CBSA had confirmed to him that ArriveCAN will remain mandatory and that there will be no phase-in period to make the vast majority of the travelling public, which is non-essential, aware of this requirement. He concluded by saying that the purpose of his email to me and to the members of Parliament for Niagara Centre and St. Catharines was to make us "aware that this summer's tourist season will be difficult and frustrating at the border."

The world is reopening, provinces and territories are reopening and our economies are reopening, yet the federal government continues to drag its feet. The NDP-Liberal government is fully aware of how much chaos the ArriveCAN app could cause at the borders this summer for travellers, tourists and trade. It knows the risks to our economy, and it knows the potential impacts this will have in Niagara and beyond, so why is it continuing to use ArriveCAN and why is it continuing to make ArriveCAN mandatory to use?

We did not have, nor did we need, the federal government's app before the pandemic to cross our borders. Certainly, we do not need this app to continue operating after the pandemic.

The other major issue that has still not been addressed is the underused housing tax, which has the potential to severely and disproportionately impact local property owners in my riding. On March 14, 2022, I wrote the Minister of Finance about this, expressing my great concern. In my email I shared multiple pieces of correspondence I had received as well as a news article that was published by the Buffalo News in New York State.

I wrote seeking urgent clarification of the proposed wording for the listed exemptions found as part of the underused housing tax proposal, which would add a 1% annual tax on underused foreign-owned real estate in Canada. Unfortunately there is considerable confusion in Niagara across multiple levels of government, both in Canada and the U.S., in the business community and among private property owners as to how this tax will or will not apply to Niagara and foreign-owned vacation properties located in my riding. Our communities and stakeholders who may be impacted by this tax policy deserve to know with certainty whether they will actually be impacted.

For generations our Canada and U.S. communities along the Niagara River have become highly integrated. When our international borders are open, citizens of both countries frequently travel across the four local bridges to visit family, friends and loved ones, to work, to attend school, to play sports, to receive medical treatments and to travel and enjoy a vacation in their foreign-owned properties on either side of the river. As a result, many Americans own property in various small towns across my riding. Many have owned their properties for decades, going back generations, and a few for over a century. Some of these properties are fitted to be used year-round, while others are seasonal.

Regardless, when our international border finally and fully reopens and travel irritants, such as ArriveCAN, are removed, these small Niagara communities will benefit economically from our American family, friends and neighbours who will be visiting once again. These long-time property owners are considered valued members of our Niagara community. They are part of our social fabric, and they support our local economies. It would be wrong to target them specifically in Niagara with a punitive levy such as the underused housing tax.

I could go on for so much longer on what we need from the federal government to achieve economic recovery. Our economy should be fully reopened and recovered from this pandemic by now, but it is not. Workers should be back to work to help alleviate severe labour shortages and strengthen our supply chains, but they are not. For two years, Canadians have done their part. It is due time for the federal government to hold up its end of the bargain by ending the federal pandemic mandates and letting Canadians get on with their lives.

● (1250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is important for us to bring a few facts to the table. At the end of the day, what we have seen, virtually from day one, from this government is a commitment to the Canadian people in terms of growing our economy and getting people engaged through jobs and so forth. When we specifically look at the pandemic and the member's comments, we have actually more than replaced every job that has been lost during the pandemic. The numbers for Canada are good, and the reason the numbers for Canada are good is that Canadians from coast to coast came together in order to combat the pandemic. We continue to work with, consult and listen to science and health experts to make sure we continue to manage the economy, thereby supporting Canadians.

Can the member clearly indicate to the House which health care expert is saying and advising the Conservative Party that it is time to unilaterally end mandates?

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, just recently or several weeks ago, Dr. Tam, in one of her public news conferences, talked about the whole notion of moving from requirements to recommendations. Therefore, the government is looking at this; is it not?

From the standpoint of stimulus spending, we all in the House supported measures that were required for the pandemic. Of the January report, the PBO says, "Our report shows that since the start of the pandemic, the Government has spent, or has planned to spend, $541.9 billion in new measures—almost one third of which is not part of the COVID-19 Response Plan". Then they on the opposite side wonder what is leading to the inflation concerns that many Canadians have. It is right there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-8 barely skims the surface on the issue of housing.

This morning, the Radio-Canada website had a scathing article about the Liberal government's housing strategy. According to the federal housing advocate, who was appointed by the Liberal government to ensure its major national housing strategy is followed, the housing crisis is directly related to the neo-liberal policies that have been in place in Canada for the past 30 to 35 years. I do not think she is talking about the agreement between the NDP and Liberals, but rather the right-wing policies of governments during that time.

I simply wanted to draw my colleague's attention to the fact that a lot of money is being spent on the housing file in Canada these days, yet the targets are not being met. Does he not think that we should be investing heavily to bring the housing crisis to an end?

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, to the hon. member's point, the government has spent the most to achieve the least when it comes to the housing issue here in Canada. It is simply a fact that the average price of a home has now doubled from when the Liberals were elected in 2015, making it more unaffordable for Canadians and people in my riding of Niagara Falls to find a place to live.

The Liberals talk about returning all those jobs back to the economy, which is great to see, but in a tourism community such as mine there are still labour shortages that exist. Stats Canada, in its January report, still found over 900,000 jobs were left unfilled in this country. We have to do a better job of getting those people back to work and allowing them to earn money so that they can once again afford a place to live.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I was listening intently to the member for Niagara Falls speak about the need to address the housing crisis. The existing underused housing tax in this bill would already exempt every Canadian and every Canadian corporation. It is down to only 1% on its own. I am having a hard time getting a sense of how that would actually influence speculators. If the member is not supportive of this with the number of exemptions it already has, what is he supportive of to help deal with the housing crisis that we are in?

● (1255)

Mr. Tony Baldinelli: Madam Speaker, what I was alluding to in my remarks with regard to the 1% underused housing tax was the impact it would have on specific local residents in my community, such as those American visitors and local residents who live there during the summer months. We have yet to get further clarification on how this tax may or may not impact their residences. That is what I was alluding to in my remarks. I wrote to the minister and I await further comments back from her so that we can supply that information to those residents who are impacted.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill C-8, the fall economic and fiscal update.

I just got my seasons confused there. I realized it was the spring and we are still debating the fall economic—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I just wanted to make sure that there is no cross-debate going on.

The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon has the floor.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, let me just start by saying one thing.

My staff were up in the village of Lytton the other day, and the village of Lytton has not had much luck as of late. Finally, after months, we have seen debris removal take place. Some of the archeological assessments mandated by the provincial government have been completed in conjunction with Lytton First Nation. Everyone is hoping to just move forward and see something built now.

This is a provincial matter in one respect, but I had a constituent reach out to me and share an email that the Province of British Columbia had issued tender for housing for firefighters to be placed in Lytton in preparation for the fires that will invariably take place, God willing hopefully not, throughout the interior of British Columbia in just a few months' time.

The same constituent pointed out to me that, after the truckers blockade here in Ottawa, the federal government, through the Ontario economic development agency, put forward some funds to help Ontario businesses recover from being shut down for a few weeks. I am not opposed to that, but I wish the federal government would have done something similar for Lytton.

During this debate today, my constituents in Lytton are still looking for some answers. This week, they did get some help in the fall economic statement; I will acknowledge that. However, we are hoping this week, in the budget, there is going to be a bit more for B.C., because the village of Lytton is still suffering and the people I represent just want to go home.

The next point I would be remiss if I did not raise is the infrastructure challenges facing the City of Abbotsford. The Fraser Valley Current put out a story on some of the options that are before my hometown and where I live today. The money required to account for the disasters that took place and to plan for future disasters is anywhere from just over $1 billion to $2.8 billion. It is really bad.

A few weeks ago, a number of B.C. MPs went on a tour throughout the region and the city officials pleaded with us to keep pushing the federal government so that we get the resources we need to protect the Fraser Valley, the most economically significant region of the province of British Columbia. These resources and these contributions are taxpayer money well spent, and I am really hoping to see something more from the federal government on the infrastructure challenges facing Abbotsford and the eastern Fraser Valley.

I am part of a group called Lets'mot community forum. It brings together many of the Stó:lō nations of the eastern Fraser Valley, the District of Kent, Sts'ailes Nation and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs. They too, like the City of Abbotsford, are hoping to see more from the federal government in respect to infrastructure dollars.

We know that the Canada Infrastructure Bank has not spent nearly as much money as it could have. Here is an opportunity to use those funds wisely to support British Columbians when all of the engineers and all of the people are on the same page. We all know that this work needs to get done. Let us do it now before inflation makes it even more expensive in six months' to a year's time. We have to recover appropriately, and we have to plan for future disasters in the province of British Columbia.

I would also be remiss if I did not talk about housing. In my neighbourhood, like most other neighbourhoods in Abbotsford or Mission, we have seen a 100% increase in the cost of housing in the last year or so. Young families, people I know and people I grew up with seem to fall into two camps: They won the housing lottery or they lost the housing lottery through no fault of their own. People are losing hope, and they need to see the government completely overhaul its approach to housing.

Just this morning in The Globe and Mail, the Liberals touted their answer to the housing crisis that we face: the shared equity mortgage programs. We have the information tabled here before Parliament showing that it did not work. The money was not spent and people do not want to share their home equity with the Government of Canada.

The government has to acknowledge that it got this program wrong, and it needs to put that money into something else. It is not working. Nobody wants to do it. The government tried adjusting it once. It increased the family income levels and increased the price of a home that one was allowed to purchase under the program. It has not worked and it needs a new approach. Canadians need something now. We cannot wait three years for the next election.

● (1300)

A young family came to visit me in my office last week, and they said they sold their townhouse in Maple Ridge thinking they would wait a few months to live with their parents and then buy again, but in those few months there was such an inflationary impact on the cost of housing that they have now been priced out of the market. They do not know what to do. They are looking for options.

We know some of the problems that relate to housing do lie with the municipalities, but I believe the federal government does have a role to incent the construction of more housing across the board. This is something all Canadians could get behind, to build more homes and to build more homes for young families. We have to get it done. The government has not been getting it done, and the programs it has put forward are complete failures.

I was speaking to a vegetable grower last night on my way to the airport. Another major issue that is not being addressed by the government is the extreme labour shortages facing Canadian businesses, especially in the agricultural sector. The challenges in the agricultural sector are especially acute right now because Canada is poised to play a greater role in key crops because of the conflict in Ukraine. We need to be looking very closely at ways to help our producers get the labour they need, both domestic and foreign, onto farms as soon as possible because they cannot keep up. They cannot keep up with inflation, and if they do not have enough workers, they will have lower profits. Combine that with the inflationary impact, and they are facing a really challenging year.

The government needs to drastically look at how it is dealing with the labour shortage on farms. The price of food is already going up. I do not know about others, but my trips to Costco seem to be getting more and more expensive every single week. The hothouse tomatoes that I love eating on my sandwiches are costing more and more as well. We have to do more. We have the infrastructure in Canada to produce more food. We have the land, but we need the policies to attract labour to the agricultural sector to get our crops grown.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not talk about gasoline. Like a lot of young dads, I went to soccer practice recently and I had to fill up my 2015 Toyota RAV4. It cost me over $100. In Abbotsford the cost of gas was $2.01 a litre when I filled it up. For a number of years, the government has done everything in its power to prevent Canadian oil and gas getting to tidewater, and oil and gas getting shipped to refineries.

Everyone in the House has recognized that we need a new approach to oil and gas that would allow us to process it efficiently in Canada and get the pipelines built so there would not be such an affordability crunch on young families. People are really feeling the crunch.

To put this all in summation, my constituents cannot afford to drive to work anymore. Driving into Vancouver five days a week, with the cost of gasoline, costs a couple of extra hundred bucks every month. If people do not own a home right now, they are screwed.

A buddy of mine I went to high school with reached out to me the other day. He said he had been renting a house for 10 years and paying $1,700 in rent. The owner just sold it, and now he has to go into a smaller place where his rent is doubled. He does not know what he is going to do for his kids. He is in a tight bind. He does not know if he has a future in our province anymore.

We have to look very closely on what we are doing on housing and the inflationary impact of all this spending. There are a lot of things going on in our country. I am thankful for the time to share a little of that today.

● (1305)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member started his speech by talking about how we are now in the spring and we are talking about the fall economic statement. As he would know, the only people who are still debating this are the Conservatives. Every other party has given up on it. I am wondering if he could provide some insight into how much longer the Conservatives are going to keep this up and drag this on.

Before I get any fake outrage about everybody needing to speak to this at every stage repeatedly because it is part of the democratic process, and I fully understand that, I am hoping that the member can provide some insight into when we will actually allow this to collapse so we can vote on it and move forward. I am really hoping that we can pass this before we pass the spring budget.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I think I agree with something from the member for Kingston and the Thousand Islands—

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I only represent two of the Thousand Islands. It is Kingston and the Islands, not the Thousand Islands.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, my apologies, it is Kingston and the Islands.

I was on the red eye last night, as I figured I was going to be voting on time allocation this morning, but apparently the agreement between the Liberals and the NDP for supporting time allocation failed. The member is talking about the Conservatives, but it was actually the failure of the House leaders of the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party to reach an agreement on time allocation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will continue with the question I asked another Conservative colleague earlier about the housing crisis.

This morning, Radio-Canada posted a very interesting article on housing, which reads as follows:

> The largest program under the national strategy is the rental construction financing initiative. This program has a budget of nearly $26 billion, or 40% of the national housing strategy....According to the initiative's rules, 20% of the units have to be affordable....The problem is that only 3% of the units funded by the initiative meet the needs of low-income households.

We are spending 40% of $26 billion on this affordable housing program, but only 3% is effectively being used to build affordable units.

My Conservative colleagues are always worried about inflation, but how can we both house people and prevent inflation from rising?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I believe that in this specific case the federal government needs to give up some of its programs under the national housing strategy and turn the construction of housing for young families over to Canada's provinces and territories.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech with great interest. I think we share some characteristics in our ridings, where a lot of people do not have good alternatives for getting to work other than to drive their cars. They are facing really, really high cost increases from the gas increases.

I wonder whether the member is also on board with me in hoping that the budget that comes forward will include significant financing for public transit, so people would have affordable alternatives, and will include significant financing for the transition to electric cars.

● (1310)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke has a very fair question.

Back 100 years ago, in the Fraser Valley, we had electric rail that went from Vancouver to Chilliwack, yet we moved away from that. We need to get back to rail infrastructure to ease the congestion and get people to where they need to go faster. People want it. It is good for the economy, and it is good for people's well-being. We need to make investments in rail infrastructure.

Back in 2015, the Liberals promised they were going to get SkyTrain built, and it still has not been built out to Langley. We need to move faster on critical rail infrastructure in this country to move people and our goods faster. It is good for the economy, and it is good for everyone.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House in all circumstances. Unfortunately today, when we talk about the economy of this country, there is certainly a lot to be desired.

For the last couple of years I have had the privilege of serving my constituents in the capacity of their member of Parliament, we have used surveys to ask for feedback from them respecting things they are facing from an economic perspective. I just got the results back, and I think it is timely that today I would be rising to talk about the fall economic perspective, although I choose not to call it that, as it is more of a doomsday story. However, it is an opportunity for me to rise to speak about what my constituents have had to say about what they are facing today and will be facing moving forward.

The first I will go to is our businesses, which have been impacted greatly by this. This is one of the questions we asked of them: What impact has the global pandemic had on their business? Ninety-six percent of the businesses in my riding who responded to this survey said that it was bad or very bad for them and their business. The impacts are far-reaching.

We also asked them what their expectations were for 2022 as they went into the new year. Almost 30%, 29.5%, of the respondents said that they were not sure. The government had not given them confidence as to what to expect, and they were not sure how that was going to impact their business. However, 22% were hopeful that they would restore some semblance of normality in their business.

When the pandemic began, there was already a high level of uncertainty with the economy, but few thought the pandemic would last as long as it has, which is two years now. We asked another question: How are businesses positioned to manage the ongoing impacts going into 2022? Fifty-one percent said that they are managing, but the revenues are substantially lower, and they anticipate those revenues to remain low. Twenty-two percent said that they were struggling and will continue to struggle in their fight to keep their businesses operating. They need the economy to return to normal in order for them to just survive as businesses.

The federal Liberals have promised stimulus spending in the next budget. Experts such as the Parliamentary Budget Officer have said that stimulus is unnecessary and could harm our economy with more inflation. We asked a question about this: Would stimulus help their industry or their company? Forty-eight percent said no, they do not need more government stimulus. They need employees and the opportunity to get their economy back to normal. They need the pandemic and the restrictions to end, and they need skilled workers to be able to function as they did previously.

We asked them what barriers they thought their company had to growth currently and what they would be facing in 2022. It was interesting to note that almost 82% of respondents said that higher taxes and rising costs were some of the barriers they were facing with respect to their company's growth. We know that this government likes to increase, has increased and will continue to increase payroll costs. Sixty-seven percent of respondents said that payroll costs were costing their businesses significantly. Government red tape and regulations from a federal level was almost 56%, and a lack of supplies and resources due to the pandemic at almost 40%.

We have to access the market and, depending on clients' situations, these are all factors that businesses in my riding were very concerned about with their ability to continue in business.

We asked them pre-emptively about the April 1 carbon tax increasing to $50 a tonne and what that would do to their business. We had 89% of businesses say that it will have a very negative impact and another 8% said that they would have somewhat of a negative impact on their businesses and their ability to continue to function as businesses.

We asked another question: How much would they expect to spend on carbon taxes this year? Surprisingly, the majority, 40%, said they were uncertain exactly what that amount will be. However, about 20% were in the range of $10,000 to $25,000 and another 20% were in the range between $5,000 and $10,000, just in extra carbon taxes for this year alone.

● (1315)

It makes one wonder what the current government is doing. It talks a big talk about what it is going to do to impact business and the economy, yet the very nature of some of the policies it puts in place does the exact opposite. They thwart growth and the ability of businesses to thrive, and we know that when our businesses thrive, our economy thrives.

We conducted three surveys. As I said, there was one for businesses, one for municipalities and one for individuals. Some of the individuals provided some very interesting feedback.

We asked them what measures would improve their life and that of their family. It was interesting that 40% said it would be to end the mandatory restrictions and lockdowns and return life to normal, and 35% said it would be to lower the cost of everything from food to gasoline to utilities. Those were the majority of the responses we received.

We asked them what their expectations were in 2022. A full 72% said they hoped and prayed there would be an end to the perpetual pandemic that seems to be going in this country.

One of the other questions we asked was with respect to the inflation rate climbing to between 5% and 6% on essentials this last year and whether they had noticed that in their daily living. Of the responses we received, 92% said everything in their life was more expensive. The previous speaker, my colleague from Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, mentioned this as well, and it is very true. Individuals have indicated that significant increases in the price of food and gasoline continue to plague them and their households.

Many people reported that their mental health had been impacted during the pandemic, so we asked them what changes people had seen in not only their own mental health but in that of those around them in the past year. Surprisingly, 39.5% of individual respondents said their mental health has been declining, and another 32% said it has been declining significantly. To me, those are alarming numbers, indicating that we need to realize the significant impacts the pandemic has had on our mental health.

Further, we asked individuals if they, their family or friends had access to mental health supports. Thankfully, about 65% said they did, but 25% or almost 30% said they did not, which is alarming.

We asked them what the government should focus on to support long-term growth and jobs. Of the responses we received, 45% said agriculture, 53% said energy, 30% said manufacturers, another 30% said new technologies, and 16% said green technology and renewables. Tourism was at 18%, and 58%—and these are individuals—recognized the value of small business and said it should be the government's focus.

I will wrap up with this. Although the current government talks a good talk about what it wants to do for the economy, we can see that is having a negative impact on the people on the ground who are experiencing what is or is not happening with respect to the economy in this country. People are struggling to make ends meet. Everything is getting more expensive, and the carbon tax is exacerbating an already difficult situation.

I would like to thank the constituents of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, its businesses, municipalities and individuals for the great information they have shared with us and their perspectives on what they need from the government moving forward.

I look forward to entertaining questions.

● (1320)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is truly amazing that when the Conservatives talk about inflation, they often forget to mention that it is not unique to Canada and that it is happening around the world. If we compare Canadian inflation to the average inflation rate in the G20, Canada does well. Ours is lower. If we compare our inflation rate to that of the United States, again ours is less. Therefore, I find it somewhat disingenuous that the Conservative Party is providing a false narrative by saying that it is our government's policies that are directly causing inflation when in fact government policy is protecting and covering the backs of Canadians by ensuring we have jobs well into the future.

In hindsight, I wonder if the member is implying to Canadians that the money we spent on the wage subsidy and the CERB is money we should not have spent. Is that what the right wing of today's Conservative Party is saying today?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I am glad the member finally got to a question, rather than just his usual spouting off of rhetoric.

This particular government is responsible for the inflation in this country. It is easy for the Liberals to talk about it being a global problem and say we do not have to worry about it because it is a global problem. However, the policies of this government, in this time, are the ones that are directly responsible for the inflation we are experiencing in this country right now.

Take ownership. Live up to it. Develop some policies that will give people some hope moving forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-8 marks the first time we see the federal government interfering in the area of property taxes.

We moved just one amendment and tried to find a compromise to ensure that property taxes do not apply in a province without its consent. The Liberal chair of the committee ruled that the amendment was out of order.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of that.

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I am not familiar specifically with the issue that he raises with respect to the impact of property taxes and Quebec's desire to have a say in that area.

Our party certainly supports some provincial autonomy and the ability for provinces to make decisions on issues that impact them, rather than the "federal government knows best" policy. I certainly do not support any measure whereby the federal government imposes some of their measures on the responsibilities of the provincial governments.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have two comments and two questions for the member.

We know when we talk about Canadians filling up their tanks that the oil and gas companies have price-gouged Canadians for many years. It has been documented in many studies. They jack up prices far beyond what they should normally charge and they keep those prices high even when the price of crude has come down.

Does the member agree that price-gouging is not something that oil and gas companies should be doing to Canadian consumers?

My second question is around the transition to clean energy and the fact that the federal government plays a role in a just transition and making sure Canadians can go to electric vehicles, which are very much more cost effective.

Does the member agree with me that this would be an important initiative for the federal government to undertake?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner has one minute to respond.

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I hope to take the entire minute.

I thank my friend for his question. While we disagree on many fronts, I have always appreciated his approach and the depth of his questions and I know he cares deeply about his constituents.

It is important to recognize that in a fair market, we would hope that companies would be responsible to the consumer. We have seen in many different sectors, and not just in the energy sector, that this is not always the case. I do not have an easy solution to that issue. It is exacerbated by the government continuing to raise taxes at all levels, including excise taxes and carbon taxes on the price of fuel.

With respect to the transition to electric, I find it difficult when I see electricity generators being operated by diesel in many vehicle charging stations across the country. They are diesel-powered electricity generators. I find that ironic, quite honestly.

In my own riding, I could not travel across my riding in an electric vehicle without having to charge it a number of times if I wanted to get back home in the same day. I—

● (1325)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I have allowed the hon. member some additional time over the one minute, but there is no more time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I had no problem with my colleague continuing on. I appreciate my colleague from Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

It is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-8, the economic and fiscal update implementation act, 2021. I would like to thank the people of Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan for their overwhelming confidence in sending me to Ottawa to serve them as their member of Parliament. In my maiden speech, I recognized the sacrifices of my family. I would be remiss today if I did not recognize the team of volunteers who door knocked, canvassed, made phone calls and contributed to help get me here today so that true Saskatchewan values have a voice in this House and so that people from Saskatchewan can participate in Confederation and bring a voice of reason to this House.

I want to focus today on something that affects everyone daily but that the government seems to have forgotten about: the skyrocketing costs of living. Last Friday, Canadians got a rude April Fool's joke played on them in the form of a 25% hike to the carbon tax. This means that when I drove to the airport last night, the price of gas in my riding had gone up to $1.68 per litre. This came at a time when inflation had already hit a 30-year high of 5.7%.

The Liberals, when challenged on this issue, always compare us to other countries. I have just witnessed that. We are not here to compare ourselves to others. We are here to fight for the interests of our constituents. Just because inflation here is not as bad as it is in another country does not mean that it is good. The Liberals must address this and take responsibility for it.

Inflation is increasing the cost of everything, including groceries, housing and everyday essentials that Canadians rely on. How did the Liberals decide to try to help Canadians who are already struggling? It was by hiking their taxes yet again. The problem with raising the carbon tax is that it does not just target the cost of gas; it hits everything that is transported or harvested with gas. Essentially, everything we buy is affected. Raising the carbon tax even increases inflation. The Bank of Canada told us recently that the tax accounted for 0.4% of the latest inflation numbers.

A few weeks ago we, the Conservatives, offered a solution to these high gas prices. We proposed a motion to pause the GST on gas. Unsurprisingly, the Liberals voted this down. We are saying, and I have been saying since my maiden speech, that policy needs to be there and exist to help people, not punish them, and hiking the carbon tax during the current inflationary crisis is hurting Canadians. The least the government could do is postpone this tax grab.

The largest contributor to the global economy is the consumer. Those consumers in this case are citizens and taxpayers. Reducing their buying power actually slows down the global economy. This has created a bureaucratic cycle implemented by this Liberal government. How does this happen? The Liberal government taxes someone with one hand and then, with the other hand, gives the money back to them. That bureaucratic cycle costs the taxpayer their hard-earned dollars, because someone has to administer and oversee the tax.

● (1330)

This lost money should be used by consumers to purchase goods and services to support their own households. We see this in every policy that the Liberal government comes up with. It is like going to the carnival and seeing the giant pea and shell game. It is just moving money around. Everyone knows that this is a bureaucratic mess.

Leading up to the federal budget, we are hearing more and more about the number of big-spending promises that the Liberals have made to buy the support of their coalition partner, the NDP, such as national dental care and national pharmacare. On top of these pet NDP causes, we have the Russian invasion of Ukraine that is forcing the government to finally rethink defence spending. I am glad to see that the government is finally buying the F-35s that Stephen Harper, the former prime minister, agreed to buy nearly a decade ago, but it is coming at a higher cost and at a time when Canada will struggle to afford it.

As someone who has served in the Royal Canadian Air Force, increasing Canada's defence spending is something that I wholeheartedly agree with. However, times like this are why we need a prime minister who thinks about monetary policy. A leader who spent any time thinking about it would know that all of these big-spending promises cost Canadians.

The Canadian debt is skyrocketing under the Liberal government. According to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the national debt is now over $1 trillion. It is growing by $16 million per hour, and each Canadian's share of it is over $31,000 at this point in time.

My youngest daughter is six years old. We are spending money that her children will be paying back, and probably her grandchildren, too. We expect the government to set an example and be reflective of who we are as a society. We do not remortgage our homes to buy something for ourselves. We mortgage our homes to have a place to raise our families and to leave something to our children when we have paid it off: to leave a legacy. What legacy are we going to be leaving behind at this point? I talked about this theme in my maiden speech. It is our shared responsibility to leave something to our children and to future generations. Leaving them a trillion-dollar national debt is not what I had mind.

Last week, we debated another Conservative motion calling on the government to exercise any semblance of fiscal restraint in the upcoming budget. We voted on that and, unsurprisingly, the NDP-Liberal coalition voted against it. Let us not fool ourselves. Pierre Elliott Trudeau was a member of the CCF: It was the precursor to the NDP, prior to 1965. Now, this coalition is coming full circle and showing the current Prime Minister's true colours. It took this country decades to dig our way out of the debt that Pierre Trudeau left us. How many decades will we be cleaning up his son's mess for?

I would like to spend a bit of time talking about Canadian veterans. I sit on the veterans affairs committee, which has been studying the rising backlog of cases under the current government. The average wait times are bad enough, but they get even worse if people are francophone or female. Heaven forbid if someone is a female francophone. I expect we will see some mention of this in this week's budget; however, I know that it will not be enough to fix the lingering issues. The fact that we are planning to spend nearly a billion dollars on electric infrastructure just shows how out of touch we are, and that we are not focusing on veterans: that number is a sizable chunk of the entire budget for Veterans Affairs Canada that could be used.

I am concerned about the future of our country.

● (1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the tail end of the comments of the member opposite, I think we can do both. We can continue to support seniors, and in particular veterans, as the member referred to. We have seen huge investments in supporting veterans in recent years. We have reopened many, if not all, of the offices that the Stephen Harper era shut down. I also believe we can continue to move forward on the environment in green initiatives. We have seen it, and I look forward to seeing more of that in the upcoming budget.

Would the member not agree that we can move forward on both of those items in a budget?

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague bringing that comment forward. I think that there are obviously two components. Let us focus on them. Veterans in my riding are being challenged. They are suffering. Their pensions and buying power are being lost.

Another component has to do with green initiatives. I have said that policy should not be there to punish us. It should be there to help us. We have not seen that. We have just seen money going from one hand to the next hand. Someone, being the taxpayer, has to pay for that process. We are losing buying power because of bad policies.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague from Saskatchewan talking about the wait times experienced by francophone veterans and veterans of the Canadian Armed Forces in the processing of their cases. That fact really struck home. In my riding, one veteran has been caught up in red tape for a decade. To illustrate how ridiculous this situation is, he stated that if the government had put as much energy and money into solving his problem as it has put into constantly challenging his arguments, officials would probably have been able to help many veterans like him.

However, my question is about another matter. In Bill C-8, there is new interference in jurisdictions. We are used to seeing the federal government interfere in provincial and Quebec jurisdictions, in particular health care. This time, however, it is interfering in another jurisdiction, which is just as astounding. The federal government wants to meddle in municipal jurisdictions by getting involved in property taxation. Would my colleague like to comment on that? Does my colleague believe, like me, that the federal government is taking its interference a bit too far?

[*English*]

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments concerning Veterans Affairs and the challenges that francophone veterans are facing with the backlog. I find that unacceptable. If people have served in our forces, it does not matter if they are men or women, or English or French. They have served this country. They deserve and are entitled to fair treatment and fair service. I want people to please know that when we sit at committee, we will be fighting against that poor service and backlog. I am very disappointed that that is a challenge we are facing.

With regard to municipal taxation, I am a former mayor of the city of Moose Jaw. What happens is that the municipality gets 8% of tax revenue. That same taxpayer is paying 92% to the federal and provincial governments. Municipalities deal with cleaning garbage, paving roads, providing parks and all those essential things, as well as infrastructure required so that Canadians can get to their workplaces and have a healthy lifestyle.

There is overreach. We continually see an overreach by the Liberal government in everything, whether it has been the municipality tax or the Emergencies Act. It is always overreaching and always overstepping the mark.

● (1340)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here this morning talking about government spending again. Spending is something the government knows how to do very well, and it has been very actively spending taxpayers' dollars as it sees fit, as if it is the government's own slush fund. I am here to speak against Bill C-8, because some of that bill would actually do the exact same thing that has happened before.

Let us review what is going on in the Canadian economy as we speak today. Typical housing prices have gone from $345,000 to $810,000 in the biggest one-time gain of all time. Newly created government cash, $400 billion, was pumped into the financial markets, and a lot of that money went into high-risk mortgages at rates less than inflation. Those are concerns that Canadian taxpayers should have going into the future, because we are insuring a lot of those high-risk mortgages. We are seeing the price of food going up, and that is something I hear of quite often. The price of chicken, for example, is up 6.2%, beef is up 12%, bacon is up 20% and bread is up 5%. Those are old numbers. Those numbers are no longer relevant. We could almost double them today and that is what we would see when we go to buy things at the grocery store.

Inflationary pressures, not COVID pressures, are starting to become a major factor in what Canadians are facing moving forward.

We see the economies opening up here in Canada. Saskatchewan has been open for literally over a month and a half. Masking mandates have been removed and vaccine passports have been removed. Canadians are getting back to business, except for federal employees who, for one reason or another, decided not to be vaccinated or not to reveal their status. Those people are still sitting in unemployment lines or have been laid off or fired. It is really sad when we look at the history of these people and what they have contributed to our economy and to our civil service. These are penitentiary guards and other federal workers who have given their hearts and souls to their jobs, only to be told, because they did not release their medical status, that they were no longer needed or wanted.

It is amazing to lose people with that type of skill set and that experience at this point in time, in a situation where we have unemployment. People are demanding and looking for labour. The government is going to have a huge problem filling the shoes of those people who have left.

I think the government has forgotten history, and I am going to go on a trip down memory lane, just as I did last week when I was talking about our motion to look for a way back to a balanced budget. The government has not remembered the mistakes of the past. It has not talked to former Liberal members who went through the process of trying to actually balance the budget after they were told they had to.

Let us go back to the 1990s. Let us look at the situation in 1992 and 1993. All of a sudden, the warning signs were going off. We had inflation. We had gone through a period in the eighties when, if someone got a mortgage at 14%, they were excited. I can remember buying my first house. I was excited. I got a mortgage at 14%. Now, if I cannot get a mortgage at 2.5% or 3%, I am mad. That really tells us the difference between where we are sitting right now and where we are possibly heading again.

We saw rapid inflationary pressures. We were seeing oil and gas pressure. The Canadian economy was showing strides. If someone had a job, they were excited. When I was coming out of high school in 1984 or 1985, if I got a job at McDonald's I was taking it, because there were not a lot of jobs to be had. A lot of people flocked to university, just because they had no options other than continuing to go to school. There were no jobs to be had.

In 1994, Moody's investors lowered our credit rating. In 1995 and 1996, we had more people jumping on that and saying that Canada needed to do something, and in 1996 Jean Chrétien and finance minister Paul Martin had to go through the process of making decisions they did not want to make. They were decisions I hope no future governments will ever have to make. The federal government, for example, wanted to block transfers to the provinces. It cut health care funding substantially, compared with 1993 levels, and those levels did not return to normal, or 1993 levels, until 2004. It took that long to get things back in order so that we could actually start putting more money back into our health care system.

Basically, we saw a situation where people were looking at the economy and were in dire need, and there were just no financial resources there to help them out. We had spent the cupboard bare, and the government had to make all sorts of difficult choices, both at the federal and provincial levels, to pay back the excess of borrowing that happened in previous governments, such as the Trudeau governments of the early and late seventies. I do not want to see that repeated. I do not want to see that handed on to my kids or my grandkids. Hopefully I will have grandkids somewhere down the road.

● (1345)

We are spending a lot of money. We are seeing inflationary pressures and all sorts of instability around the world. We are spending our reserves, which we may need to save for another rainy day, like we did when COVID-19 first hit or when we had the great recession of 2008. At that time, we had the fiscal capacity to spend some money and strategically use it in such a way to advance our communities and help things that needed to be done get done earlier so we could get back to balanced budgets in 2015. Now we are seeing the government spending like crazy.

Part of it is okay. I have to admit that part of it is fine. Supporting people during the time of COVID-19 was important. We had to be there for people. I think all parties agreed with that. However, now as we get out of COVID and start looking into the future post-COVID, all of a sudden we have not learned a lesson and we continue to keep spending and spending. We have to wonder: What is the role of taxpayers? Are taxpayers really on board with this type of spending? If we go back to the last election, they did not vote for a coalition government. They did not vote for a new dental care program or a new pharmacare program. They did not vote for a coalition government. If we asked them that today, they would be totally against it, and it would have changed their voting habits in the last election.

When we look at the costs of these types of programs, one has to wonder: Who is going to pay for them? How are we going to pay for them? There are some options. If we want a dental care program or health care program, there are options to pay for that. One of them is to quit shutting down the industries that actually would pay for it, like the oil and gas sector, for example. We have the safest and most ethical oil and gas in the world. We just need to get it to market. By getting it to market, we would have royalties that could be used to keep our deficits low, pay for services like a dental care program, increase funding to health care and education and transition to a green economy, which is somewhere we all know we have to go. However, our transition is not going to be paid by royalties off oil and gas; it is going to be paid off with deficits and debt.

The Liberals call this investment. That is fine, but in the same breath, why are we borrowing money when we have the ability to raise the money? That is what drives me and a lot of Canadians crazy, because they see opportunities for the government to get this economy going and what does it do? It brings in regulations and policies that slow or shut it down. It brings in policies that are not being followed anywhere else in the world and it is putting Canadians through restrictions that nobody else has to face.

A classic example is the oil and gas regulations for the environment we have here in Canada, and our friend President Biden and the regulations he put in place. If he was so in favour of what we have done in Canada, why did he not copy us? Why did he not bring in our regulations? Why did he not bring in the exact same regulations we have here? Has he done that? Is he going to do that? The answer to that is no, because he will not risk the U.S. economy in light of what he needs to do in moving forward with electronic vehicles or the green economy. He is not going to throw that away. He is basically going to try to do both at the same time, which is what Prime Minister Harper was trying to do. He was balancing the economy and the environment together.

We can look at other sectors. If we talk to those in the manufacturing sector, they are saying we are losing manufacturing left, right and centre. They are saying nobody is reinvesting in Canada because it is too expensive to operate here in Canada. I was in the U.S. two weeks ago and had some closed-door meetings with some senators. They were saying the reputation of Canada being a great member of the supply chain is at serious risk. They were saying that we cannot seem to get it together and that we do not have the ability to be part of a supply chain anymore. They said we are great for one-off purchases, but if we want to part of and embedded in the supply chain, we need to improve our border efficiency, our reliability and our tax structure. Not all of these are federal problems; I will agree with that. Some of them are municipal and some are provincial. However, we need to get to work on them, and that is where we need to focus.

When we look at things we could be spending money on, things that could grow our economy and make things grow stronger, that would be wise to consider. More importantly, we need to be smarter and more proactive. Let us spend money where it is needed and required immediately, not chase new dreams and new structural deficits and debts that will leave our kids basically out in the cold, making the exact same decisions that Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien had to make. Even Ralph Goodale was part of that role.

I encourage the Liberals to talk to some old Liberals. I think a lot of the old Liberals, like Dan McTeague, would say, "What is this party?" [*Technical difficulty—Editor*] what the government has been doing. They would not endorse it. They would not say this is a prudent way forward. They have the scars of going through the 1995-97 cuts and have experienced that. Let us not make the same mistakes. Let us learn from history. Let us move forward and do it in a prudent, proactive way.

● (1350)

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, regarding Bill C-8 and, obviously, the significant impact it would have on our country and our fiscal situation, I would like to ask my colleague's opinion. The Liberals have an opportunity to vote in favour of a Conservative motion here this afternoon that would provide some important context to address some of the fiscal realities that our country is facing. I wonder if my friend and colleague could comment on that vote, which will take place just after question period.

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I think a lot of people are following this vote very closely because it sends a signal to Canadians about how, and whether or not, the government is going to act responsibly. Having a game plan on how we are going to pay back our debt or get to a zero deficit is not a bad thing. Having a strategy in place to say this is our focus as we go out of the COVID world into an economy that is possibly facing another global war with what we are seeing in Ukraine and Russia is probably a good thing. Actually making sure that we have our ducks in a row physically and financially is very important.

Canadians want to see that out of the government, but right now what they are seeing out of the government is confusion. They are seeing a lot of spending. They are seeing a lot of untargeted hyperopia on things the government wants to do moving forward, but nothing that really focuses on Canadians to actually set their families up for the future, and nothing that will prevent our kids from making the horrible decisions the Liberals made in 1995-96 because of the irresponsible spending before them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I am a bit surprised to hear him argue against dental care. I would imagine that getting reimbursed for dental care would save people in his riding a lot of money.

However, I would also suggest to him that, if we want to pay for new services, then we need to go and get the money where it can be found.

What does my colleague think about a special tax on the indecent profits being made by the big banks? They made $60 billion in profit last year, which represents an increase of 40% in just one year.

Why not tax the super-rich and corporations like banks that make outrageous profits?

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Madam Speaker, the hon. member makes an excellent point. One would think people in Saskatchewan want dental care, and yes, they do, but they do not want to burden their kids with all sorts of expenses they cannot afford. This is a structural change in government spending, so we need tax revenue, not just today but in the future, to pay for it. How are we going to do that? We just shut down the oil and gas sector and we just heard from the manufacturing sector that it is leaving, so what are we going to do? My suggestion, if we want a dental program and pharmacare program, is to maybe get the cash first. Maybe pay for it instead of financing it through deficit and then waiting for somewhere down the road to pay for it.

We talk about the big banks and the people who make tremendous amounts of money with their corporations. Proper taxation is very important, no question about it, but keep in mind that when a big bank makes money, what does it do? It pays out dividends. What do shareholders do? They reinvest it back into the Canadian economy. They buy things, or they borrow from the bank and use the money in their business to function their operating capital. If we want to have fair taxation rates for banks, let us talk about that; let us make that part of the debate. However, why not raise that money first before we start committing Canadians to a structural expense that they may not be able to afford?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, released a report this morning at 11 a.m. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about it.

For example, the report states that projected carbon dioxide emissions from existing and currently planned fossil fuel infrastructure exceed the total emissions that would limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. That is a big deal.

Furthermore, the IPCC calculates that, by 2050, the equivalent of $1 trillion to $4 trillion U.S. in fossil fuels must be left in the ground to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that.

● (1355)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, well, I have not seen the entire report so it is hard to comment, but with regard to his comments about fossil fuels and keeping them in the ground and emissions, let us talk about a few things. First of all, this is a global crisis, and where is the most environmentally friendly fossil fuel in the world? It is in Canada. If we want to shut down the Canadian industry, okay, shut that down, but it is going to get replaced because people are still burning fuel. What the Europeans found out when they could not get oil and gas from Russia is that they are still burning fuel, so where is it going to come from? It is the areas that are not environmentally friendly, which will actually increase the speed of carbon emissions in the world and provide cheap, dirty, unethical oil all over the world.

We have a choice to make, and it is a very clear choice. We can have energy security here in Canada, with a very safe, green, ethical fund growing in Canada's oil and gas sector, whether it is in Newfoundland, Alberta or Saskatchewan, or we can get oil from Venezuela or from third-world dictatorships like Russia. What do we want? We have to decide, because right now the decisions that are being made do not make a lot of sense.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague for Prince Albert has it right. Canada is the place where we should be investing. We should be harnessing the power of our energy sector to get clean energy to the rest of the world. Unfortunately, the NDP-Liberal coalition government does not understand that.

We know that this Thursday, the NDP-Liberal government is going to be tabling its 2022 budget. Quite frankly, based on the government's track record these past seven years, I expect it will again fail to meet the expectations and aspirations Canadians have for their future. For two long years, Canadians have been resilient, hoping to see a return to normal once mandates began to lift, lockdowns were lifted and Canadians were vaccinated, but instead, Canadians are struggling more than ever due to a soaring consumer price inflation rate, which stands at 5.7% today and is going up. In fact, the Governor of the Bank of Canada has suggested that it is going to get worse before it gets better, and Canadians have a right to be concerned. They see inflation at a 30-year high and skyrocketing housing prices, which have exacerbated the mess that our Liberal government has made of the economy.

Economists have been warning for well over a year that there was an inflation crisis coming, yet the experts in our government assured us that inflation was transitory and there was nothing to see here. Meanwhile, hundreds of billions of dollars in special stimulus, as the Prime Minister called it, was being pumped into our economy. Of course, those were taxpayers' dollars, and they were beginning to flood into our economy, with the excess cash driving the inflation rate and driving up the cost of everything.

The Conservatives had warned the finance minister that out-of-control borrowing and spending without a plan to return to balanced budgets and a plan to manage the massive debt the Liberal government was leaving behind would leave future generations of Canadians to pay for this mess, this huge albatross hanging around their necks, going forward. However, we understand why this has happened. It is because, as members know, the Prime Minister said that he does not think about monetary policy. For the leader of this country not to care about monetary policy and its role in driving inflation in this country is appalling.

When I have an opportunity to continue my speech after question period, I would love to elucidate and expand on those comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April is Sikh Heritage Month. My *bhaji*, back in 2019, brought in legislation that was ultimately passed unanimously by all sides of the House, recognizing the importance of Sikhism not only to Canada but around the world.

It is with a very proud heart that I say to people that April is the month in which we should be recognizing the importance from Sikhism from coast to coast to coast here in Canada. April 14 is a very special day. It is the day in which we celebrate Vaisakhi. At this time, I would like to wish everyone a very happy Vaisakhi.

I have been touched and blessed since 1988 when I was first elected to the Manitoba legislature, and I know the importance of Sikhism. I want to say to everyone, *Sat Sri Akaal*.

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● (1400)

SUPPORT FOR KORT FAMILY

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my community of Bay of Quinte was changed forever on March 19 when the unimaginable happened. On their way home from a family vacation in Florida, the Kort family was in a horrific vehicle accident. While driving home, they were struck by a cement truck. Jamie and Hannah are in critical care. Ethan and Pieter were badly injured. Maddie and Joni were taken from this earth into the arms of their grandparents who predeceased them.

Many have asked what they could do to help, and the community has come through for them. Over $482,000 has been raised by the Bay of Quinte community in just two weeks. While we do not know the specifics of this journey, we know the road ahead will be long and fraught with immeasurable grief.

Everyone's love, support and prayers are appreciated during this time by the family and by the community. Let us continue to pray for the Kort family and their recovery. On behalf of the community, I thank everyone for all the support to them in this time of unimaginable need.

RAMADAN

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year Muslims across the world take part in Ramadan. As we fast from dawn to sunset for the next month, we take the time to reflect on ourselves, our actions and our values.

Ramadan is a time of patience, empathy and compassion. It is a time when we grow closer to our families, friends and community. We open our hearts and strive to give back to our community through charity and volunteerism. We share these values as Muslims and Canadians who work every day to make our country a better place.

This year, for the first time in two years, we will be able to observe Ramadan together in the community, while still observing public health best practices. We will be able to join together in our local mosques for Taraweeh prayers and join our families for Iftar.

I invite all members to join me in saying to Muslims in Canada, *Ramadan mubarak. Ramadan kareem*.

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[*Translation*]

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the unspeakable images of bodies of men and women strewn across the streets of Bucha are a stark reminder of the horrors of war.

It is an affront to our humanity. The entire world mourns as we see these bodies strewn about, neglected, assaulted, murdered, and thrown onto the street. These are men and women who loved and were loved, lived, conversed and laughed just like we do. These people were brutally and horrifically killed.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I vehemently condemn the war crimes that have been committed in Bucha and elsewhere in Ukraine.

We must do more, we must move faster and we must do better. We have a sacred responsibility to help Ukrainians, even more so now that we know exactly what awaits them if we do nothing.

* * *

RAMADAN

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Muslims all over the world celebrated the start of the holy month of Ramadan this weekend. Ramadan is a time of spiritual contemplation with an emphasis on devotion, during which Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset as a way to get closer to God.

To the 20,000 Muslims living in Laval and to all Muslims across Canada and around the world, I wish you a blessed month. May this month of reflection and its lessons of compassion and gratitude permeate through the community and help make us all more open, inclusive and tolerant.

I very much look forward to sharing *iftars* with members of the community in Alfred-Pellan, whose community spirit, generosity and spirit of sharing enhance our cultural mosaic.

Ramadan mubarak.

* * *

● (1405)

[*English*]

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY NORTHUMBERLAND

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the great work of Habitat for Humanity Northumberland.

Back in March, I attended Habitat home dedications in Cobourg and Bewdley to celebrate the wonderful work they are doing in our riding.

Habitat for Humanity's mission is to break the cycle of poverty through their innovative home ownership program, which helps individuals and families in financially vulnerable situations build and buy quality houses. However, they do so much more than just build houses. They help build homes for families, which strengthens our community with every family and partnership.

A special shout-out goes to Meaghan Macdonald and her team for all the great work they do at Habitat for Humanity Northumberland. I thank Meaghan and I thank Habitat for Humanity.

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SIKH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, April is Sikh Heritage Month in Canada, when we celebrate the contributions and accomplishments of Sikh pioneers for their positive impact on our country.

This past weekend, I had the opportunity to attend the Sikh heritage society of B.C.'s annual opening gala in celebration of these rich historical and cultural contributions. I was inspired by speaking to many young leaders and hearing how proud they are to be Sikh and Canadian. These identities are not separate but rather forever intertwined.

For me, this is the essence of why Sikh Heritage Month is so important: celebrating past achievements to chart a similar path forward for the next generation.

Sat Sri Akaal. This translates to truth is the timeless one.

* * *

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mister Speaker, today I would like to recognize Greg White, who is a teacher, coach and leader in the Hespeler community. After 31 years of teaching at Jacob Hespeler Secondary School, Mr. White has retired.

He dedicated his personal and professional life to the betterment of the school. For years, he even hosted regular fundraising events alongside his best friend and colleague Mark Hatt in order to raise money for the school.

Later, becoming head of the physical education department, he transformed the fitness program and facilities to rival those of universities, let alone other high schools. While known to many as a coach, his influence did not stop on the field, as he pushed students to excel no matter their pursuit. Mr. White touched the lives of thousands in Hespeler, including my son Brad.

I ask the House to join me in congratulating him on his retirement and thanking him for working so selflessly to inspire the next generation of leaders.

* * *

MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

Mr. Damien Kurek (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, April is the Month of the Military Child. It is my honour to pay tribute to the unsung heroes who stand behind our women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Military families are often on the move and military children find themselves in unfamiliar territory, leaving friends, activities and schools behind. Their parents are often absent for prolonged periods of time, and countless holidays and birthdays are spent without mom and dad.

Having CFB Wainwright in my riding, I am witness to the reality of a life of service for the spouses and children of our women and men in uniform. They say that patience is a virtue, and military children have perfected that quality. They know how to wait. Military kids say more goodbyes in their first few years of life than most folks do in a lifetime.

If we know of a military child of a serving member, let us give them a hug and say thanks for sharing their loved one with the rest of Canada and, indeed, the world. God bless them for their service, sacrifice and strength.

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REFUGEES

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi will visit Canada.

In honour of his visit, I want to recognize all those individuals across the globe who have had to flee their homes, communities and countries due to political unrest, war, humanitarian crises, natural disasters and instability. Around the world, refugees fleeing Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria, Myanmar, Yemen, South Sudan and so many other places face uncertainty, despair, hunger and oppression.

Canada has a proud tradition of protecting those who are most vulnerable. In these difficult times, it is even more important that we continue to welcome those seeking refuge who wish to build a better life. We know that refugees put down roots in Canada and work hard to make this their home. They embrace Canadian values and they work hard to make our communities better. They come with experience, skills and an incredible resilience. They make Canada better. Their presence is a reminder of why it is so important for us to continue to uphold our shared values of compassion, pluralism, generosity and kindness, because this benefits each and every one of us every day.

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● (1410)

BUSINESSES IN THORNHILL

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I joined the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and some businesses in my riding for a very frank discussion. With Canadian families facing record-high inflation, a skyrocketing cost of living and a growing housing affordability crisis, businesses in my riding are feeling the squeeze, labour shortages and a supply chain mess. The only thing on the rise for them are costs.

They want to see real solutions and a meaningful plan from the government to fight the inflationary pressures, to get Canadians back to work, to attract capital, to support innovation and to do something, anything, about the regulatory hurdles that they face.

The only consistent thing I hear from businesses at home, from those building the transformers that power our lives to those who build the medical devices that might save them, is this. They all say that it would make more sense to leave. They want to see a plan for growth with targeted investments to boost our productivity and improve our competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Thornhill punches way above its weight when it comes to building great companies and I want to keep it that way.

* * *

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the honour to speak in support of Bill C-224 in the House, a bill that recognizes the importance of bringing awareness to certain types of cancers that firefighters face each and every day. As a former firefighter, I want to thank the brave men and women who protect us all. We appreciate everything that they do to keep our families safe.

It is hard for us to say goodbye to friends that we have lost and perhaps even tougher to say goodbye to someone like my friend, Darrell Ellwood, who passed away on Christmas Day 2011 from cancer and was laid to rest on January 14, 2012. Darrell's story is one of far too many, a life taken far too soon.

To the International Association of Fire Fighters, I say I will continue to work vigorously in the House to ensure that those who have sacrificed so much, whose spouses and families have lost so much, are not lost in vain.

[*Translation*]

BATTLE OF VIMY RIDGE

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to mark the 105th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. On April 9, 1917, soldiers from across Canada, including the two Nova Scotian battalions, the Nova Scotia Highlanders and the Nova Scotia Rifles, fought in the first battle of the Great War, in which four Canadian divisions fought side by side and accomplished something other allied forces had failed to do: capture Vimy Ridge.

However, this victory came at a very high price with the loss of more than 10,600 Canadians. I was extremely proud to represent Nova Scotians at the 2018 ceremonies in Normandy, where I gave them our flag and placed our wreath.

I invite all Canadians to join me in commemorating the Battle of Vimy Ridge.

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[*English*]

NATIONAL DENTAL CARE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, April is Oral Health Month and today marks the beginning of National Dental Hygienists Week. This week's theme, “Oral Health for Total Health”, reminds us that taking care of our mouth, teeth and gums is critical to our overall well-being. However, despite clear links between poor oral health and serious medical conditions, over 35% of Canadians have no dental insurance and seven million people avoid the dentist every year because of the cost.

After decades of advocacy, New Democrats are proud to have secured an agreement with the government to deliver a national dental care plan, starting with low-income Canadians. Coverage will start for children under 12 this year, expand to those under 18, seniors and persons with disabilities next year and be fully implemented in 2024.

This Oral Health Month, let us celebrate and work together to make this long overdue primary health care a reality for all Canadians in our country.

● (1415)

[*Translation*]

YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Oscars gave talented Quebeckers in the film industry their due, and now the Grammys have recognized our music industry stars. Yesterday, Montreal orchestra conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin picked up the Grammy for best orchestral performance for the Philadelphia Orchestra's recording of Florence Price's Symphonies Nos. 1 & 3.

This honour reflects well on our institutions, which are able to see their excellence recognized, institutions such as Montreal's Conservatoire de musique et d'art dramatique du Québec, where Yannick Nézet-Séguin studied. Just as important is the culture. This award is the culmination of a respectful, firm approach that inspires the best musicians in the world to give their all with a smile. It is a breath of fresh air in the classical music world.

With humility, Mr. Nézet-Séguin reminded us yesterday that much of the credit for this victory goes to the late composer, Florence Price, the first African-American woman to win a Grammy for a classical composition. Mr. Nézet-Séguin produced an outstanding classical work and demonstrated outstanding class.

On behalf of all Quebeckers and the Bloc Québécois, congratulations to Yannick Nézet-Séguin.

* * *

[*English*]

UKRAINE

Mr. Larry Brock (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Ukrainian army liberated the Kyiv region from Russians, yet nobody celebrated, as the world was shocked by the atrocities and crimes against humanity by these modern-day fascists in Europe.

Ukrainian armed forces, joined by journalists, recorded hundreds of civilians murdered right on the streets of Bucha. Many had their hands bound and were shot in the back of the head. Women were raped in front of their kids and the streets were mined. The bodies of tortured, burnt and murdered children, men and women who refused to obey were found in mass graves, sewage systems and ditches.

The world has not even seen the whole tragedy that is going on in Mariupol and other cities that are still under Russian occupation. This is genocide. This is the massacre of free people in the 21st century. Nobody can say now that it is Putin's war and that he is the only one responsible. The horror in Bucha is the real face of Russia.

Let us not forget the people of Ukraine who did not surrender and died for their freedom.

Vichnaya pamyat.

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SRI LANKA

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sri Lanka is facing the most serious financial crisis in its history. The corrupt regime led by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa is in the final days of governing the failed state. The entire cabinet of ministers has resigned, save and except for Mahinda Rajapaksa.

This is the beginning of the end of the Rajapaksa family. The brothers stand accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. As the state seeks a bailout from the International Monetary Fund, it is essential that funds given are not used to support the oversized military with a history of rights violations.

If Sri Lanka is to move forward, it must severely curtail its military spending, return lands to Tamils, repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act and release all those being held under the act, ensure accountability for international crimes, account for the disappeared and ensure that there is a just political solution that recognizes the inherent right of Tamils to self-determination. Anything short would lead to ongoing instability and chaos on the island.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

FINANCE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as prices soar, government debt climbs and Canadians suffer through the worst inflation in 30 years, many observers are saying the Liberals have lost their way. Instead of presenting a responsible budget on Thursday, these NDP-Liberals are going to be spending outrageous amounts of money on big permanent programs, and that means more debt and more taxes.

Is there anyone left on the Liberal side who would like to see a responsible budget, or have they all turned into closet NDPers on that side of the House?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives continue to ignore the facts. Our GDP grew for the eighth consecutive month. We have recovered 112% of the jobs lost to the pandemic. In 2021, we saw Canada's largest annual trade surplus, at $6.6 billion. Households, on average, have more savings than debt, and S&P and Moody's have reaffirmed our AAA credit rating. Those are the facts.

● (1420)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under previous Liberals like Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, there was a sense of fiscal responsibility among their ranks. My, how the current Liberals have changed. Even former finance minister John Manley said, "Tax and spend is not a growth agenda." We agree with him.

Canadians want a responsible budget that will deliver tax relief, not cost Canadians more. Will the Prime Minister listen to some reasonable people in his party, abandon his NDP ways and present a responsible budget?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after campaigning on a deficit of $168 billion, the Conservative opposition continues to flip-flop. On Mondays it wants do more for seniors. On Tuesdays it wants to cut the CPP. On Wednesdays it wants to do more for small business. On Thursdays it wants to block Bill C-8.

If the Conservatives want to help small business, farmers, teachers and Canadians, they can do the right thing and support Bill C-8.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Candice Bergen (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he sounds like the NDP to me.

Canadians deserve a break. They need a break. Conservatives have been asking for a solution to give them that break, like a GST holiday on fuel or an end to the ineffective and expensive carbon tax. We have been asking for practical things to help Canadians, but the NDP-Liberals keep saying no. Are there any Liberal MPs on that side who believe that Canadians deserve a break, or have they all turned into NDPers who believe the left-wing dogma that if it moves or breathes, it must be taxed?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our record is clear when it comes to supporting the most vulnerable Canadians with the cost of living. Today we announced the implementation of a program that will provide high-speed Internet at $20 a month for low-income seniors and families. We introduced the Canada child benefit, which is indexed to inflation and lifted almost 300,000 children out of poverty. Our increases to the GIS have helped over 900,000 seniors. From 2015, when we formed government, to 2019, we raised 1.38 million Canadians out of poverty. That is real progress for the most vulnerable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are only days away from the very first NDP budget. The NDP members have won. Unfortunately, there are no fiscally responsible Liberals left in this government. Gone are the days of hearing a Liberal finance minister like John Manley say that tax and spend is not a growth agenda.

What is the point of the Liberal Party if it is willing to sacrifice its values and our country's future just to implement an NDP agenda?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our agenda and our plan are clear.

Here are the facts. Our GDP has increased for the eighth consecutive month. We have recovered 112% of the jobs lost during the pandemic, specifically 3.4 million jobs. In 2022, Canada posted its largest annual trade surplus since 2008, totalling $6.6 billion.

The reality is that the economy is growing, and the Conservatives do not like that. Those are the facts.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, spoken like a true New Democrat.

The fact is that young families are seeing their dream of home ownership turn into a nightmare. Inflation is at its highest in 30 years. Everything we buy costs more.

What is the Prime Minister's priority in this Thursday's budget? It is to please the NDP with a long list of new permanent spending so that he can stay in power until 2025. Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin or John Manley never would have dared to sacrifice their party like that. It cost only 20 or so votes to buy Liberal values.

Why are all the Liberal MPs staying quiet when Canadians need a bit of breathing room, not new taxes?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague across the way for reminding Canadians how fiscally responsible the Liberal Party and our government are and how the Liberals under previous governments and under this government have focused on the most vulnerable people in Canada.

We brought in the Canada child benefit, which has helped lift 300,000 children out of poverty. We have supported more than 900,000 seniors. Today, we brought in a program to provide access to $20 tests for vulnerable individuals.

* * *

● (1425)

HEALTH

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all health care professionals are now calling for a public summit on health care funding, which would bring together the federal government, the premiers of Quebec, the provinces and territories, and all parties concerned.

The entire health care community is tired of the shortfall in federal funding, which is negotiated piecemeal and, especially, by playing hardball behind closed doors. The entire sector wants a permanent and unconditional increase in health transfers.

Health experts are the ones who actually provide care to people. Will the government convene a summit to hear them out?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the member in thanking and congratulating all health care workers in Quebec, who have worked so hard over the past two years to protect us against COVID-19.

Thanks to the extraordinary co-operation of all levels of government, we collectively saved tens of thousands of lives and tens of billions of dollars in revenue for families and small businesses. We are very proud of this result. We will continue to work hard together to continue moving forward.

Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, Quebec's general practitioners, specialists, hematologists, oncologists, nurses and other professionals in the FIQ, professionals and technicians in health and social services, the FTQ, the CSQ, the CSN, the CSD, and the APTS all called for a public summit on health care funding. They have all had enough of the government's disregard for health transfers, and they criticized the government for always providing one-time contributions with conditions.

When will a summit be held?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government has invested a total of $63 billion over the past two years to support all of the amazing work that my dear colleague just spoke about.

This $63 billion was invested to protect the health and safety of workers and residents, and the outcomes we have seen have been extraordinary, especially compared to what might have happened under another government or in another country. We are very proud of the results. We also look forward to continuing to work together in the coming months and years.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, another IPCC report, another clarion call.

Humanity has less than three years to reverse the current greenhouse gas emissions trend in order to ensure the planet's viability. We have to cut current emissions in half by 2030.

We need urgent action, but the Liberals' plan is not good enough. They are counting on technology that does not work, and they are still pouring billions of dollars into fossil fuels. We are not going to hit these targets by increasing fossil fuel production.

Will the Liberals put an end to oil subsidies and invest in clean energy for our children's future?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his question.

As he is well aware, we committed to ending fossil fuel subsidies, including those for Crown corporations, by 2023, which is two years earlier than all of our G20 partners.

Last week, we announced $9.1 billion in new money on top of the $100 billion our government is already investing across Canada to make this country a global energy transition leader.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today's IPCC report tells us we are racing toward a climate disaster. Worse still, we know what needs to be done and we have the tools, but the government is failing to act. There is no time left to delay, but the Liberals' emission reduction plan is far from what is needed. They continue to hand out billions of dollars to big oil and gas instead of scaling up renewables and supports for workers.

The world's top scientists are clear: It is now or never. Why is the government acting like there is no emergency?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, we are very seized with the emergency, which is why we presented the most ambitious, transparent and solid climate change plan we have ever seen in this country.

Do not take it from me. Take it from Greenpeace. Take it from Équiterre. Take it from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Take it from Andrew Weaver—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: I was having trouble hearing, so I will let the minister back up to answer that one.

● (1430)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I was having problems hearing my own voice.

Our plan is such a good plan that organizations such as Greenpeace, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I want to be able to hear the minister's answer.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that Andrew Weaver, an IPCC scientist and ex-leader of the B.C. Green Party, said that with the plan we tabled last week, Canada reclaims its status as an international leader on climate change. Do not take it from me; take it from him.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians are facing sky-high inflation, which has led to higher grocery and gas prices, and a housing affordability crisis, they want real solutions from this government. They want a plan to fight the skyrocketing cost of living that has left so many behind. Another budget with an avalanche of spending will only fuel inflation, leaving future generations with more deficits and more debt to repay.

I ask the minister this: Will the government's upcoming budget present a plan to fight inflation, grow our economy and return to balanced budgets?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition is raising the issue of affordability, so let us go to the facts.

Our government lowered taxes on the middle class and raised them on the wealthiest 1%. Conservatives voted against that. We created the Canada child benefit and indexed it to inflation. The Conservatives voted against that too. We provided seniors 75 years of age and over a $500 payment last summer. The Conservatives voted against that. They voted against Bill C-2, and they are on track to vote against Bill C-8. Why do they not just double down on affordability and vote with us on Bill C-8?

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister.

Money does not grow on trees. Virtue-signalling does not feed people or put gas in their car, and it does not buy a home. What Canada needs is a plan for growth with investments in jobs and productivity. We need a budget that has a real debt management strategy with a firm fiscal anchor and a clear path to returning to balanced budgets.

Will the upcoming spend-DP-Liberal budget include a plan to control inflation, a strategy to grow our economy and a return to balanced budgets?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I can share with the member opposite is a real plan to grow our economy. In every province and territory across this country, families now have access to reduced child care fees. In fact, if women across Canada choose to enter the workforce at the same rate as women in Quebec did 25 years ago, that is 240,000 workers in this country able to join the economy and able to grow the economy.

We are committed to fiscal responsibility, and we will do just that.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the former parliamentary budget officer indicated that this is not the environment in which we want to do deficit spending. The economy is in recovery, and unemployment is low, while the Bank of Canada is struggling to deal with inflation we have not seen in 30 years.

Does the Minister of Finance realize that additional spending risks making inflation worse, yes or no?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will remind Canadians and opposition members that they campaigned on deficit spending of $168 billion.

Our fiscally prudent plan, which will be revealed in the budget later this week, will continue to not only make investments in Canadians but also set us on a very prudent course for the future.

Our GDP is now above prepandemic levels. We have recovered 3.4 million jobs. We came into this crisis with the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, and after investing half a trillion dollars in Canadians, it is still the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess if everything is so good, why do we need to keep spending?

The government's only answer to every problem is to spend more money, but now the chorus of warnings is growing. Just last week, Scotiabank said that spending commitments undermine the government's ability to tackle inflation. Even Stephen Poloz and a former Liberal finance minister agree that now is not the time for stimulus.

For a government who claims to listen to the experts, why is it burying its head in the sand when it comes to inflation, out-of-control spending and affordability?

● (1435)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the opposition clearly does not understand is that it is important for us to support Canadians when they need that help. In fact, in 2015 we brought in the Canada child benefit, and the Conservative Party voted against it.

We have also brought in universal, affordable and accessible quality child care across the country, and what did that opposition party say? It said that it would get rid of it, if it were elected. Thank goodness it was not elected because we have Canadians' backs, and we will continue to do so.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, food prices are going up, rent prices are going up, gas prices are going up, yet this government is doing nothing.

What is worse, as a result of the new NDP-Liberal alliance, on Friday, taxes went up. That is the legacy of this NDP-Liberal government.

My question for the Minister of Finance is very straightforward. Will she rise in this House, look Canadians straight in the eye and assure them that she will do everything she can as the Minister of Finance, specifically control spending, at the very least, to reduce inflation for Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that Canadians look at the facts because the Conservatives certainly are not.

Under our plan and our program, a single mother with two children will receive $13,600 from the Canada child benefit, an average family in Saskatchewan will receive nearly $1,000 in carbon tax rebates, and a student will save more than $3,000 thanks to the changes we have made to the program.

This is a plan that allows us to tackle affordability, and that is what we will continue to do on this side of the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are missing in action again.

[*Translation*]

In Quebec, there is a great expression about governments "having both hands on the wheel". That is a great political expression in Quebec.

Unfortunately, what are we seeing with the new Liberal-NDP government? There are two people driving the truck.

What is the result? There are two left hands on the wheel to steer left, and there are two right hands to dip into taxpayers' pockets. That is the new NDP-Liberal government.

Could the Minister of Finance be clear and at least tell Canadians that they are going to control spending?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all this time, the Government of Canada has been there for Canadians with respect to the environment, families, seniors and the regions. These are issues that many former Liberal prime ministers supported, including Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin and Jean Charest.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives have been sliding further and further to the right. Why would we need a Conservative Party when we have Maxime Bernier's party?

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, Quebec's health care workers joined the Bloc Québécois in calling for a public summit on health care funding.

The men and women who take care of us have been telling us about the consequences of federal underfunding for a long time, but government after government has failed to listen. The pandemic exposed those consequences in the most tragic way possible.

Today the health care community wants to be listened to. They are calling for a public summit to talk about a major, sustainable, no-strings-attached health transfer increase.

My question is very simple: Will the government give them what they want?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to our colleague for generously giving me the opportunity to add further information to the previous question.

Exactly 10 days ago, we announced $2 billion. That is an extra $2 billion, no strings attached, to help the provinces and territories clear the terrible backlog in surgery, treatment and diagnosis, because we know just how important this is to the provinces, the territories and all the patients who have been waiting for these surgeries for so long.

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for Ottawa to claim that it knows Quebec's and the provinces' health care needs better than they do is one thing, but how can it claim to know better than medical specialists, general practitioners, haematologists, oncologists, nurses, respiratory therapists, perfusionists, physiotherapists, orthotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and support staff?

I could go on and on and list all health professionals who today are condemning how the federal government funds health care.

Will the government invite them to a public summit to listen to them talk about their needs, rather than telling them what those needs are?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I once again sincerely thank my colleague. I will be able to add more information to the list.

One billion dollars is the sum we agreed to transfer to the provinces and territories just a few days ago. We are really looking forward to making an official announcement to all the provinces and territories.

That money will help take care of our seniors, who went through very hard times and suffered a great deal over the past two years. We know that the stress on seniors and patients was also a source of stress for all health care workers, who found it difficult to find the time and resources to look after our seniors.

We are very proud of this agreement, and we look forward to discussing it further.

● (1440)

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the people speaking out today are the women and men who care for others every day around the clock.

They want their voices to be heard. They know what they need, because that is their job. They are not here today to play partisan politics. They are here to be invited to share their experience at a public summit on health care funding.

The real experts want to tell us how to care for our people properly, today and tomorrow. Why not accept their offer?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank my colleagues for giving me a chance to talk about the $3-billion investment in mental health that is already allocated in our budgets. We look forward to being able to transfer that investment to the provinces and territories to help look after Canadians' mental health.

We know how much people's mental health has suffered, including that of health care workers who, over the past few months, have had a hard time doing their jobs because of challenges related to physical and mental health. We know how difficult it has been for them.

It is very good news that we are investing another $3 billion to help the provinces and territories.

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, promises of housing affordability are a complete joke under this government. For example, housing prices in Toronto are up over 36%. In Montreal and Vancouver, they are up over 20%, and in Calgary and Ottawa, they are up 16%. All of these urban centres are full of hard-working young people who just want to get out of their parents' basements.

When will the spend-DP-Liberal MPs join Conservatives and demand a real housing affordability plan that will actually help these young people and these first-time homebuyers?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish the hon. member had had a conversation with the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, who said that we should end the first-time homebuyer incentive, precisely the program that is meant to help Canadians access the dream of home ownership. He should have another conversation with the member of Parliament for—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am having trouble hearing the minister. I will ask him to start again with his answer.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that they talk about home ownership, but, every single program we have in place to help first-time homebuyers, they oppose it. They have actually said this publicly.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry wants to end the first-time homebuyer incentive. The hon. member for Calgary Centre spoke about his opposition to the measure to put a tax on foreign and non-resident homebuyers, and just recently the hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon tried to table the Conservative platform in the House, which did not contain the words “affordable housing”.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this minister continues to be obsessed by speeches given by my colleagues on this side of the House, so let me offer him another quote. Last week, Mortgage Professionals Canada said, “The government's well-intended...First-Time Home Buyers...program...is simply failing”.

It does not get clearer than that. Canadians do not want to co-own their home with the government, so when will the minister scrap this failed program?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we intend to move forward in increasing housing supply. We intend to move forward with enhancing the first-time homebuyers incentive. We intend to move forward to set up a first-time homebuyer tax-free savings account to the tune of up to $40,000, and we intend to turn more Canadian renters into homeowners through an innovative and groundbreaking rent-to-own program.

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a billboard in Toronto reads, “Can't afford a home? Have you tried finding richer parents?” As sarcastic as it is, it gets our attention on the out-of-control state of our housing market. The cost of housing under the government has doubled since 2015, and Canadians who are lucky enough to own a home pay almost 50% of their income to service their mortgage.

Does this minister have a plan for anyone without a trust fund trying to buy a house in the country, or is it just the CMHC bonuses that get his attention?

● (1445)

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. member should speak to another colleague, the member for Simcoe North, who said that the government should not be in the business of helping Canadians access their dream of home ownership.

What kind of party is this that it cannot get its story straight? One day they talk about affordable housing, but it is not in their opposition motion or their Conservative party platform. They talk about first-time homebuyers, but they voted against that. They talk about the first-time homebuyer incentive program, but they speak down about it all the time. They have no credibility on this issue. We will do everything possible to make sure that every Canadian can have access to a safe and affordable place to call home.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, women and children are being brutally murdered in Ukraine. Three hundred bodies have been discovered in a mass grave in Bucha, and more civilian bodies have been found in the street. Women, children and seniors have been senselessly murdered. There have been reports of sexual violence perpetrated by Russian invaders against women and children as young as 10. There is evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity everywhere.

We need to do everything we can to stand up for human rights in Ukraine and around the world. Will the government call for Russia to be removed from the United Nations Human Rights Council?

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I speak with all members of the House to express the outrage, sadness and horror we feel as we watch scenes of civilians who have been killed in Ukraine. Let me be very clear. We believe these amount to war crimes. We believe these amount to crimes against humanity, and we will continue to take every step possible to hold Russia accountable for these crimes. We will go to the International Criminal Court. We will go with Ukraine to the International Court of Justice. We will stand with the people of Ukraine.

TAXATION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians are struggling to keep up with the rising costs of groceries and housing, the six largest Canadian banks recorded a profit of over $5 billion in the last quarter. The Liberals are doing nothing to force these corporations to pay their fair share. CEOs are lining their pockets while people are struggling to pay rent.

The Liberals must make a choice to stand with the majority of Canadians or with their billionaire pals. When will the Liberals make billionaires pay by implementing a 3% surtax on their excess profits?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to asking those who prospered during the pandemic to help a little more for those who did not. Our platform committed to raise corporate income taxes on the largest, most profitable banks and insurance companies and to introduce a temporary Canada recovery dividend because these companies have recovered faster. We are also working to implement a global minimum tax, and 136 OECD G20 framework members have already signed up.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regulations act as the rule book for how businesses operate, and protect consumers, the environment and our health and safety. Over time, regulations can accumulate, become outdated and result in barriers to innovation and growth.

Could the President of the Treasury Board update the House on how the government is modernizing our regulatory system to improve Canada's ability to attract investment and growth-oriented businesses?

Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hard-working colleague for Fleetwood—Port Kells for the question. Our regulatory system needs to be more efficient and less burdensome while maintaining protection for consumers, health and safety, and the environment. The government tabled the second annual regulatory modernization bill. It would reduce the administrative burden for businesses, simplify overly complex rules and let us do more online. It would support our economic recovery by helping businesses do what they do best and would make it easier for Canadians to get things done.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP-Liberal minister can try to sidestep the economic woes the government's high-tax, high-inflation policies are placing on new Canadians, but they know the truth. It is why, when asked why they would not recommend Canada to future immigrants, the top two reasons were current government leadership and cost of living.

We are in a labour crisis, and the government's fiscal policies are not helping. Will the NDP-Liberal minister fix the fiscal policy mess so that Canadians and new Canadians are not driven out?

● (1450)

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would caution the hon. member as she seems not to be aware of the fact that Canada has one of the best fiscal positions of any developed economy in the world. We entered this pandemic with the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of any G7 country, and our AAA credit rating has been reaffirmed by major credit rating agencies.

I would point out as well that Canada, this year for the first time, has actually ranked first globally as the world's top destination of choice for newcomers who are thinking about leaving their country of origin. The measures that we have been putting in place are making a positive difference to our economy, and we are going to continue to make Canada the most welcoming place on earth for those who wish to seek new employment opportunities.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to repeat the question.

When newcomers are asked why they would not recommend Canada as a destination to other potential immigrants, 43% blame current government leadership and 35% blame the cost of living.

Will the NDP-Liberal Minister of Finance commit to cleaning up her suffocating and inflationary tax policy, which is such a mess that many Canadians, even newcomers, are considering looking elsewhere?

[*English*]

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting frame that the member uses when she puts it on the floor of the House of Commons.

If we asked the group of workers around the world any country they would like to come to, to explore new economic opportunities, the number one choice they would make is Canada. This is something we should be extremely proud of. Canada is winning the global race for talent. The only question I constantly ask myself is how we can increase the margin by which we are winning.

We know we have created economic conditions that are not only seeing our economy rebound, with more than 112% of the jobs lost during the pandemic coming back, but we have many job vacancies for newcomers to fill, which sustain work for them and—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hearing the commentary today, I think there is one thing all British Columbians can agree on, irrespective of party, and that is that the Government of Canada has a role to play in helping to rebuild British Columbia.

In this week's budget, can the government let us know whether there would be additional funds on top of the $5 billion for dike infrastructure, road repair, and first nations emergency management and supplies? British Columbia needs it. Will the government be there to help rebuild my province?

Hon. Bill Blair (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his advocacy on behalf of his constituents.

Right from the beginning of the terrible floods that took place in British Columbia, we have been there. We have been working with the people of British Columbia, with the provincial government and with local authorities as well. We have already committed $5 billion to that rebuild, and the work is ongoing with municipalities, the people impacted by the floods, the province and indigenous communities in order to make sure the federal government would be there for the people of British Columbia.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Richard Lehoux (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, supply-managed producers and processors in the egg, poultry and dairy sectors are still waiting to hear the details of the compensation the government promised.

There have been major concessions made and conditions imposed on Canadian businesses, and we need to protect our food sovereignty and ensure that our farmers and food processors are properly compensated following the implementation of CUSMA.

Will budget 2022 finally include funds to compensate supply-managed sectors affected by CUSMA, yes or no?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is well aware that we have already committed to providing $2 billion to dairy producers as compensation for the agreements with Europe and the trans-Pacific region. They already know how much they will be getting next year, in 2023.

As for our commitment in terms of CUSMA, the agreement with the United States and Mexico, we will provide all the details during the first year.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to this morning's IPCC report, we have three years to save the planet. Our greenhouse gas emissions must peak within the next three years and then fall by 48% by 2030.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change tabled a plan last week, but despite his promises to the contrary, it contains no targets for peak fossil fuel production or emissions.

We have three years to act, but the minister's plan is holding us back. Given the urgency of the situation, will the minister go back to the drawing board?

● (1455)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have here Canada's greenhouse gas emissions reduction plan, and on page 90, it says—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The minister is about to quote something from the plan. It is not appropriate for members to intervene during his answer.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Steven Guilbeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, on page 90 of the plan, it says that the oil and gas sector could reduce emissions by 80 million tonnes. That is the most ambitious target of any sector. It would be like cutting all of Quebec's greenhouse gas emissions combined.

Our plan is serious, it is solid, and it will enable us to meet our targets.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the IPCC report says that we have three years to reduce and cap greenhouse gas emissions. The UN Secretary-General even said, "Investing in new fossil fuels infrastructure is moral and economic madness."

That brings us to the new Bay du Nord project. This project is madness, plain and simple. The minister would be supporting an additional one billion barrels over 30 years when we have only three years to take action. This would completely shatter the credibility of the plan he presented last week.

Is Bay du Nord getting the green light or not?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my hon. colleague that our plan, which is based on projections from the Canada Energy Regulator, provides for increased production in Canada, but we are addressing greenhouse gas emissions.

Sabaa Khan, director general for Quebec and Atlantic Canada at the David Suzuki Foundation, said, "This plan has a better chance of success than any of Canada's previous climate plans".

Marc-André Viau from Équiterre said, "We welcome the emissions reduction plan because this is the first time that we have such a detailed strategy".

Diego Creimer from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Quebec chapter, said, "It was double or nothing, and the minister went for it. Ottawa has just invested heavily in our best ally: nature."

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last Parliament, the Liberals voted against a Conservative bill to introduce a carbon capture tax credit to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Now, the NDP-Liberals are agreeing with Conservatives about the technology's potential and are prepared to introduce such a tax credit themselves.

Why did it take the NDP-Liberals over a year to consider our proven Conservative solution to this environmental concern?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change is the greatest long-term threat to our country. It is an existential threat, yet we know that a market mechanism, and an important mechanism, is carbon capture, use and storage. Important investments were made in budget 2021.

We have put on the floor of the House the emissions reductions plan. It is an ambitious plan. It is an important plan, and we will continue to work with industry and all stakeholders to make sure that we get to where we need to be to save the planet and have good, long-paying jobs across the country.

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the International Energy Agency has stated that carbon capture, utilization and storage is the most near-term available technology to mitigate climate change. Deployment will amount to approximately 7% of the world's GHG reduction targets. Canada was at the forefront of developing carbon capture. Billions of dollars have been spent by industry and governments to advance the technology, making it a Canadian technology champion.

Will the government commit to ensuring that this environmental leadership remains in Canada, or will we see more inaction that will move more jobs to the United States?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to fight climate change, we need all available technologies, and that is exactly what our approach has been so far. In budget 2021, we committed to put in place a tax incentive for carbon capture and storage, which is in fact featured in today's IPCC report as a technology we absolutely need to tackle climate change.

We should not put all our eggs in that basket. It is part of our plan. Five per cent of our plan rests on carbon capture and storage, but we need to invest in transit. We need to invest in solar, in wind and in electrification. By doing all these things, we will get to our target.

● (1500)

Mr. Greg McLean (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources told delegates at the IEA meeting that he would be implementing a 45Q-type regime to capture carbon in Canada. The American 45Q tax credit has pulled investment away from Canada because it includes enhanced oil recovery, yet the same minister co-wrote an article saying that EOR should not be part of our carbon capture regime. There is one story for people who know what is required and another when pandering to special interests at home.

Which side of his mouth will the minister be talking out of now, and how many more jobs do we have to lose to the United States?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy that I have another opportunity to point out that the United States is also working toward renewables and toward cleaner energy. In fact, the U.S. secretary of energy, Secretary Granholm, specifically said the Biden administration was "aggressively investing in a wide range of clean energy technologies, which will grow our economy, create good-paying jobs, lower costs for American families, and combat the climate crisis."

Does that sound familiar? That is what we are doing right here in Canada. We are building a sustainable clean economy for sustainable jobs for the future.

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[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Prime Minister announced the Government of Canada's plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% by 2030.

Canadian farmers are on the front lines of climate change, and their efforts are essential to meeting Canada's climate targets.

To that end, the plan allocates more than $1 billion to the agriculture sector. Could the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food explain to the House how the agriculture sector will benefit from this new plan?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Châteauguay—Lacolle for her commitment to agricultural producers. They really are essential partners in our fight against climate change.

That is why our emissions reduction plan earmarks $1 billion to provide financial incentives to help producers adopt best practices for reducing emissions, particularly fertilizer emissions, to make clean technology more affordable, and to invest in research and knowledge transfer.

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so many small and medium-sized businesses in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove tell me that one of their biggest challenges is to find good workers with the skills and knowledge needed for today's economy. We know that many young people and new immigrants are anxious to get to work, but if the economy cannot produce the products, services and workers the economy needs, we have inflation.

When will the government realize its mismanagement of the economy is hurting so many Canadian businesses and workers?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to share with the House all the good work our government is doing to address labour shortages. This includes attracting talent from around the world to Canada, including additional measures announced today under the temporary foreign worker program. It is about investing in the next generation of workers through the Canada student loans and grants program. It is about maximizing workforce participation of workers who are in this country and ready to work, such as indigenous youth and persons with disabilities. It is about investing in things like child care, transit and housing so people can live and play near where they work. There are so many things we are doing that I will need another question.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Belden, a manufacturer in my riding, has been struggling with its expansion. It needs two engineering experts from India to train Belden engineers, machine operators and local installers. Work permits from India are taking well over a year in processing time. Belden is coming close to a standstill and layoffs are close.

When will the NDP-Liberal government finally take ownership of the unacceptable processing times and stop putting Canadian businesses at risk?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things that we have advanced to address processing times and I would point out that chief amongst them is an $85-million investment across five lines of business, including work permits that were included in the economic and fiscal update, which the Conservatives continue to delay.

In addition, we have hired more than 500 staff who are full trained and producing now. We are modernizing the way we do immigration with a new digital platform. I am proud to share that, in the immigration levels plan I tabled a few months ago, we have set the most ambitious course for immigration in the history of Canada, because we know it is good for the economy, it is good for jobs and it is good for our communities.

● (1505)

TAXATION

Mr. Tony Baldinelli (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on July 1, wineries in my riding producing 100% Canadian-grown wines will now be hit with the excise tax. This is the result of the government's failure to protect the sector and the 2006 excise exemption the Conservatives provided to allow the industry to flourish. To help mitigate uncertainty, the wine industry is asking the federal government to confirm it will not apply the excise tax to wine products bottled before July 1.

Will the NDP-Liberals commit to not taxing 100% Canadian-made wine products produced before July 1?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and value the great contribution that the wine industry makes to Canada and to the tourism sector. I can also say that for the craft beer industry, like other taxes and benefits, the alcohol excise duty rate is automatically adjusted each year to inflation, and this is the right approach. It provides certainty and predictability. It is to ensure the fairness of our tax system for all Canadians.

The increase is less than one-fifth of a penny per can of beer and there are specific measures taken into consideration when it comes to the wine industry. We are going to continue to support the industry. We are going to continue to support jobs across the country.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Afghanistan is dire. For the year 2022, the United Nations estimates that 24 million people inside Afghanistan require humanitarian assistance. This represents half of the population. The rise to power of the Taliban has made the humanitarian crisis much more important, especially for women and girls who are the primary victims of this situation.

Can the Minister of International Development inform the House of what Canada is doing to support the Afghan people?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for Laval—Les Îles for his strong advocacy for the Afghan people.

Afghanistan is suffering from a humanitarian crisis. That is why last week I announced that Canada is providing an additional $50 million, for a total of $143 million in 2022 to help support the people of Afghanistan. This assistance will be delivered through our partners and will provide life-saving assistance such as food, nutrition and medical support to the Afghan people, particularly women and girls.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, across Canada, declining habitat and years of poor management have put Canada's fish stocks at risk. Coastal communities and workers are feeling these impacts first-hand. They want to be a part of the solution to protect our marine ecosystems, but they are being left behind by a lack of support by the government.

Instead of fighting with workers trying to make ends meet, will the minister confirm that a fair transition plan for workers across Canada's fishing industries will be part of the budget?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly I will not be talking about what is in the budget, but what I will say is that we are very committed to growing our fish and seafood sector, which means having sustainable stocks. We are working on that as well as transitioning to bring more indigenous communities into being able to satisfy their right to fish, while working with the harvester community on this transition.

I will continue to be engaging with all of the stakeholders to have the best possible way forward.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I have received many emails from constituents calling for the government to support a "people's vaccine". The Prime Minister had joined EU leaders to pledge that future COVID-19 vaccines, developed with government support, would be for the global public good and be made available, affordable and accessible. That pledge appears abandoned. It is unacceptable that three billion people are still waiting for their first vaccine. Fighting COVID abroad fights COVID at home. It protects Canadians, small business and jobs.

Will Canada endorse the TRIPS waiver to permit the temporary global transfer of vaccine-making technology, as called for in a motion by the hon. member for Beaches—East York?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one thing that I can assure the member and the House is that Canada is doing its part in making sure that we provide vaccines for around the world. In fact, I was in Senegal and Ghana. In particular, in Ghana when I was there we received 300,000 doses of vaccines. We are working in partnership with the WHO and COVAX to make sure that the world gets vaccinated.

● (1510)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Twice today we heard different ministers claim Canada has the best debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. With the House's permission, I would like to table a report from the Library of Parliament showing we are actually third and have the 29th best in the OECD.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the hon member's moving the motion to table the document will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

* * *

EVENTS IN BUCHA, UKRAINE

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion. I move:

> That, in light of the horrific and appalling reports received from the city of Bucha, the House condemn in the strongest terms possible the crimes against humanity and war crimes perpetrated by Vladimir Putin, the Russian military and Russian-backed forces, and call on the government to:
>
> a) provide Ukraine further aid to defend themselves against Russian aggression;
>
> b) ensure instances of crimes against humanity and war crimes are documented and that Russia be held responsible for these crimes at the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice;
>
> c) provide desperately needed economic support to Ukraine, including the implementation of further severe economic penalties on the Russia regime and those supporting it, including even stronger trade restrictions and economic sanctions, and continuing to freeze the assets of Russian oligarchs and their families; and,
>
> d) report to Parliament on the progress of these actions as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the hon. member's moving the motion will please say nay.

Therefore, it is agreed.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

(Motion agreed to)

The Deputy Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I understand there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence in light of the events that occurred in the city of Bucha, Ukraine. I now invite hon. members to please rise.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL BUDGET

The House resumed from March 31 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 3:13 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 of the member for Abbotsford relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

● (1525)

[*English*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 54)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albas
Arnold
Barlow
Benzen
Berthold
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Carrie
Chong
Dalton
Davidson
Doherty
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Genuis
Godin
Gourde
Hallan
Jeneroux
Kitchen
Kram
Kurek
Lake
Lawrence
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lobb
Maguire
Mazier
McLean
Moore
Morrison
Muys
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
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Epp
Falk (Provencher)
Ferreri
Généreux
Gladu
Goodridge
Gray
Hoback
Kelly
Kmiec
Kramp-Neuman
Kusie
Lantsman
Lehoux
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lloyd
MacKenzie
Martel
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Morantz
Motz
Nater
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Reid
Richards
Rood
Scheer
Seeback
Shipley
Soroka
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Tochor
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Vien
Vis
Warkentin
Webber
Williamson

NAYS

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Anandasangaree
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Bachrach
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Beech
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Hardie
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Hughes
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Badawey
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Gaheer
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Hanley
Hepfner
Housefather
Hussen
Idlout
Jaczek
Jones
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Kelloway
Khera

Koutrakis
Kwan
Lambropoulos
Lamoureux
Lattanzio
LeBlanc
Lemire
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor
Maloney
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLeod
Mendès
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Miller
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Noormohamed
O'Connell
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Rodriguez
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Simard
Singh
Spengemann
St-Onge
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Martinez Ferrada
Mathyssen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McPherson
Mendicino
Michaud
Morrice
Murray
Ng
Normandin
Oliphant
Pauzé
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Powlowski
Robillard
Rogers
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Vandal
Vignola
Virani
Weiler
Yip
Zarrillo

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Before everyone goes, I would like to draw the attention of the House that today was the first vote called by our table officer, Danielle Labonté.

[*Translation*]

We congratulate her on a job well done.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*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 responses to four petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, entitled "The Impacts of a Ban on Certain Single-Use Plastic Items on Industry, Human Health and the Environment in Canada".

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

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in relation to the motion adopted on Thursday, March 31, 2022, regarding the situation at the Russia-Ukraine border.

The motion reads:

> That the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration report the following to the House: We
>
> (a) condemn the continuing attack on Ukraine ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin,
>
> (b) recognize that a growing proportion of the Russian people are bravely resisting and opposing this attack,
>
> (c) call on the Government of Canada to develop measures to support Russian dissidents, human rights defenders, and conscientious objectors within the military who are seeking to urgently flee Russia, while ensuring that necessary security precautions are taken.

● (1530)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, entitled "Integrity of Juno Beach Site".

FINANCE

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC) moved that the third report of the Standing Committee on Finance, presented on Monday, March 21, 2022, be concurred in.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to members this afternoon. I would like to mention that I am splitting my time with the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

The world is different now than it was just a year ago. We have an unprovoked invasion and war by the Russian Federation against Ukraine that threatens our global security and shattered peace in Europe, inflation is anything but transitory and COVID restrictions are lifting across Canada, giving hope to our nation that we can return to some normalcy. However, it is in this global context that we must consider the budget.

Our committee heard testimony from a number of witnesses about what they would like to see in this year's budget. The budget can provide some opportunities and can deal with some challenges that our country faces. There is no question that our government needed to provide unprecedented levels of support to Canadians and businesses during the early days of the pandemic. However, as pandemic concerns abate through our greater understanding of the virus, we must be prepared to evolve our approach to government spending.

Closer to home, Canada must put its own economic house in order so that we can respond to the changing global context. We have to re-establish Canada as a destination for investment, and supply the world with ethical, conflict-free energy. If we want to stop Mr. Putin's war machine, we must help our allies reduce their dependence on Russian energy by ensuring that our energy can reach global markets. Furthermore, we can create a secure North American energy market that uses all sources of Canadian energy, including renewables, traditional fuels and nuclear energy. That is how we will help defeat Mr. Putin.

At home, the number one issue affecting Canadians is affordability. At the grocery stores, at the gas pumps and at retail shopping locations, prices keep going up and up. Our purchasing power is shrinking faster than at any other point in the last 30 years. This is a silent tax that hurts the economically vulnerable and those on fixed incomes, such as seniors, the most.

There are several ways the government can address this, and we heard some of them at committee.

We can reform competition policies and help lower prices for consumers by increasing competition in key sectors, which includes banking, air travel and telecommunications. If we believe excess profits exist in these industries, the answer is not additional taxes to increase government revenues. Rather, consumers should capture these excess profits in the form of lower prices.

We should reform the one-for-one rule on regulatory burden. Instead of taking out a regulatory rule for every one we bring in, why do we not just cut the regulatory burden by 50% over five years? Let us be ambitious.

We can quicken the implementation of the beneficial ownership registry for Canadian corporations that look to the Canadian market to hide assets in the form of money laundering. Most of those laundered funds end up in real estate, which distorts our local real estate markets. Just last week, the Bank of Montreal indicated that in six years there has been a threefold increase in housing prices in Orillia, which is in my riding. How can we expect young Canadians to look at this country and think that home ownership is in the cards for them?

We need to focus on economic growth. We have seen an unprecedented growth in the size of government by every available measure, but at this point we must focus on the private sector to take advantage of the entrepreneurial spirit of Canadians. The government has seemed more interested in wealth redistribution than it is on underlying economic growth, and this must change. We do not need new superclusters or national consultations distorted by well-connected lobbyists and rent-seekers. We must create an environment where businesses of all sizes can thrive. Businesses that grow create jobs and pay taxes.

An overarching opportunity following the pandemic is the rapid deployment of high-speed Internet across all regions of the country, and that is very important to the people in Simcoe North. It is nice that, as we heard just today, the government might be subsidizing and working with those who are of low income so they can access high-speed Internet, but this really will not help those who do not have access to high-speed Internet in the first place.

● (1535)

Tax policy that penalizes success also drives investment away. It is not a surprise that in the year following the changes the government made to the marginal tax rates in 2016, the government received far less revenue than it anticipated. These short-sighted policies can drive businesses, jobs and tax revenues to other jurisdictions. This hurts Canada through lower tax revenues that are used to fund social programs enjoyed by all Canadians: health care, retirement security and, of course, education.

Furthermore, industry-specific tax policy is a very poor idea. The government should set a consistent rate applicable to all sectors. Capital can move freely across borders, and in some sectors, like financial services, companies can shift operations and profits to other jurisdictions. Additional taxes on oligopolies are only going to result in higher prices for consumers or lower levels of investment.

We must carefully understand the negative impacts of certain tax policy changes. For example, the luxury boat and car tax we heard at committee will only increase the sales of these products in foreign markets, notably the United States. This will drive investment, jobs and taxes out of Canada with very little revenue increase for federal coffers. My riding has one of the largest freshwater marinas in the world, plus another dozen or so other marinas. This is going to take jobs out of my community and will hurt the people of Simcoe North.

When it comes to fiscal responsibility, now is the time to make a new path. The Bank of Canada indicates that the economy is robust and is operating near full capacity, which means additional fiscal expansion will just create inflationary pressures. These warnings are coming from all corners of the country. It has been almost 10 years since the federal government underwent any serious scrutiny of its spending, and it is unhealthy for an organization of its size to go this long without reviewing its expenditures.

It is even more important now to rationalize our non-core expenditures to focus on priority areas, including our national defence. We must support our allies, such as Ukraine and those in NATO, and we need to be able to defend our Arctic sovereignty. Pulling forward defence expenditures to displace other planned spending is a sacrifice that Canadians are willing to make in the face of increasing threats from the Russian Federation.

Additionally, the government is going to see a windfall of revenue resulting from persistent inflation, higher-than-expected oil prices and, yes, higher taxes. These excess revenues should be used to reduce the size of the deficit or provide relief to Canadian families in the form of tax holidays. Significant deficit spending at all stages of the economic cycle will have a protracted impact on the fiscal sustainability of government finances. It will threaten our AAA credit rating, which is only going to drive up the cost of borrowing. We cannot continue to erode the country's fiscal position with no plan to rein in unnecessary expenditures. The ability of future governments to deal with the emergencies of their time depends on the responsibility of our government today.

We also must think about the overarching regulatory framework in the country with respect to financial regulation. We are still waiting for open banking regulations. We are still waiting for the government to get serious about innovation in the financial services sector. However, we need to consider asking our agencies to get back to basics. The emerging housing affordability issue and related financial system vulnerability expose serious concerns about the effectiveness of our regulatory system in Canada. We have agencies on one day saying one thing about the housing market, and on the next day, a different agency says the complete opposite. That cannot be left to continue. We also need to make sure we have the right people and HR strategy to attract those who have knowledge about the financial services sector to help us through this transition.

Finally, there are a few items I would like put forward that we heard at committee that the government should be considering.

We talked about high-speed Internet. We need to re-establish the Lake Simcoe cleanup fund. We have to fund the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. We have to implement a two-year ban on purchases of real estate by non-resident Canadians. Let us take the wind out of the sails of this red-hot property market. We have to follow through on the existing mental health and addictions commitments for an opioid addiction strategy. Finally, we need to ensure that we can introduce employee-owned trusts that will help our business owners transition business interests to employees. I hope we will make some headway on affordable housing and all kinds of housing in this budget.

● (1540)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member says that the Conservative Party wants to see us cutting taxes and cutting back on borrowing. I do not think the Conservatives understand developing a program of expenditures. I will use the example of child care. I know a national child care program is something the Conservatives do not support, but by providing that program, we are going to be growing Canada's workforce. Yes, there is a cost to government for it, but there is also a revenue stream being generated because we will be growing the workforce.

I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on that. Do members of the Conservative Party see any value in doing as we have done through the child care program? The government has made expenditures that will generate revenues, let alone many other benefits for Canadian society.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, the question is not whether child care is good or not. We had a debate in the last election about different child care policies. The question is, what are the priorities of the government? If it has so many priorities, then it really does not have any at all. If we want to talk about how to fund child care, we should not be taking on additional debt to fund operational costs of government. Why do we not just have an honest discussion about what is no longer working and where we can find the money to fund some of these programs?

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, one thing that we put in a supplementary report around this motion is that Canadians are within only $200 of being able to pay their bills, and fishers really comes to mind for me right now. Fish harvesters are absolutely being impacted by climate change. We are seeing in other industries that there is $360 million to help support those who have been impacted by climate change in the agriculture sector and in forestry, but we saw a cut of 60% for the salmon harvesters on the north coast and absolutely no support for those harvesters. They are not $200 away from making ends meet; they are actually well over $200 under making ends meet. Now we hear that crab harvesters are going to lose half of their quota because of really important reconciliation, which we support, but reconciliation should be shared by all Canadians, not just by a handful of fishers on the west coast.

Does my colleague agree that there should be money to support fish harvesters and fishers who are on the verge of bankruptcy?

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for talking about this issue again in the House of Commons.

Of course, it is very important that we think about our fish harvesters and those who are very close to insolvency. We absolutely need to be there to help those who are nearing bankruptcy. At the same time, there are Canadians across the country who are very close to bankruptcy, so when we talk about increasing the cost of living through higher carbon taxes or higher taxes period, it is going to push people closer to insolvency. Additionally, the Bank of Canada has said it is going to increase interest rates for the next number of meetings, so we can expect a much higher interest-rate policy. Where are families going to come up with the additional funds?

I think we should be talking in this place about how not to increase the burden on families and should really make sure we can support them in the way they need.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, the third recommendation in the report calls on the government to factor in population aging in the provinces and territories in the formula for calculating the Canada health transfer.

Just this afternoon, Quebec's entire medical community called for a health care summit to be held so that the federal government can consult with stakeholders and the provinces and territories. They are all calling for health transfers to be increased to 35% of total costs.

I expect to see this in the budget. Is that what the member expects as well?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Chambers: Madam Speaker, I certainly hope we can have an honest conversation about health care. The government campaigned in 2015 that the health care funding formula was broken. What do we have? We have the continued use of Prime Minister Harper's health care funding formula. It is time we have a good conversation with our provincial colleagues about that, and I look forward to hearing more about that in this budget.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to discuss this important issue. I want to thank my hon. colleague from Simcoe North for his great insights on this report from committee and follow up on one of the themes he touched on, which is affordability. This really is the greatest crisis facing Canadians this year.

The government has had a couple of mandates and is going into its seventh year. The member talked about how, if everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority. There was a time when the finance minister would be known as the "minister of no" because everybody has an ask at budget time.

Every community has an ask. I have a list of them from stakeholders in my community. As the shadow minister for health, I have heard asks from stakeholders. Everyone has an ask of the finance minister and the government, but we have to look at the full picture of what the greatest needs are facing Canadians today. That does not mean the asks people make are not important; it means we need to prioritize.

What are we looking at as a country? We have seen unprecedented amounts of spending over the seven years since the government came to office. During COVID-19 there were unbelievable and extraordinary amounts of money spent, some of which was absolutely necessary, but there was also other money spent that was questionable, at best, because the accountability was lacking. While all this money has been spent, and this week's budget is probably at the printing press today, if not already boxed up, the impacts of that document and those policies on Canadians will be far-reaching.

The member for Courtenay—Alberni, in questions and comments to my colleague, talked about the burden individual Canadians are facing with respect to their personal finances and that over half of Canadians are within $200 of not being able to pay their bills, with one-in-three Canadians being technically insolvent. That situation is not going to get any better when we know that increased prices at the grocery store are going to affect the average family to the tune of an extra $1,000 this year.

The policies of the government are driving up other prices as well. We know we live in one of the world's harshest climates. We are all very proud of our great country, but it is also really cold. Heating our homes is not a luxury. However, a tax has been put on home heating, which is making Canadians choose between heating their homes and providing nutritious food for their families.

That was already a tough choice before we had the pressures of an increased carbon tax. With natural gas up nearly 19%, it becomes an impossible choice. I have already talked about the increased food prices, but we know those prices are going to go up even higher. With the carbon tax that went up on Friday, the price of everything will go up.

These are really tough choices Canadians have to make between keeping the family warm or keeping it fed, to say nothing of being able to, in many parts of this country, put gas in one's car to be able to go to work, a medical appointment, a hockey practice or a dance practice. It has become unaffordable to even get there. Many people in my community are telling me they are unable to fill up the gas tanks in their work trucks on Monday mornings. They have to wait until they get paid by suppliers during the week, and are asking for money upfront because they cannot afford the increased gas prices.

● (1550)

They cannot carry it on their own. That is their livelihood for these contractors, who work in the community using their pickup trucks. This is true for everyone who relies on personal vehicles when they do not have public transportation. That is true for the vast majority of those in my community and those in the communities of many members in this place.

When the government looks at what the course is going to be for the next year, and very big spending commitments have been made with the fourth party in this House, its new partner the NDP, we have to wonder what that will look like for Canadians. What pressures is that going to put on affordability in their lives? It is incredibly stark.

When we talk about Canadians heating their homes and feeding their families, we presuppose that they have a place to live. More and more Canadians are not going to be making those choices about their own homes, and if they can find a place in competitive rental market, they are going to be renting homes. The dream of home ownership over the last six, seven years under the government has slipped further and further out of reach, again because of the policies of the government.

The government needs to think through what the implications are on the price of homes. Home prices have doubled during the government's time in office. What steps has it taken, aside from using the amount of money it spends as a metric of success instead of asking what it has done to make housing actually affordable for more Canadians? That is not the question that seems to be asked. We see how much it can spend to show Canadians that it has been in motion and, therefore, has made some progress, trying to confuse Canadians in the process.

Is there a path to balance that is going to be proposed in the budget on Thursday? What are the fiscal anchors? What certainty can Liberals give to Canadians that there has been some temporary pain, but there is a path back to the same type of budgeting that we have to exercise in small businesses, our homes and personal lives, something that is sustainable, because what we have seen is not sustainable?

I touched quickly on the expenses that the government has taken on during COVID-19. One that was in the news this weekend was the money spent on the Covifenz vaccine made here in Canada. The government spent $173 million on this, but we are not going to see it going to COVAX this week, and we are not going to see it as a recognized vaccine that Canadians can receive and then travel internationally. We are not going to see that this week.

Why is the $173 million that Canadians spent on this not going to be worthwhile for them? It is because the government failed to do its due diligence. This vaccine is not even receiving approval from the World Health Organization because of the failure of due diligence by the Liberal government and its partners.

What I am hoping for is prudence, that the government is going to be meticulous and careful with how it spends money, because we have seen anything but. It wildly spends money and uses that as a measure for success instead of the success of individual Canadians and how they are able to live their lives, prosper and support their families. Conservatives are looking to the government for some fiscal sanity and some responsibility.

● (1555)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member is aware of the fact that when he ran in the election in September of last year, his party was actually proposing to spend even more money.

More importantly, when he talks about a path to balancing the budget, what kind of path is that exactly, because the path that he ran on in September of last year was a path of 10 years. Is he saying that 10 years is the magic number, or is he now saying five years is the number, or is it 15 years? Can he quantify how many years is appropriate and if it is, indeed, what he ran on six months ago?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, this is a great opportunity to talk about how we have all of the provinces and territories across this country who have basically been asking for an agreement from the federal government to plan out what the investments will be in our health care system. While we have a global pandemic, the government is unwilling to make a commitment to the provinces and territories on what their funding is going to look like.

Instead we have an introduction of them going to throw $2 billion at it because there are backlogs in surgeries, in diagnostic screenings and care appointments, but the provinces want stability. They want planning. They want prudence, something that we are not seeing from the government.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives often talk about abolishing the carbon tax to help people cope with the increased cost of living. I think there are other ways to achieve this, since the carbon tax is a good way to combat climate change.

The Bloc Québécois has made a few suggestions, such as doubling the GST rebate for quarters in which inflation surpasses the Bank of Canada's target, increasing the monthly Canada child benefit in accordance with inflation and providing targeted support for the sectors that are suffering the most from increased input costs.

Does my hon. colleague agree with these suggestions and does he expect to see these kinds of measures in the budget on Thursday?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, when we talk about the carbon tax as a way to disincentivize people from using necessities for them such as their vehicles or heating their homes, we think that is an ineffective way to address climate change. One of the ways that we can address climate change is through technology, making sure that we are making investments in things like SMRs and vSMRs, making sure that we are collaborating with those in our agricultural sector, who are leaders and environmental stewards. That is incredibly important.

It is also very important that we collaborate on ways to support individual families, make sure that those supports are means tested and make sure they are able to support their families so they do not have to make those terrible choices, as I mentioned before, between heating and eating.

● (1600)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, in my riding of North Island—Powell River we are seeing a lot of folks without housing. This is a growing concern. The market in our region is very hot. People are coming from all over the country to live in the beautiful area, but it is just making it so hard for local folks to be able to afford housing. At the same time, as those houses are being bought up, we are seeing fewer and fewer available rentals.

I am wondering if the member could speak to why we need to see affordable housing across this country. I am also wondering if he has any thoughts about when the government is going to do what it promised and ban blind bidding.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, it is no surprise that we had a promise from the government, and it looks like it will be joining a long list of broken promises. It is incredibly important. Here in Ontario, for example, a commitment from the federal government, money that is owed to the province for supports for housing and homelessness, just does not flow. That is the hallmark of the government. A lot of talk and big announcements, but not a lot of action. Liberals have done nothing to remove the gatekeepers that have kept prices high and supply low, and that is the shame of the government.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

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

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

First, if I may, I am rising to respond to a question of privilege raised on March 31, 2022, respecting an order of the House made on March 25, 2021, in the previous Parliament. I would like to begin by making it clear that the ministers are accountable to the House of Commons for duties carried out within their departments and for the actions of their political staff in their political offices.

Page 30 of the *House of Commons Procedures and Practice* states the following regarding the fact that ministers are responsible to Parliament:

> In terms of ministerial responsibility, Ministers have both individual and collective responsibilities to Parliament...The principle of individual ministerial responsibility holds that Ministers are accountable not only for their own actions as department heads, but also for the actions of their subordinates; individual ministerial responsibility provides the basis for accountability throughout the system. Virtually all departmental activity is carried out in the name of a Minister who, in turn, is responsible to Parliament for those acts.

This is not a new concept. To reinforce this assertion, allow me to quote from Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who, in the 2006 publication "Accountable Government: A Guide for Ministers", stated, "Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the exercise of their responsibilities whether they are assigned by statute or otherwise", and "Ministers are personally responsible for the conduct and operation of their office."

The second issue I would like to draw members' attention to is a Speaker's ruling of December 9, 2021, on the effects of dissolution in which he stated:

> *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, clearly stipulates, at page 397, the following:
>
> "With dissolution, all business of the House is terminated....The government's obligation to provide answers to written questions, to respond to petitions or to produce papers requested by the House also ends with dissolution....Committees cease to exist until the House reconstitutes them following the election. All orders of reference expire...."
>
> Consequently, as a result of the dissolution of the 43rd Parliament, the orders of the House from March 25 and June 2 and 17, 2021, have expired. The government and the people summoned to appear are released from their obligations. Similarly, the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations and the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics have ended, as have their studies. Any report presented in connection with the study involved only the committee from the previous Parliament.

The ruling is actually clear. Orders from the previous Parliament expired with dissolution. Therefore, there can be no breach of an order in the current Parliament for which a prima facie question of privilege can be found.

I would further submit to the House that logic follows that the simple retabling of a report from a previous Parliament does not constitute a new order for which a breach of privilege can be found. If a committee in this Parliament were to issue new orders for the appearance of individuals who were the subject of a study of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics in the 43rd Parliament and those individuals did not appear or refused to appear before the committee in this Parliament, and the committee produced a report on the refusal of these individuals to appear and that report was tabled in the House, then a member could raise a question of privilege to argue that the privileges of members had been infringed.

That is not the case here. A report from a previous Parliament has been retabled and reported to the House. That in itself does not give rise to any contempt. All previous orders from the 43rd Parliament have expired, as the Speaker stated in the December 9 ruling. No new order has been made. Therefore, there is nothing for the Speaker to adjudicate.

● (1605)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank the member for the additional information. I will certainly take it under advisement and will bring it back to the House once we have had time to deliberate on that.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am tabling the government's responses to Questions Nos. 337 to 356.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, here we are again today where the official opposition here in Canada has made the determination that it wants to have a continuation of what I would suggest, and my colleague from Kingston, no doubt, would vouch, is a filibuster because the Conservative Party just does not want to see Bill C-8 pass.

The Conservatives have made it very clear that they do not support Bill C-8. What they are doing today is to prevent the bill from being debated once again. I am not too sure exactly how many days this bill has been up for debate, but I suspect that if one were to do a bit of research one would find that it has been a good number of days. It would have been nice to see the bill actually pass. After all, Bill C-8 is the fall economic update and here we are now in the spring.

My colleague from Kingston had a question for one of the many Conservative members on Bill C-8 this morning, in essence asking when this bill will be passed or why they have not passed it. The response was that it was because the government has not brought in time allocation—

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, as a point of order on relevance, we are discussing the pre-budget consultation and concurrence. Maybe the member could steer his thoughts and start talking about that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members to wait until I respond. When it is time for questions and comments, it will be time for members to decide to stand up if they have anything to say.

On the hon. member's point of order, he knows very well that there is some latitude to the discussion when debates are before the House. I want to remind members, though, that they are to make sure that they are referencing the motion and to keep that in mind during debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member is not. He is standing up on a point of order to say it is not relevant to a concurrence motion that is dealing with the budget, when Bill C-8 is all about the budget. It is all about the fall budget. I just cannot quite understand why the Conservatives, for whatever reason, have chosen to vote against that bill.

When we think about a report from the finance committee on budget ideas, we can take a look at Bill C-8. In listening to the consultations, I can assure the member opposite that Canadians are very much concerned about the pandemic. The very bill the Conservatives do not want to debate today, for whatever weird reason, deals with the priorities Canadians have today.

I concur, they are priorities. The issue is why the Conservative Party does not recognize that providing things such as rapid tests is important. All one has to do is look at what provinces and territories have been saying. They want to have rapid tests. This provides literally hundreds of millions of dollars for the acquisition of rapid tests for Canadians, which are in high demand.

It provides supports today. The concurrence motion is referencing the importance of consultation, and if the members opposite consulted, they would understand that we need to support small businesses. That is in fact what Bill C-8 does. If they continued to look at consultations, they would see that many people are concerned about the air they breathe and ventilation in our schools, in particular. They would find that, if they were in fact consulting with Canadians. Once again, that is what is in Bill C-8. If the Conservative Party of Canada really understood the importance of consultation and actually reflected what they were hearing from their constituents back inside this chamber, Bill C-8 would have passed long ago.

Now, it is as if the Conservatives have turned a leaf and know how to consult. They are saying that they want to concur in this report because of all the things that they heard in regard to this particular report. However, let us listen to some of the speeches they have given. There were only two Conservative speakers, so far. I sure hope it gets better. What did the members talk about? I made notes of some of the things they were talking about. They talked about cutting back on borrowing and stopping any form of tax increases. That is the message from the Conservative Party. Some members opposite might applaud while others are saying that it is a good start.

However, there are expenditures. This is the question I put earlier. The expenditures the government makes do cost money. "Expenditure" means that it costs money, but just because the government is spending money does not necessarily mean that it is not bringing in money. The example I would give is the Canada child care program. For the first time in the history of Canada, we now have a government that has instituted a national child care program. Let us talk about that program. I am sure that if the Conservatives did their homework, and they did not, they would find that there is a broad spectrum of support for a national child care program. There are even some Conservatives, albeit somewhat shy Conservatives, who actually support child care programs and what the national government is doing.

Some hon. members: Name them.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would not want to embarrass them by naming them.

● (1610)

Here is the reason I like to use it as an example. Let us take a look at the province of Quebec. The nice thing about being in a federal system is that we can see what is happening in different regions of our country. The province of Quebec has been highly successful with a day care or child care program that has enabled more people to have access to child care.

The national government recognized the strengths and benefits implemented in the province of Quebec, and we turned it into a national program. As a direct result of that, we will see that day care across Canada is now going to become a whole lot more affordable. There is no doubt about it.

We will see more day care spots. For the first time, we will see more people getting engaged in different aspects of our society. That could be more people volunteering for wonderful organizations, but more often than not it will enable individuals who would not have been able to work to enter the work force. When they enter the work force, they are going to be paying income tax. It will generate revenue.

Yes, there is a government expenditure. It is going to cost money to ensure that we have that national child care program, but it is also going to allow people to engage in work and generate additional revenues for the Government of Canada. It is a fair policy. It is a good decision for the government to move in that direction.

The Conservative member who spoke before me talked about the government being too concerned about income equality, or that was the essence of one of the points he was trying to make. I can appreciate why the member would say that. I do not know how many times in the past I have talked about some of the actions we have taken in government.

I can tell the member that, in the consultations I have had, there is a good deal of support for the initiatives we have taken to deal with income inequality. For example, when we came into government one of the very first things we did was put a tax on Canada's wealthiest 1%. The Conservatives voted against that, and today we are being criticized because it did not generate as much income as we wanted to see it generate as a government. It is unbelievable.

At the end of the day, it was a smart thing to do. All the members have to do is consult with their constituents. Had they consulted with their constituents, I would suggest that a vast majority of Canadians supported us having an increase in the tax rate on Canada's wealthiest 1%. I can assure members that is the case in Winnipeg North, and I would suggest it is the case in 337 other ridings.

Another issue that we dealt with in addressing income inequality was lowering tax points for Canada's middle class. Again, the Conservative Party voted against that measure. The party that likes to say it wants tax breaks actually voted against a tax break. It was one of the more significant tax breaks in the last 20 years and it voted against it. It just does not make any sense.

We are talking about consultations. I am wondering this. If my friends across the way were to consult with their constituents on this one, what do members think their constituents would have said about having a tax break for Canada's middle class?

● (1615)

I am not a gambling man, with one exception in regard to the member for Kingston and the Islands, to whom I lost a McDonald's meal, but I can tell members that, at the end of the day, a vast majority of my constituents supported that measure. They recognized the value of it.

We can continue talking about consultations and commitments that have been given by the government. One of the earlier actions taken by the government was to listen to what seniors had to say. After a decade of Stephen Harper, there was a huge need to give attention to Canada's seniors. We have seen that virtually from day one, when we came into government, to today. We have had the Minister of Finance, the department and 150-plus Liberal members of Parliament actually working with and consulting their constituents. We are participating wherever we can in things such as roundtables and are listening to the different stakeholders, whether they are labour unions or business representatives, big or small. We are trying to get a better understanding of what other things we can do.

One of the common things we hear is with regard to the issue of seniors. We have a very proactive Minister of Seniors, who ensures that the issues surrounding seniors are a top priority for the government. We even have a caucus group of members of Parliament who talk about the importance of seniors and what else we can do.

I am happy to report to members that, from day one, we have consistently been there to support our seniors. I would like to give a few examples of that.

We will recall that one of the first actions we took was to reduce the age of OAS eligibility from 67 to 65. I recall that I was in the third party in the corner back here, and Stephen Harper was overseas when the Conservatives made the announcement that they were going to increase the age to qualify for OAS from 65 to 67. I can tell members that the reaction in Canada was not very favourable. I suspect that was why Mr. Harper was in Europe during that particular decision. It did not go over well.

We listened to Canadians, much as is expected when we consult, i.e., the consultation on the budget report that we are talking about today. I know—

● (1620)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for actually mentioning the pre-budget consultation report, which is the actual thing we are supposed to be talking about here in the motion. Actually, the title is, "Considering the Path Forward". I would hope—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This is not a point of order. It is a point of debate.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, on the point of order, there are 221 recommendations in this report that address just about every fiscal—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): What the hon. member is trying to do is make a point of clarification and not a point of order. Again, I have already indicated that the other one was not a point of order. It is a point of debate, as is this other member's point.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has just a little over five minutes left, and then there will be 10 minutes for questions and comments. I would ask people to be patient. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I really believe I should get a bonus two minutes because I had to entertain points of order.

Having said that, with respect to consultation, which is so very important, from the very beginning we have been working with Canadians in a very real and tangible way. An excellent example is what we have done with respect to seniors. In the first few months, there was a substantial commitment for the GIS increase. It was somewhere around $800 or $900 to max out. It literally lifted hundreds of people out of poverty in Winnipeg North. Seniors from Winnipeg North were lifted out of poverty because of that one particular initiative.

I know members want to talk about something more recent. In the pandemic, we had one-time payments for both OAS and GIS. We also supported people by listening to the many different organizations that are out there to support seniors. We literally gave tens of millions of dollars to those organizations to enhance services for seniors during the pandemic. We have now brought forward a budget that is actually seeing a 10% increase in OAS for seniors over 75.

We take the issue of consultation very seriously. We have a Minister of Finance and the finance department. As I have referenced before, the Prime Minister, over the years, has been very consistent in terms of his expectations of members of the Liberal caucus. That was to get the sense of, and be advocates for, the ridings that we represent and to bring the voices of our constituents to Ottawa. I believe that, in good part, we do that.

We factor that in, along with the many different types of round tables, meetings and discussions that have been happening through a multitude of different ministers all focusing in with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. In a couple of days, we are going to see a budget that will reflect what Canadians really want to see. It is, first and foremost, going to be a team Canada-reflected budget on Thursday.

I know to a certain degree that the far-right element within the Conservative Party, which has really raised its head in the last number of weeks, will likely be a little disappointed.

● (1625)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the member is insinuating that there are members of the far right in the Conservative Party. That is completely false and inappropriate.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): That is a point of debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I do not mean to insinuate it. It is fact. That is the reality.

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, that is completely inappropriate and it is not a fact. My family came to Canada. I am a member of the Conservative Party. One does not insinuate that I am a member of the far right. It is completely inappropriate and unbecoming of the member for Winnipeg North. I expect more from him.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I just want to remind members to be careful. I know that one of the Speakers spoke to this last week and indicated that people should be judicious, and very careful, in some of the words that they are using. Again, I just want to remind the hon. member that it is still a point of debate.

I do want to remind the parliamentary secretary to get back to his speech and to try to keep it focused on the debate that is before the House. He has two minutes left before there are 10 minutes of questions and comments.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, maybe "Reformers" is a better word. There is a very strong Reformer element to the Conservative Party today. We can just look at some of the words we are hearing in their speeches, whether the words are inside this chamber or in what some of the leadership candidates are saying outside of the chamber.

We need to recognize that Canadians as a whole see the true value of good governance and recognize that at times there is a need for government to develop social programs to really made a positive difference. There are Conservatives who will constantly talk about cutting taxes, and that is it: Cut taxes and deal with the deficit. That is their whole preoccupation.

When I think of the people I represent there, I see there is more to being a member of Parliament than strictly fixating on cutting back on what the people of Canada need. There is a need, for example, to provide and support national health care, and now national child care. There is a need to support programs that put money directly into the pockets of people, such as OAS. There is a need to look at ways in which we can improve other programs to support people, such as an enhancement of the CPP, and to provide support through infrastructure dollars.

Government has a role to play, and I am looking forward to a couple of days from now, when we will see a vision that is going to take us out of the pandemic and continue to put Canada on a road to prosperity.

● (1630)

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am looking for something to vote for. We have been waiting since 2019 in York—Simcoe for the Lake Simcoe clean-up fund. I know the members for Niagara Centre, Kingston and the Islands and Winnipeg North all know how badly that is needed. It was promised in 2019, and we are still waiting.

I would also suggest to the member that I represent the Holland Marsh, again the soup and salad bowl of Canada. We are looking for programs for our farmers right now. Half of the farms are on propane; they want to move to natural gas, but there is nothing. Small businesses are on phase 1 hydro. They cannot move to phase 3 hydro.

I would like the hon. member for Winnipeg North to comment on those points.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, allow me to help my friend across the way. Bill C-8 takes a number of initiatives that the member is talking about. When he talks about helping small businesses, Bill C-8 does that.

In talking about helping his constituents and again in the spirit of consultation, the member should take a look at what Bill C-8 does before he is obligated to vote against it. If he were to consult with his constituents, he would hear that there are a lot of positive measures in there, and I would encourage the member, not only on the concurrence motion but also on Bill C-8, to vote in favour. Better yet, let us pass the fall economic update report.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before I go to the next speaker, I want to remind the hon. member and his colleagues that they had an opportunity to ask a question and they should be respectful when the answer is coming through, as opposed to talking and yelling across the way.

[*Translation*]

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech.

However, I am rather tired of hearing the Liberals brag about how they have taken such good care of seniors. In his speech, my colleague once again reminded us that the Liberals increased old age security for seniors aged 75 and up. However, in doing so, they are creating two classes of seniors.

When we ask them about that, we either get an interminable yet empty speech about how they are, have always been, and will always be there for seniors, or we are told we are trying to pick a fight.

I would therefore ask the parliamentary secretary to give me a yes or no answer without giving me an interminable speech or telling me I am trying to pick a fight. Does he agree that OAS should be increased as of age 65 in order to avoid creating two classes of seniors, yes or no?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, as I pointed out in my comments, we as a government have stepped up consistently to support our seniors in a multitude of different ways. I was able to touch upon a number of them. The increase in OAS for those 75 and older was an election platform promise that was made, and now it has been fulfilled. That promise was made in 2019. As a direct result, seniors aged 75 and older will get a substantial increase. The older one gets, generally speaking, the higher the need for supports. It was a positive policy move that was supported by Canadians, who gave us the mandate to increase it.

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to the parliamentary secretary's speech. I was particularly interested when he extolled his government's actions to address income inequality. It reminds me a little of the government's approach on climate: It does small, modest things to reduce emissions and then big things to increase emissions, and of course the net result is an overall increase.

My question is quite simple. The Liberals have been in power for seven years, and I wonder if the parliamentary secretary can tell me if income inequality has become better or worse during that time.

● (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would reflect on the riding of Winnipeg North and say that literally hundreds of seniors have been lifted out of poverty, along with hundreds of young children. Readjusting the Canada child benefit program was quite significant. We no longer give millionaires money through that program, and there were substantial increases given. As I pointed out, there were increases to the GIS, which is for the poorest of seniors. There was the special tax on Canada's 1% wealthiest, while a tax break was given to Canada's middle class. We distributed hundreds of millions of dollars to support organizations, in particular organizations that support youth, and there was enhancement to the summer youth program, which more than doubled, from what I understand, the total number of jobs.

As a member of the government, I would challenge the member to tell me of another government, either provincial or federal, that has done a better job on income redistribution than this government has in the last six years.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have to ask what we are doing here. Honest to God, what are we doing here? Yes, today we are debating a concurrence motion on a report from the finance committee. In three days, we are going to table a budget, and there will be a whole host of debates on the different elements in it..

Every time I have come into the House in the last two weeks and tried to figure out what is going on, it is a repeat of Bill C-8 continuously. We have debated this bill, and then the Conservatives bring this forward. They then stand and talk about measures that matter to their constituents, measures that the member rightly points out are in the legislation that they keep delaying.

I love hearing from the member for Winnipeg North, but I do not need to hear him again talking about the government's good work. I do not. I want to hear something else. Can the member opposite at least talk about the delay? We need to get on with the legislative agenda of the government and this Parliament, and Conservatives need to stop delaying it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, to change focus a little, I would recognize that we are here today because the Conservatives continue to want to play a destructive force in the processing of legislation through the House of Commons. They do that by bringing forward, as they have done today, a concurrence report on something that is, quite frankly, just not warranted. We again started the debate on Bill C-8 earlier today, and the Conservatives are using this concurrence motion as a tool to frustrate the legislative process. We have seen that.

One of the answers that was provided earlier today said a great deal. A Conservative member said Conservatives were expecting the government to bring in time allocation on Bill C-8, with the full expectation that if we did not bring in time allocation, they had no intention to pass the legislation, and if we do bring in time allocation, they will criticize us for bringing in time allocation.

Go figure. It is Conservative logic, I guess.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, after listening to the commentary and speech from my colleague across the way, I have to say that with respect to our responsibilities as members of Parliament, there are two things. One is to talk about all the things we would advocate with respect to spending, and the member went through a litany of what that would be. What was completely absent from all of that discussion was how we are going to pay for it.

In these conversations we are having this week in the lead-up to the budget and in the report we have here from the committee and in numerous other factors, the government does not tell us how it is going to pay for that spending because it is not going to. It is adding to our federal debt and our annual federal deficit. We were already projected to have that before the recent NDP-Liberal deal or coalition agreement, whatever the budget may be this week. If the government is saying it is going to spend on A, B, C or D, I think it is important for Canadians to know how it is going to pay for it.

The member has been quiet on that because there is no way to do it. It is adding to the country's credit card and letting somebody else have to deal with it down the road.

● (1640)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, that is not true. Earlier I commented that a growing economy generates additional revenues. The example I used fairly extensively was the child care program. By bringing in that program, we are going to enable greater participation in the workforce. By having a larger participation in the workforce, we are going to generate additional revenues, so that side is addressed by the bill.

We have invested heavily in Canadians and the economy. Members of the Conservative Party need to realize that the healthier Canadians are, in particular our middle class and those aspiring to be a part of it, the healthier our economy will be, thereby generating additional revenues in different ways also.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. 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 Saanich—Gulf Islands, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, The Economy; the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, Climate Change.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division, Government Orders will be extended by 14 minutes.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Mirabel.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I would like to share my time with the hon. member for Terrebonne.

I want to begin by stressing the importance of pre-budget consultations and their particular significance this year. We are emerging from two years of a pandemic. It has been extremely difficult. Our businesses, taxpayers, workers and families have been through trying times, something quite out of the ordinary. Given those circumstances, it is more important than ever to consult our constituents, our organizations, the business community, so that we are drawing ideas from the grassroots level.

I am an optimist, and I cannot wait to see the budget this Thursday. However, we are already starting to get the feeling today that things are not going well and that there is a chance we will be disappointed. Let us start with health.

We know that the pandemic was very hard on the health sector. There has been a lot of focus on COVID-19 patients, COVID-19-related deaths, and long-haulers. We are there for them. It is still very hard for many people, but we cannot forget the triaging, the surgeries that had to be delayed and the families who have had to go through extremely difficult times.

We have seen this in other countries. Switzerland comes to mind, for example. Certain other countries have more resilient health care systems. They were more resilient because they have been reformed. They have been reformed because funding was available and more hospital beds were available. This enabled them to do better in the pandemic and to reduce the economic costs associated with all the lockdown measures. What we need now in order to deal with future crises, to clear the backlog of surgeries, to clear all the backlogs, are health transfers with no strings attached, transfers that cover 35% of system costs. Indeed, our health care systems need to be reformed.

The Quebec health minister has already presented a major reform plan, but it needs to be funded. As we know, the money is here in Ottawa. We had a long list of health care stakeholders in Quebec today. Everyone was there, including general practitioners, specialists, unions. These people are calling for health transfers with no strings attached in order to ensure predictable funding so that we can plan reforms. These are the people who work on the ground, in hospitals. These are the people who take care of others.

I imagine that the budget is pretty much ready to go, that copies are being printed and bound in pretty plastic covers. When we asked the Minister of Health the question, he said that, yes, the government would be giving small amounts. I am sure the member for Winnipeg North will talk about that later. The government is handing out money, but these are ad hoc microtransfers, bits of money here and there. Then the Minister of Health expects us to thank him for that. In the meantime, he is refusing to meet with people in Quebec who take care of the sick day after day.

This is one of our demands, something we need to support the budget. We are proud of that because it is what Quebeckers and others want. The federal government is the one with the money and it has to recommit. We are also asking for the Canada social transfer to be brought back to its 1993-94 levels.

The Conservatives are on their soapbox again. Last time it was about their love for Paul Martin. Today it is Paul Martin, Jean Chrétien and John Manley. They like all the Liberals who made cuts. As I have said before, starting in 1995, they merged the health and social transfers and then made repeated cuts to them. We are still not back to the same level of funding as we had before.

The Canada social transfer is used for post-secondary education, social assistance, early childhood education, and educational services. It is astounding to hear the Liberals brag about interfering in provincial jurisdictions when it comes to child care when, for years, they have not made up for any lost ground with the Canada social transfer. That should be done. It is necessary. The provincial governments are the ones providing the services. When the federal government tries, it rarely goes well. We are seeing that right now with Citizenship and Immigration.

● (1645)

I attended and participated in the budget consultations at the Standing Committee on Finance. Before the marriage between the NDP and the Liberals was even consummated, people were already asking questions. The recommendations were presented, and we told them that they fell under provincial jurisdiction. However, they do not understand what these jurisdictions are.

Last week, the member for Fredericton told me that she understands why the Bloc wants the government to stay out of provincial jurisdictions but that mental health is such an important issue that the government should intervene.

I have no doubt that they are sincere, but sincerity and incompetence do not get us anywhere. What matters is money, and it needs to be given to those on the ground.

Let us talk about the cost of living. As an economist, I know that the supply chain and the issues we have had are partly to blame for the inflationary pressures we are experiencing. The Conservatives are living in their own little world, where the Earth is flat and there is nothing outside our borders.

I know that all these supply problems are a big source of the inflationary pressure, but there is another factor at play. Inflation has been at 2%, or between 1% and 3%, for decades, so families, businesses, governments and anyone who needs to procure goods have planned their finances around a predictable inflation rate of 2%. Everyone was taken by surprise.

The most vulnerable members of society are among those who were taken by surprise. Some families are struggling to make ends meet. They are being told that this is temporary, that it will not last long. They are being told that they only have to go hungry for two years, then inflation will go back to 2%.

The Bloc Québécois believes that these people need to be supported. This must be done through an increase in the GST credit when inflation is above 3%. Indeed, there is a monetary policy commitment that inflation would not exceed 3%. The frequency of cheques could also be increased. It is important to help these people, because they are struggling financially right now.

Let us talk green finance. We want to see that in the budget. During question period today, the environment minister once again boasted about eliminating fossil fuel subsidies. To hear him tell it, one would think the Liberals had been in power for six months, but they have been in power since 2015.

The subsidies are still there, and the government is still dumping taxpayer dollars into fossil fuels. That kind of short-term thinking is what gets the world in trouble. That kind of short-term thinking means that, when gas is $2 a litre, we will be even more dependent on it. That is what we need to work on.

Our financial institutions must disclose climate risk. That is under federal jurisdiction, but the one time they do have jurisdiction over something, they do not use it.

We also need to change the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board's mandate. It is clear from what the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec is doing and from all the financial innovations at Desjardins that people want green investments. We have to put money toward the transition.

The CPP Investment Board has come up with its own strategy. It wants to invest in carbon capture. Carbon capture does not exist, though. It is a last-ditch strategy that may one day enable us to knock out the last few units, the last few metric tonnes of emissions, but they are up to their eyeballs in oil.

Let us talk about access to water. Are the Liberals proud of their legacy? The Chrétien government promised our first nations access to drinking water, Paul Martin made a commitment to that effect, and the current government keeps talking about it, but it has not happened yet, even though drinking water is essential.

I will talk about farming because it is very important to my riding, Mirabel. Earlier during question period, the Minister of Agriculture told us that our farmers know how much they will be getting in compensation. Their market was stolen from them with CUSMA, but they will not be getting their money until next year. I feel like going up to every government MP and telling them that their salary is *x* amount, but I will not pay it until next year, so good luck with the mortgage.

Those payments need to be moved up. Farmers are important. They are the ones who feed us. Farmers, especially those who are supply managed, are having a very tough time right now because of input costs.

I will close by saying that expectations are high and I am very worried about the signs I am seeing.

● (1650)

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the member, as I would like to congratulate everybody at that end of the House and everybody at this end of the House who have been talking about people, because what we have heard from that portion of the other side is all about money. There is a an old saying that is quite often misused. It is, “Money is the root of all evil”, and that is not correct. The correct expression is, “The love of money is the root of all evil.”

I would like to ask my hon. friend, who has done the right thing and talked about people, whether or not it is reasonable for the average Canadian to believe that the Conservatives love money more than people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I did talk about people, but I will say which people I started talking about—

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Hon. members on the opposition side will likely have a question in a few minutes. I would ask them to hold on to their thoughts until it is time and allow the hon. member for Mirabel to respond.

The hon. member for Mirabel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, people are important to me, and that is why I started by talking about all the stakeholders in the health networks who today asked for an unconditional increase in health transfers.

I also spoke about the Minister of Health, who turned a deaf ear. I do not know why I would turn to the Conservatives today when it is the Liberal government that is preparing the budget.

I would like my colleague to tell me why the federal government's desire for control takes over when the Minister of Health talks to us about his refusal to give us the transfers.

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

I sense that he did not have enough time at the end when he was talking about agriculture, and I would like to give him the opportunity to speak more about the promises for compensation.

This Liberal government likes to repeat its promises one, two, three and even four times, which obliges the people on the other end of the conversation to remain polite. When someone promises something, the other person must keep calm and not get upset. I find that to be very unhealthy. Producers want to settle these current issues, including this one, and they need their money now.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, the tragedy here is that farmers feel like they are begging for their own money.

CUSMA has been signed, and that free trade agreement is being enforced. International goods have already started coming in.

When the agreement was being negotiated, the government was in a rush and wanted it all to be resolved immediately. However, when it comes time to compensate farmers, it is always next year, it is always later.

Our farmers would have rather kept their supply-managed market. Now, farmers are not asking how much the cheque will be for; they are asking when the cheque will be in the mail.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, a lot of what my colleague for Mirabel said I agree with, and there are a lot of questions I could ask. However, the question I will ask him is the question I asked the parliamentary secretary at the end of the last speech we heard, because it seemed like he deftly avoided giving a straight answer to the question.

The question was around income inequality and whether it has gotten worse or better in the seven years that the Liberal government has been in power. I know that my hon. colleague has a background in economics, so I am sure he will find this an easy question to answer for the edification of the parliamentary secretary.

● (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, a lot of things in life are unequal. It is true that income and wealth inequalities are growing. There is also inequality in health outcomes. Hospitals are still having to triage and surgeries are still being delayed. However, the Minister of Health still refuses to send health transfers with no strings attached and is spitting in the face of Quebec's entire health care sector. These are the inequalities we should be talking about today.

The NDP's approach consists in telling the provinces and Quebec what to do, but the governments of Quebec and the provinces are the ones that have the capacity to make reforms. This approach conflicts with the NDP's world view of achieving equality.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the hon. member for Mirabel for sharing his time with me.

These days are particularly important. Obviously, they are quite extraordinary, given the current context. Two years ago, our country closed its borders, implemented health measures and entered the pandemic era. Also, the budget is about to be tabled. There is plenty to say, and I want to begin by looking at the current challenges.

To begin with, we are in an era of shortages: customer shortages, labour shortages and supply chain shortages.

I want to start with customer shortages. Consumer habits have changed. Although economy activity has picked up, some businesses are barely staying afloat. I recently spoke to the executive director of the Terrebonne SODEC, a cultural development agency. She told me that theatres, even the busiest ones in Quebec, are not filling up. They may be open and operating at full capacity, but people have changed their habits and are not coming back.

Now let us talk about the labour shortage. Everyone knows that most companies are having trouble recruiting. We are returning to an era of full employment, but companies are struggling to fill positions. Once again, there is some tension. I recently spoke with a number of people and businesses in my riding. They told me they are having a really hard time finding staff. They are quite stressed out by the fact that Immigration Canada and Service Canada cannot keep pace with the needs of businesses. The wait times are outrageous, forcing some companies to shut down while waiting for employees to arrive. I am talking about temporary foreign workers and workers in the economic immigrant category. I am also talking about companies that simply cannot keep their plants running because there are not enough workers.

Lastly, I want to talk about supply chain problems. Many companies have talked to us about the parts shortages that are affecting the manufacturing process of their products. One of the reasons for this shortage of parts and products is the delay in containers arriving from western Canada. It is also caused by the many shutdowns that occurred during the pandemic. In short, these parts did not arrive. We are at the point where the economy is reopening in most countries around the world, but these companies still cannot produce their goods and are forced to shut down because of parts shortages. We are in an era of shortages.

We are also in the middle of a climate crisis. The environment file is a major one, but our Minister of Environment and Climate Change is having a hard time deciding whether to green-light the Bay du Nord project, which would extract one billion barrels of oil over 30 years. Let us not forget that this is a former Greenpeace leader having a hard time making a decision about a project that makes no sense.

Then there is inflation. Lots of people have talked about this. Not that I want to provide ammunition to any of our friends in the House, but I would like to reiterate that inflation is currently at a 30-year high. We are also seeing record-setting rent increases and gas prices. Today, the Bank of Canada released a report showing that businesses think this inflation is not temporary and will last a long time. People are worried, and they have reason to be.

With all that in mind, let us look at what the Standing Committee on Finance did. The committee received 495 briefs from individuals and groups that wanted to have their say about the future budget and wanted their voices heard as part of this democratic process. We listened to them. Between January 31 and February 14, 29 witnesses from all sectors of our economy were called. The committee heard from representatives of community organizations and small, medium and large businesses, and their recommendations were taken into consideration.

● (1700)

This committee's overall objectives are to grow the economy, of course, but also to protect the vulnerable. We also need to make sure that there is still a planet to leave to our children.

Economists agree that for this to happen, we obviously need to increase productivity, but we also need to strengthen our social safety net. I remind members that the Bloc agrees with the report that was presented, but we have several unconditional demands.

The first demand has to do with health transfers. My colleague from Mirabel spoke about this one. Every time we ask a question about health transfers, the government gives us the runaround, which unfortunately does not help the people who are suffering in our health care system. Our demand is quite simple. We are calling for the federal government to respect jurisdictions. Respect for jurisdictions is the bedrock of the Bloc's mandate. Provincial jurisdictions must be respected. We developed our knowledge and skills over time. The government cannot reinvent the wheel. Our demand is clear. We want the government to increase the Canada health transfer from 22% to 35% of health care costs, and then by 6% annually. We are also calling on the government to restore the funding for the Canada social transfer to its 1994-95 level. This is not rocket science.

Second, we are calling for the government to pay close attention to our seniors. We need to ensure that those who want to keep working are able to do so. I should also point out that this is a solution we proposed for addressing the labour shortage. We are calling for old age security to be increased by $110 over three years, starting at age 65. We do not want two classes of seniors.

Third, we proposed and will continue to propose measures for fighting inflation. Obviously they include short-term measures to protect the most vulnerable, as others have mentioned. For instance, we suggest doubling the GST rebate whenever the inflation rate exceeds the rate set by the Bank of Canada and paying it out every month. We are asking for an increase to the Canada child benefit to keep pace with inflation. We are asking for targeted support for SMEs. There are also several medium-term measures that could be taken immediately, if the government is willing to be a bit more proactive, in order to help fight inflation and especially to boost our resilience. For example, we suggest building social housing to address the housing shortage. We could also develop segments of the economy that we are missing, such as semiconductors. We know that there is a shortage and that these parts are very important to our economy. There is also the fight against monopolies. It is outrageous that Canada still has monopolies creating certain costs that have been eliminated in other places around the world. The European Union broke up the telecommunications monopolies. Canada should no longer have any monopolies.

Fourth, we want green financing. Our banks must be more transparent. Finally, there is the issue of first nations housing. It is not right that there are still problems with access to clean drinking water and a lack of social housing in a G7 country.

If the trend continues, we will have a minority Liberal government Thursday evening and probably on Friday as well. However, as with every budget, our proposals should be incorporated. The Bloc Québécois's role is to make concrete proposals. That is what we did. The government has often listened to us. We are there for Quebec.

● (1705)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her speech today. I have three quick questions for her.

First, does my hon. colleague believe that there will be an oil and gas industry in 2050?

Second, does she believe that Canada has a role to play in providing its products to the whole world, assuming we can reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions per barrel?

Third, does my colleague believe that small modular nuclear reactors have a role to play in Canada's energy future and in our fight to reduce emissions?

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, the first question is perhaps the easiest. The way things are going with the current government and its proposals, there will definitely still be a flourishing oil industry in Canada.

However, this is not the right objective to set if we want a greener, fairer and more equitable future. We hope that this industry can be transitioned without necessarily causing job losses, because that is not what we want. It needs to be transitioned for a better future and for a more resilient economy that can respond to the climate crisis.

Another question from my hon. colleague was, I think, about products that we are being asked to produce. My colleague asked whether they have a future in the context of the climate crisis. I think that all products, no matter where they come from, should be designed to create a greener and fairer economy. We need to do this now. It is urgent, as the IPCC report points out.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I agree, especially regarding the issues of climate change. We know that the impacts are being felt profoundly. I am from British Columbia, and last year we saw a heat dome that took many lives because we simply do not have the infrastructure we need to deal with that kind of heat. We saw extreme flooding and forest fires and lost whole communities. Farmers lost everything. We know the impacts of climate change are real, but they are also extremely expensive, and I am very concerned because we do not see the government taking the next steps it needs to take to address this issue in a serious way.

I am wondering if the member could talk about what she is seeing and how urgent and expensive climate change is.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for this easy question. Having worked on the report published by the Ouranos group several years ago, which talked about the cost of climate change in Quebec, I would say that climate change is indeed very costly for society.

There are certainly health costs associated with climate change, and some diseases are a direct result. Zoonotic diseases come to mind. There are also infrastructure-related costs. We need only think of flooding, erosion and permafrost.

The government cannot see this, probably because its discount rate is too high. It is surely not a social discount rate, so it must be a private discount rate. By doing a cost-benefit analysis, the government would see that climate change is very expensive and that tackling it would be the better solution, both economically and environmentally.

● (1710)

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. Earlier, I heard her talk about the 35% health transfers being demanded by all the provinces. In recent weeks, I could not help but notice that the Minister of Health has avoided the question whenever it was put to him.

The minister takes the question, then heads in a different direction and does not answer it. I would like to know what my colleague thinks is going to happen with these health transfers.

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my esteemed colleague for his question. Unfortunately, I believe that the government will do what it usually does. Before the next election, it will promise a pittance but will fail to address the fundamental issue, which is that Quebec must decide for itself, particularly when it comes to health care, and that the money, which is ultimately ours, must be returned to Quebec.

It is our money we are sending to the federal government. It is up to us to decide where it goes and how it will be used to improve our health care system.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is my honour today to rise in this place on behalf of my neighbours and constituents in my community of Edmonton Griesbach. Folks in my community and across Canada are facing a true crisis of affordability. With the cost of living rapidly rising and workers' wages continuing to be stagnant, or even worse decreasing as they are in my home province of Alberta, where the current Conservative government is slashing the wages of hard-working public health care workers, we must do more.

During this affordability crisis, it is our job to protect our social safety net so that it truly assists those who need it most and continues to provide Canadians with the dignity they need. We are seeing more and more seniors, people with disabilities, and Black communities, indigenous communities and all person-of-colour communities across Canada struggling to make ends meet due to this crisis. We need more protection and we need the social programs to keep them going.

This is no surprise to my community of Edmonton Griesbach. We have been struggling with the affordability crisis for years. We see, for example, a study by the Edmonton Social Planning Council. Its research showed that 9,705 lone-parent families are already experiencing poverty, while an additional 10% of Edmontonians are living in extreme poverty. This makes Alberta one of the most unequal provinces in our federation, according to the Edmonton Social Planning Council. This is something that must change.

All this is happening while large companies have been making huge profits. CN Rail and Suncor have made record profits throughout this pandemic, while everyone else did their part. We all did so much for one another. We took care of our neighbours. We talked to family members. We even gave a few bucks to some of the community organizations, trying to help others. However, these big companies—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. I hate to disturb the hon. member. I may have been sidetracked. I am just wondering if the hon. member has indicated that he is going to share his time. I may have missed it, but I just wanted to ask the hon. member.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Members of these companies have been making record profits. We are seeing CN Rail, for example, with huge profits of over $7 billion. We are seeing Suncor spend $3.1 billion on its shareholders. Canadians are losing their hard-earned money. I am a former energy worker, who the Conservatives often talk about supporting. Never once did the Conservatives go to the workers to talk to them about what it means to ensure the security and dignity that workers across this country deserve.

Soaring housing prices continue to make our country more unaffordable for the average Canadian. Young people are being left behind. Single parents have nowhere to go. Children are not sure what their future is going to look like. We are seeing a world that is increasingly unpredictable. Last summer, we saw record heat waves. We have seen floods. We have seen droughts. We have seen regular communities take on the brunt of this work, yet where is the support? We need to ensure that we work toward rebuilding our economy so that it works for every single Canadian, not just some of us.

I want to particularly highlight some community organizations in Edmonton Griesbach that are doing the hard work to lift up communities, such as Boyle Street Community Services, Hope Mission, and some of the Amity Houses that are spread throughout our great city of Edmonton and are working with everyday community members. They are seeing them and meeting them where they are, so that they actually have a chance to get out of poverty. Some of these families have been living paycheque to paycheque for years, not knowing when they are going to get a break.

We are also seeing huge impacts on young people and their ability to make sure that they have good lives because of student debt. Student debt payments continue to be collected by the current government. Students have paid nearly $4 billion today in student loan payments during one of the most difficult times in our country's history. Young people need support, now more than ever, to make sure that they can actually get to a point where they see that their education is going to pay off: it is not just a debt sentence where they are going to be left with an unimaginable debt load and an unpredictable future.

We need a country that will understand the issues of some of the communities we are leaving behind the most. Indigenous communities have been disproportionately affected by the poverty crisis and are disproportionately impacted by the unjust levels of profiteering by the companies that are partnered with them.

We are seeing the need to increase social responsibility for these companies, to make sure that they are paying into our social safety net and they are continuing to do the hard work. In Alberta, for example, we are seeing that some of these oil companies have forgone municipal taxes. They are not paying municipal taxes. In what jurisdiction do we allow companies not to pay basic municipal taxes? Alberta is one of them. These communities, these municipalities, these reserves and these Métis settlements need that revenue.

I talked just recently to president Herb Lehr of the Métis Settlements General Council. The council predicts that it is missing over $3 million in unpaid taxes due to these companies. That is $3 million that is not going toward the basic needs of family members in these communities: the basic infrastructure that goes into clean water, roads and building communities. We often talk about reconciliation as if it is this thing that is going to cost us billions of dollars, but we often do not even give indigenous peoples the tools they need, such as enforcement to ensure that these companies pay their fair share.

We know that a guaranteed livable basic income is something that would dramatically change our country. It would dramatically change how Canadians live. It would give people the dignity that they need to move on with their lives. It would ensure that our economy works for everyone. When consumers have the power to spend what they need in order to accommodate things such as rent, food and gas, it creates confidence in an economy that can actually continue to grow. We need to ensure that people are living with dignity, and we need a guaranteed basic income now.

● (1715)

When we look at this affordability crisis, we know that longstanding issues the New Democrats have fought for for decades, such as child care, dental care and pharmacare, are things Canadians need now. We are seeing an issue where young people have to go to Stollery Children's Hospital at the twelfth hour to have surgery performed on their teeth because they had no preventative measures. This is actually costing Canadians. We can tackle these issues if only we have the courage to do what is right.

When I think about the struggling families in my community of Edmonton Griesbach, we often think about those who are unhoused, but we do not often think about those in the middle: they are right on the edge of poverty and need help now. They need a huge amount of assistance. They need to see the current government working for them. They need to see their monthly paycheques increase. We need to see justice for families who are working, sometimes three or four jobs, and still not making ends meet. No one in this country should have to work more than one job in order to have a good life. That is what we are living with right now in my community. Community members are working 15- or 16-hour days because they have family members or children who need that support.

I recently visited the Nebula Academy in Edmonton. It is a not-for-profit community school that is working to make sure that marginalized communities can continue to get the supports they need. New Canadians are often abandoned when they come to Canada, with respect to receiving the education they need that is culturally appropriate and in the language of their choice. They want to see their families and religions represented in the place they call home. These are the kinds of programs that are going to go a long way toward ensuring that we have a better Canada for everyone.

● (1720)

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for Edmonton Griesbach for his remarks today. I think this is the first time we have had to engage each other in the House, and I congratulate him on his election. Certainly, as we are two of the younger members of Parliament in the House, it is great to see another young face here.

I have been thinking a lot about energy and its future in Canada and around the world. I believe the member opposite mentioned that he was a former energy worker in Alberta. I am thinking of the future of the oil and gas sector. I believe that, come 2050, there still will be an oil and gas sector, albeit smaller globally because of the work we will be doing collectively. On that end, coupled with the amount of electricity that is going to be needed in Canada as we move to EVs and otherwise, I believe that small modular reactors in the nuclear sector are going to be extremely important.

Does the member opposite have any thoughts on that as it relates to positioning the oil and gas sector for success in a tighter global and Canadian market? Also, how could it be important for electricity in the country in the days ahead?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, working in Alberta's oil sands granted me a tremendous opportunity. It allowed me to get my education, pay off that debt and be part of an economy I saw a future in. The reality is that, the last time I worked in that industry, I was laid off four times in the same calendar year. Why would people want to work in an industry where they cannot make ends meet because they are laid off so many times?

When I think of what our country needs, as well as about our energy needs, I often think about how vast our country is. I have worked in the Northwest Territories. I have seen the geothermal plants and renewable projects, and I know our country can sustain more renewable energy projects without going to nuclear.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's contributions to the debate today. Specifically, I would like to ask him about carbon capture, utilization and storage. The government has been making promises, through the Minister of Finance, to the energy industry. It has said it will support an investment tax credit to allow for those pathways to net-zero projects to move forward. There are a number of energy companies waiting for that. If we do not see those kinds of investments being made, they will simply go to other regions or places and we will be left with fewer jobs and less opportunity.

Where do the New Democrats stand on carbon capture, utilization and storage? Do they believe it is a fossil fuel subsidy or a way to responsibly develop our resources?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to work on carbon capture in one of the first testing projects in Fort McMurray, but in reality how much has it captured? It is zero today, and that was about seven years ago.

We do not know the number. We do not know how much carbon is being captured by sequestration. When we are talking to these companies, their numbers range, so which is it? Is it a scientific fact or is it a scientific fantasy? I think in many ways we have to follow the science, and it is not in carbon capture.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for such an interesting speech.

My colleague and I agree on the substance of several points, including providing the dental care that people need. However, is my colleague aware that health is under provincial jurisdiction in this federation? In theory he is, because that is what is written in the contract they signed.

Does he not think that we should increase health transfers to the provinces and trust the governments that are responsible for providing those services?

● (1725)

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I believe that Quebec's social safety net is really helping many Quebeckers in the province. However, when we think of the province of Alberta and what is happening there, we see that the protections and powers of jurisdiction the province has enjoyed have actually harmed people. We are seeing public health care wages being cut, so I believe that we should increase the transfer, but it needs strings attached.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, today we are debating a motion to concur in the report of the finance committee regarding recommendations arising from the pre-budget consultations. As we often hear, budgets are about choices on expenses, services and the investments we are making to create a better Canada, and choices on revenues and who we ask to pay for those investments.

It is therefore good to look at where we are now, or at least where were before the pandemic, when the parliamentary budget office reported that 1% of Canadians shared 25% of the wealth and that 40% of Canadians have only 1% of the wealth shared among them. The pandemic has only accentuated and aggravated these inequalities and differences. Supply chains have been disrupted. We have had labour shortages that are still very critical. We have had climate disasters, droughts, floods and heat domes, a lot of them happening in my riding or adjacent ridings. We have seen the impacts of what climate change is bringing. Now we have an illegal war in the Ukraine that is further exacerbating the situation in the world economy.

How did the inequalities change during the pandemic? Well, billionaires got richer. Billionaires in Canada added more than $70 billion to their own wealth while the rest of those in Canada really struggled. This committee report fails to recommend any solution that would change or reverse this trend. The NDP feels that we need a tax on additional profits that were brought in by many of the big corporations during the pandemic. We need a wealth tax of 1% on superwealthy Canadians who have assets of over $10 million. Instead, we see superwealthy Canadians and big corporations taking money out of Canada year after year. We are losing over $25 billion in tax revenue every year because we are not taxing the people who can afford these investments and are, instead, taxing the people who cannot afford them.

In terms of climate change, there are many recommendations in this report on what we need to do about climate change, and we agree with many of those recommendations. However, we really want to emphasize that a successful transition to a low-carbon future in Canada must be centred on workers. As my colleague from Edmonton Griesbach so eloquently said, he has personal experience with that. We need a federal authority created and funded by the federal government that has a mandate to quickly implement a real plan to guide us to that low-carbon future.

Hundreds of thousands of new jobs could be created by bold work on retrofitting our buildings, as 40% of our emissions come from our buildings. The government came out with a plan a few years ago that would do a small part of that necessary work with a combination of grants and loans. It helps people who can afford to do the work up front. They spend thousands of dollars retrofitting their homes and then apply for a smaller grant, or they take on a loan, of $20,000 perhaps, to do the work. However, who that leaves out is the 20% of Canadians who live in energy poverty and cannot afford to spend that money up front and cannot afford to take on any loan, no matter how low the interest. The government recently came out with a plan for climate action that it said would help people in energy poverty, but it is in the form of loans. That will not work.

One area of expenditure that neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives want to eliminate is the billions of dollars the government gives every year in subsidies to oil and gas companies. I could go on and on about this. One of the biggest ones, of course, is this obsession to build the Trans Mountain pipeline, which has now cost over $20 billion. This is $20 billion to build a piece of infrastructure that we cannot afford in light of climate action and that we do not need.

● (1730)

As to health care, it is a huge issue for all Canadians. Again, the pandemic has really emphasized that. Health care workers are at their breaking point. I met with the nurses union recently and it has just had it. We need a significant increase in the Canada health transfer. We need a pan-Canadian health workforce strategy that is led by the provinces and funded by the federal government.

Some of the witnesses who came before the committee asked for an end to for-profit long-term care. Canada has a horrible result, on a global scale, in terms of the deaths we saw in long-term care homes. We desperately need to fix this. It was clear from the analysis that for-profit long-term care homes had a much worse outcome than not-for-profit long-term care homes.

My colleague mentioned pharmacare and dental care. These are things that hopefully we will finally see. If we had a federal publicly funded universal pharmacare plan, we would save a minimum of $4 billion a year according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. We could have a dental care program that costs $1 billion. We could have four dental care programs funded by the amount we would save with pharmacare.

I talked to a friend of mine a few days ago who heard about the announcement of the dental care plan. She said that when she was a kid, her family did not have money for dental care and she never went to the dentist. I think when she was 12 years old, she went into the hospital and they pulled out a bunch of her teeth and gave her a bad-looking plate that tried to replace those teeth. She said that caused her irreparable damage in her confidence around people. She has been socially shy and uncomfortable around people ever since she was 12 years old because she could not afford to go to a dentist. This plan would change people's lives in Canada.

Reconciliation is another thing we have heard about again and again over the last couple of years, like just recently regarding the visits with the Pope and the Vatican. This is another area where there has been a shameful lack of political will. I am happy to see the recommendations in this report from the finance committee that deal with the 94 calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the calls for justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, as well as the recommendations to support the economic empowerment of indigenous people.

I could talk about housing for 10 minutes. This is a huge issue in my riding, where the lack of housing is an important part of the labour shortage. People simply cannot afford to move to my riding and work there. We have companies that are forced to buy accommodations for their employees. We need a real plan to create affordable housing in Canada.

I will also bring up a big part of my riding, the wine industry. It has felt a real blow because we lost the excise tax exemption for many wineries. The federal government has to come up with a long-term plan to replace the supports that the exemption created.

I will finish by reminding members that it is our job to focus on making life better for Canadians. Too often, our governments have made life easier for wealthy Canadians and big corporations. We need to refocus and make budget choices that benefit all Canadians, and create a fairer and more prosperous Canada for all.

● (1735)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member for his contributions to today's pre-budget concurrence debate.

There is a very important issue in the Okanagan and, in fact, throughout Similkameen as well. The federal government will be doing a replacement program for the wine industry. Most people would ask what that has to do with anything. Well, on July 1, anyone in the wine industry, whether they have done 100% Canadian content or not, will have to pay excise tax on their existing inventory. This has not been done since 2006. Many small and medium-sized wineries are suddenly going to have bills from the federal government that they have never had before. This could devastate the industry on the small end. I have also spoken to some of the larger operators, who have said that because the government took away the tax exemption, they will have to pay more.

Would the member speak to this issue? I know it will greatly affect both of our ridings and the Canadian wine industry as a whole.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, just to the north and west of me, for that question, because it is a very important question for both of our ridings and for the entire Okanagan area and the Canadian wine industry as a whole.

As he mentioned, and I briefly mentioned at the end of my speech, the wine industry, especially the smaller wineries, are losing the exemption to the excise tax that they have enjoyed for many years. In fact, most of the wineries in our ridings have never paid that. They are relatively new businesses and they have not have a business model to cover that. We need to support them to make that transition. Every wine-producing country around the world has ways of supporting their wine industry, and the federal government has come out with a short-term thing. He mentioned the date and the fact that it is going to be on existing inventories. We have to change that and make sure our wine industry can grow and prosper.

Mr. Kody Blois: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola rose to ask a question and said that the government had taken away the 100% excise. It was actually deemed ineligible, as per the World Trade Organization. I thought—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): That is an issue of debate.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Vaughan—Woodbridge.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member from beautiful British Columbia, which was formerly my home province and where my parents and the rest of my family reside still, a question with regard to strengthening Canada's social fabric. We came in and from 2015 on we have strengthened Canada's social fabric, whether it is for seniors or for families with the CCB, or whether it is for workers with the Canada workers benefit, which is increasing again. We are increasing the basic personal exemption amount to $15,000.

Does the hon. member not feel that we are on the correct trajectory in continuing to strengthen our social fabric with improvements in dental care and with ongoing improvements with pharmacare?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I would certainly agree with him that we are on the right path by including pharmacare and dental care, which I think would be two programs that will help Canadians the most. This will change people's lives. I mentioned the example of my friend who would have had a very different life, perhaps, had she had dental care when she was a girl.

As for people with pharmacare, 10% of Canadians cannot afford to fill their prescriptions. We have free care in hospitals and we have free doctor visits, but when one gets a prescription, one has to pay for that out of one's own pocket. These are things that will change people's lives more than anything else. However, if we want to make a real big difference for all Canadians, we should bring in a guaranteed basic income that would make sure that all Canadians would not be below the poverty line. People would still work, but people could live in dignity and that would really make a difference.

● (1740)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from British Columbia for his thoughtful and socially conscious speech, which brought up some very important issues.

However, I cannot help but notice that the solution always seems to involve the superwealthy. I would like to know if, for him, the concept of superwealthy is economic, sociological or ideological.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I think it is a very practical solution. We do not have to bring up ideology or whatever. These are the people with billions and billions of dollars. As I mentioned, 1% of them share 25% of our wealth. They should be paying more for this. We have had a trickle-down economic theory that has been completely debunked but that the Conservatives still cling to. They would say to cut taxes for the wealthy and the big corporations—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to this concurrence motion regarding a report that was done by the finance committee and then tabled.

For those who might be tuning in today to watch and who are asking themselves what the motion is all about, basically the Conservative Party has decided to table a report that I bet will pass unanimously in this House when we get to the time for voting. People might ask why the Conservatives would do that. In my opinion, it is for no reason other than to just delay the work of this House.

Of course, they will give us their fake outrage about how the democratic process entitles everybody to speak forever and ever, and they are not wrong about that. However, the reality of the situation is that there are things we need to deal with in this House. One of those things is passing the fall economic statement. We are unable to do that because the Conservative Party is putting up speaker after speaker to drag out the process. The Conservatives are probably starting to run out of speakers now, but one of the reasons they had to bring in this concurrence motion is to add a little more time, at least three hours, to this debate.

That is my opinion on why we happen to be debating this concurrence motion right now. Although the Bloc, the NDP and the Liberals all realize that maybe it is time to pass the fall economic statement, and it would be great if we could pass it before we pass the spring budget that will be introduced in a couple of days, the Conservative Party is relentless, quite frankly, because it figures this one motion is going to be its pathway to victory in the next election. I am sure that is what the Conservatives are thinking, and that is how we have ended up here. It is either that or just to tell Canadians later on that the government was unable to conduct its business, all for reasons of its own making, and that of course none of that had to do with the Conservatives.

We are here because our procedural rules permit this to happen. We are talking about a report that I am very confident will pass unanimously in this House when we get to it.

There was a comment earlier, when one of your counterparts, Madam Speaker, was in the chair, by the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, who got extremely excited when the member for Winnipeg North accused some of the Conservative bench of being far right. I would point out that the member for Winnipeg North did not even say "alt right"; he said "far right". I would say that the member for Winnipeg North was being extremely generous when he made that comment about being on the far right.

If the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon is so concerned about members of his party being labelled "far right", he might want to, I do not know, talk to the member for Lethbridge or the member for Saskatoon West. He could talk to them about maybe not coming into the House and calling the Prime Minister a dictator. That kind of rhetoric and language certainly leads in the direction of understanding why they might really be considered far right.

I will give another example. How about on February 17 in this House, when the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said, "Canadians want foreign interference"—

● (1745)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have a point of order from the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, as a point of relevance, the member should be speaking to this motion today. I know he seems to be getting a little—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): As the member well knows, this is definitely a matter of debate.

The hon. member has 20 minutes to get to the relevance of the motion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, it is very interesting that when the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon raised this issue earlier, the member who just rose on the point of order started heckling this side to give them examples. I am literally just fulfilling his request right now.

This is what the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said on February 17 in this House:

> Canadians want foreign interference from the Prime Minister's jet-setting resetters to stop.

This was clearly a reference to the Great Reset conspiracy theory. If the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon is worried about being labelled "far right", he might want to talk to his seatmates about the things that they say in this House.

Hold on; I have another example. The member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands went out and took a picture with Pat King, who is now in jail and facing 10 charges for the events that took place out in front of this building. The member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands actually went out and got a picture taken with him.

I have one that is even better. The member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon himself said, at a "Truckers for Freedom" rally in his riding, "Right now, you're right to be angry. Everyone has a right to be angry. Our country isn't normal. You need to stand up for what you believe in and you need to do it in the way you're doing it."

If the member for Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon—

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, he did not make reference to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Those are matters for debate.

The hon. member is quoting something apparently strictly on context.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I would be happy to talk to the member about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and how they were infringed upon as soon as he can bring forward to the House an actual example of how that has been determined to be a fact by the court, which it has not. Nonetheless, if the member is so concerned about being labelled far-right, he might want to talk to his seatmates and indeed personally reflect on the comments that he is making because doing that will certainly give him the ability to control that narrative.

However, we are here talking about this motion and this particular report. I am going to focus my comments on pages 191 to 193 of the report. That is the dissenting report from the Conservative Party, those that decided to dissent on this report.

What I found very interesting about their dissenting report is that it is a quick read with not a lot of complex words. People can get through that pretty quickly. It is only two pages long and a sentence, so I would encourage anybody out there to read it and see for themselves that this is not a report to provide recommendations. There is not a single recommendation in it. It is just whining on with the same talking points that we hear over and over in the House. There is not a single actual recommendation of how to do something different.

They do have four points in here, which I will address specifically. They say in their first point that there is no plan that has been recommended by the committee to balance the budget. I find that very interesting, coming from a party that ran on balancing the budget not after one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight or nine years, but 10 years. The party opposite, which in this report is so incredibly critical of this government's position on running deficits during this pandemic as a way to empower Canadians and our economy to get through this, somehow is able to be so incredibly critical of it. However, their former leader, the member for Durham, was more than willing to tell the Canadian public back in September that he was willing to wait 10 years to balance the budget, yet they have the audacity to be so overly critical about it.

Let us go to point number two. There is no plan to control spending. That is what the Conservatives are saying, but we might recall from that same platform that I just referenced that the party ran on a platform of spending way more money than our party did when we were elected in the fall of 2021. I find it fascinating how they are suddenly so concerned about running deficits and about balancing budgets when they literally ran on the exact opposite six months ago.

Point three is interesting. They said in their report that they have concerns over the fact that there is a lack of attention paid in this report to supporting growth and prosperity. We have the highest GDP in the G7. How can they possibly make that claim, if nothing more than to try to score political points from the hundreds of thousands of people who will read this report, that we do not have a thriving economy when we have the best GDP right now in the G7?

Hon. Ed Fast We have the lowest investment, Mark.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member for Abbotsford is correct. We do have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio. What does that mean? That means it puts us in the position of being able to rebound out of the economic hardships of the last two years better than any of our counterparts. That is what it actually does. They failed to mention that, and they said that we do not have a plan.

I would argue with them, as the member for Winnipeg North and other people have mentioned, that growing the economy is not strictly done by reducing taxes, in particular for the wealthy, which is what the Conservatives would like to do. There are other ways of doing that. One of the ways is to empower and put more people into the workforce. There are two ways they can do that. One, we can get more parents who are sitting at home with kids into the workforce. How are we doing that? I do not know. Maybe we will do it the way that every single premier of Canada agreed to, including all the Conservative ones, and bring in $10-a-day child care. We do not have to look that far to see it is a successful program. Just look at Quebec.

● (1750)

Quebec, for quite a while, has had a low per-day child care rate. It is $7-a-day child care, and look at the success. More women, in particular, are in the workforce in Quebec, and so that is one way we put more people into the economy and grow our economy.

What is another way we can do it? It is by having robust, meaningful immigration programs that can bring more people into our country, just like the programs that attracted my parents in the 1950s after World War II. These programs can bring more people into our country so we can help to stimulate and grow our economy even faster.

Therefore, when the Conservatives say that there is a lack of attention being put on prosperity and growth, they are absolutely out to lunch. The actual data does not support their claim. It is very well known that we have one of the strongest economies in the world. Indeed, we have programs in place, or that are coming online, that will even further enhance that.

The fourth and final point, which I find to be very interesting in the Conservatives' report, is that they talk about significant proposals to attack the immediate threat to Canadians, specifically in respect to housing. They seem to be suggesting that there is nothing in the committee report's recommendations to support that. I know that there are 220 recommendations in the report, and maybe they did not get to read all of them before filing their dissenting report, but there is actually a recommendation in there, recommendation 203, that calls for the creation of half a million, quality, affordable homes. There is a plan in there, despite the fact that the Conservatives are suggesting in their dissenting report that there is not.

In conclusion, as it relates to the dissenting report, I would suggest that the next time the Conservatives put together a report to try to be critical of the work the committee has done, they should do two things: One, put some thought into what they are putting down on paper and see if it reflects the actual report; and two, perhaps more importantly, put some suggestions in there as to what they are recommending we do.

It is very easy to be critical. We hear it all the time from across the way. They are always critical about this person and that person, or that something is happening in this part of the economy or in this sector, but there is never an actual suggestion, unless it is to unlock more oil. There is never an actual suggestion to do anything that would have an impact. It is all just a rambling on of complaints about this government, which we could get just by sitting here in QP.

In my remaining time, I would like to talk about a couple of the initiatives that are in the report that I really appreciate and really like. I will start off with those that specifically have to do with the electrification of our environment, of our vehicles and of just about anything.

The world is changing. I know that the Conservatives, whenever the word “energy” comes out of their mouths, are only ever talking about oil.

An hon. member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, they even just said “Hear, hear!” However, believe it or not, energy comes in other forms than just oil. I do not know if the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, who just heckled me, would know this, but I encourage him to walk into—

* * *

● (1755)

POINTS OF ORDER

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO QUESTION NO. 351

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The rules do require me to raise issues of order as soon as they come up. Therefore, I want to draw the attention of the House and raise a point of order with respect to the response that was tabled on Question No. 351. This was a question on the Order Paper that I had tabled earlier.

Question No. 351 was with respect to vaccination policies for the federal public service. I asked a detailed series of questions, asking for various points of data including things like whether replacement workers had to be brought in to cover for workers who were put on unpaid leave as a result of their vaccination status. It included questions about, for instance, whether the government had conducted an assessment of the impact on services of work that was not done as a result of employees being put on leave.

The question I had put forward had parts (a) through (v) and the response that the government tabled provided responses to some of the sub-items that were listed in Question No. 351. It did not provide any comments whatsoever on many of the items.

The government has an obligation to respond to questions that are put forward. I understand that it is not in the responsibility of the Chair to evaluate the quality of the responses. In this case, the government is lucky that is not required. However, I would submit that the obligation of response does not just deal with the question overall. It should include an obligation to respond to the specific elements in each of the questions. In particular, there should be some response to all of the elements (a) through (v) in the question, including some of the specific points that were not responded to, such as what was required of replacement workers to cover for those who were put on administrative leave and whether workers were required to perform additional tasks for those who were put on unpaid leave, etc.

Madam Speaker, I would ask that you review the matter and advise with respect to the government's obligation here because we are seeing in general, I think it is fair to say, a decline in the quality of any kind of responses. As much as it is not for the Chair to get into the detail of the response and to say that it was a pretty good response or not a good response, the government should not be able to, in response to questions, just put up any text that is wholly irrelevant to the question asked or respond to one part while ignoring whole swaths of the question. The House should reasonably find that this does not satisfy the government's obligation with respect to responding to questions.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I would ask you to look at Question No. 351, this particularly egregious case of the government's putting forward text that totally ignores whole parts of the question, and advise whether this is the kind of approach we want to see from the government going forward.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The question will be taken under advisement by the Chair, and we will return to the hon. member.

* * *

● (1800)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, what did we just witness there? We just witnessed a filibuster within a filibuster. They were already filibustering by bringing in this concurrence motion, and then the member stood on a point of order to try to filibuster the filibuster. It is absolutely remarkable what we are seeing, but I will have that member know that I take this as a compliment. I take this as the people in the back room over there saying, “Oh God, there goes Gerretsen again. Somebody get in there and go shut him up. Hey, get in there and read this,” and they handed him something to read so he could filibuster the filibuster. That is what we just witnessed there, but it is perfectly in line with what we see coming from the Conservative Party, day after day, to avoid having to deal with Bill C-8. That is where we are right now, and that is what we are seeing right now.

As I was saying to the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, before he interrupted me with the filibuster to the filibuster, he should really take a trip to somewhere like Home Depot and walk around inside for a second and see if he can buy a gas lawnmower. It is not easy to find them anymore. The electrification of everything is literally happening before our eyes. Everything is being converted to battery-operated. It is very difficult nowadays to find products, particularly power tools, that are not battery-operated, especially industrial or larger power tools such as lawnmowers, for example.

The same can be said about the vehicles throughout the country. They are moving in a direction. Whether or not Conservatives want to get on board, it is happening. It is happening right before their eyes and it is not something they can control. It has gone past the tipping point. We have gone past the point of no return, so we are either going to get on board with it or we are going to be caught behind.

Will we need oil? We are going to need oil for a long time. There is no doubt about that, and the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan can clap to that, too. We will, but that does not mean that we cannot at the same time look for a way to transition away from oil, and that is what the recommendations in this report that I referenced are doing specifically, by calling on the government to look for those opportunities.

I brought one up that speaks to ensuring that there are charging stations for electric vehicle readiness as part of the efficiency program to help Canadians who live in older houses. This is one of the problems that we have. A lot of older houses will have to be retrofitted to put in the proper infrastructure.

The one I really liked was recommendation 191. This specifically looked at establishing a greater focus on charging infrastructure investment needs by setting up and funding higher one- and five-year targets for electric vehicle charging stations. This is basically calling on the government to move faster than the already prescribed date of 2035 of being all net-zero emitting vehicles. It asks to set a goal to make one million existing apartment and condominium parking stalls electric-ready by 2030, which is incredibly important.

The apartment that I stay in here in Ottawa was only built in 2015, but for some reason the infrastructure was not already put in place for electric vehicles. That is going to have to be retrofitted. To that point, one of the recommendations that I really liked, recommendation 193, was to incorporate zero-emission vehicle requirements into the national building code and energy building code. Why is that so important? It is because most provinces look to the national building code. If we look at the Ontario building code, it is almost a carbon copy of the national building code. It is the same with Quebec's building code. We need national standards because those will then inform the other provincial standards that are out there.

Indeed, there are provinces that just look to the national building code. By encouraging this kind of stuff, which does not cost the government any money, and by putting these into the building code and encouraging that kind of infrastructure to be built now, we are going to be preparing ourselves for the future. That is one of the other recommendations that I really liked seeing in there.

I just want to say how disappointed I am that we got to the point today that we had to have this discussion. It is going to be unanimously approved by the House.

● (1805)

I imagine that will happen when the deferred recorded division takes place, but I find it very troubling that we even had to have this discussion, just as an opportunity for the Conservatives to once again stall the debate and filibuster what was going on so that we cannot deal with Bill C-8. For some reason, they are hung up on the fall economic statement and not letting it pass. At every step of the way, they are literally dragging their feet. They are the only ones still speaking to it. Every other party has given up on it, and 90% of the members from the Conservative Party who stand to talk about it do not even talk about Bill C-8. They talk about every grievance that they might happen to have at that time.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad the member talked about and actually read the report by the Standing Committee on Finance. Some of the other speakers obviously spoke for 20 minutes without any reference to what was in the report.

On recommendation 191, the member and I will maybe debate a bit and disagree on that recommendation, which is for infrastructure for electric vehicles. I have spoken with the industry, which has said there is a problem in the Weights and Measures Act that makes it difficult for the market itself to function. Right now, when people plug in their electric vehicles, if it is fast charger that draws more out, they have to charge the same amount that they would for someone who has a regular charger and charges by the minute. The problem is that we cannot see private investment and markets begin to appear, so the government has to continue to pay for this infrastructure. Elon Musk has said publicly that there is enough adoption of electric vehicles that the infrastructure can pay for itself.

Does the member believe that, rather than borrowing those scarce tax dollars to pay for something, because we are borrowing the money right now, why does the government not actually fix it and let the market function and provide that infrastructure, like it does with regular vehicles?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, what a great policy debate. Why did the Conservative Party not put that in its dissenting report? What an incredible point. That is something we could actually debate and discuss. I want to thank the member for bringing that forward, because he might very well be right. Why did the Conservatives not talk about it in the dissenting report? All they did in the dissenting report was whine and complain about everything the government is doing.

We are having this debate and he finally brings up a quite germane point. I would argue that, as the technology develops further and further, we are not really going to need that infrastructure, other than between extremely long commutes. Right now, the average electric vehicle gets about 400 kilometres, maybe about 320 kilometres in the winter in our climate, but as the technology develops further and further, that range is going to increase more and more. I would argue that the infrastructure will not even be needed as greatly as it appears to be needed right now, but I want to thank him for that very good point that he just brought up.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He very eloquently and approvingly mentioned the system of early childhood centres that was created by our leader's mentor, among others.

My colleague's speech made it clear that Quebec was singlehandedly able to use its own resources to build a system that is favourable and very helpful to our economy.

By that same logic, Quebec is great at developing programs on its own that are good for its people. Again, let us follow that logic rationally.

Why is the federal government refusing to increase health transfers unconditionally when Quebec is so great at creating programs that are good for its people?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: It is because as we evolve, Madam Speaker, and as regional levels adopt these programs, sometimes we get to the point of saying that maybe it is time for the federal government to take on this program now. Is that not one of the great things of being in this country, that we can look at what others are doing and look to those as examples of what we can do nationally?

I will give another great example. Thirty or 40 years ago, the environment was just a provincial issue. There was very little that the federal government got into in terms of environment. It was not until recently, when we started to realize the wider impacts of the environment, that we saw the need for the federal government to take it on. I would suggest that it is the exact same thing with this.

As we see the need for these programs and the need for them to develop over time, we can see the need for various provinces to want to bring in child care. I do not recall Quebec saying it did not want its portion of that money and turn the federal government down. I am pretty sure Quebec is part of the program that the federal government brought in.

● (1810)

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member spent quite a bit of his speech talking about the Conservatives and the fact that they are still so committed to oil and gas and so committed to the big companies that are making record profits. However, the Liberal government has increased oil and gas subsidies year after year, and Canada has the worst record of any G7 country when it comes to emissions reduction.

I am curious if the member is feeling a little ashamed of his own government in that it is so close to the Conservatives when it comes to support for oil and gas.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, there is an interesting thing about this question, and I am so glad I was asked it. The problem is that NDP members will say that we have not reduced oil subsidies as much as we have, but the reality is that when they are making those calculations, they are including the money being used to deal with orphaned wells. The government put in a significant amount of money, right at the beginning of the pandemic, to help deal with the orphaned wells out there. The calculation the member is using is including that. If we look at the traditional subsidies in oil and gas, they have been reduced quite significantly and are on track to being eliminated by 2025 or sooner.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, this morning I was reading an article in The Globe and Mail, and it was quoting, extensively, the chief executive of the Bank of Canada, David McKay. He said that he was uneasy about the economy and that there was a frustration and mistrust between the business community and the Government of Canada. He said some of those challenges are ideological, that there needs to be a shift away from a tax-and-spend approach, which does not create sustainable growth. He also said tax and spending like the government is doing is like eating Sugar Pops for breakfast. He said the government is missing a chance for long-term success and that Canada is lagging its peers on key measures of productivity and investment. The article indicated that Canada's five-year average GDP growth is the lowest among the G7 nations.

When the member stands up and starts pointing fingers at me, he asks why we need to have a debate on this concurrence report. It is because it is not the Conservative Party but the Bank of Canada saying that the government and its tax-and-spend approach are ideologically hurting the country of Canada. Therefore, what is it: Sugar Pops or a bowl of Corn Flakes?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I love that the member cherry-picked some data. He talked about the last couple years and the average growth rather than talking about the GDP as it has applied over time. If we look at it over time, we have been successful in outpacing our G7 partners.

To the point about whether we need to look at spending differently from how we have over the last two years, I do not think there is a member in the House who would disagree with that. I suggest that, as we move forward, we are certainly going to see that. We are not going to keep the same level of spending that was required to provide CERB and a lot of the other supports to individuals.

If the federal government maintained the exact same spending level it has for the last two years to support people through the pandemic, I could understand the member's concern, but I really do not think that is going to happen. If that is his concern, I think he is going to be surprised on Thursday.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, on the discussion about fossil fuel subsidies, I am with the member partway. I agree that when we are cleaning up orphaned wells, it violates the polluter pays principle. I was for it because I did not want to see money going to big oil during the pandemic, although they managed to get their hands on it anyway.

There are new subsidies coming up. We have the new pledge to put federal money, as much as $9 billion, into a technology that does not work, carbon capture and storage. It would allow the fossil fuel industry to pocket more profits. If my friends in the NDP really cared about climate, they should have made it an issue before they signed the deal with the Liberals.

Will the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands join us in pushing to stop subsidizing fossil fuels while we have any prayer of holding on to 1.5°C?

● (1815)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I agree with the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. Party position or not, my personal position is that we should not be subsidizing the fossil fuel industry, full stop.

Her question is about subsidizing through carbon sequestration. I would like to get into the details of that. I do not think that carbon sequestration is a long-term objective. Could it be used in the short-term? I think the technology is not there yet, and therefore it will never happen.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think it is time we shifted from opinion back to fact.

As a member of the finance committee, I was part of the pre-budget consultations, although not the whole process, because I was appointed critic about halfway through. However, the member for Kingston and the Islands is not a member of that committee, so much of what he was saying was actually speculation. It is unfortunate, because this chamber should be a chamber in which we discuss facts, evidence and science, and that is what I would like to do. I want to talk about facts.

When the finance committee resolved to embark on a pre-budget consultation process for the 2022 budget, it established a timeline that was completely unreasonable. It ran out of time because, as members may remember, back in 2021 the Prime Minister was so desperate to get a majority government that he called an unnecessary and expensive election, which of course set the work of this House behind by many months. When that election did not deliver the majority that the Prime Minister expected, he then delayed bringing back the House of Commons, so the time that was left to do pre-budget consultations was compressed. The way the Liberals and the NDP, the new NDP-Liberal government, dealt with it was by effectively having hundreds and hundreds of submissions made to the committee. In fact, there were 500 submissions that came in to the committee, and then it adopted 222 recommendations that had come from those submissions.

Now, members have to understand the process. When families across Canada are establishing their own budgets, they first determine how much income they have as a family or how much revenue comes into their family, and then they determine how much they can spend on rent and mortgage payments; how much they can spend on food; and how much they can spend on gas, transportation, vacations for the kids, hockey and music lessons. They determine those expenditures within the context of the revenue that is coming into the household. None of that happened here at committee.

Hundreds of Canadians were coming to committee, and many were simply saying, "Hey, I want you to spend money on this, and that, and that." Then our NDP friends, our Bloc friends and especially our Liberal friends uncritically accepted these recommendations and incorporated them into the report that is before us today. This report has 222 recommendations, and many of them have big dollars attached to them. In fact, when we added all the dollars up of the recommendations that had dollars attached, it was around the $50-billion mark. Half of the recommendations had no dollars attached, but clearly, had they been costed, they would have resulted in many billions of dollars more in asks. They all found their way into this report, and that is the report we are debating here in the House today.

My colleague for Kingston and the Islands was upset that we insisted on debating tens of billions of dollars of recommendations. These are expenditures that the government is being asked to make and that the House is supposed to recommend to the government when we are facing a massive debt crisis in this country with no debt management plan, deficits as far as the eye can see, and no date on which the budget will be balanced, unlike households across Canada who have to balance their books if they are going to survive. This government has decided, over the last seven years, that it does not care about balanced budgets. In fact, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that based on the current trajectory of the government, this country will not balance its books until the year 2070.

● (1820)

Fifty years from now, we may begin to live within our means. We may begin to live within the revenues that government takes in through taxes. That is no way to manage the finances of this country.

Therefore, we have this process of all these asks coming in to the committee. One would expect that, like most households, they would go through a prioritization process of what are the "must haves", what are the "like to haves" and what are the recommendations that really are not necessary at this time. Families across this country go through that process.

Do members think this committee went through that process? Did it triage the various requests that came in and establish a set of priorities? Did it look through the revenues the government takes in, the hundreds of billions of dollars that are required to fund those recommendations, and then place them into that context and decide what is best for Canada? Did it then walk through the recommendations and prioritize them, saying at one point in time that some of the recommendations are just not affordable right now? Did the committee go through that process? It absolutely did not.

The process that took place at the finance committee was an absolute farce. In response to the question from the member for Kingston and the Islands, which was why we did not bring forward our own recommendations, it was because the process was a farce. It was not a budgetary review process. It was not a pre-budget consultation process, where we weigh the different requests and then come forward to the government with a set of recommendations that all of us could agree on. The NDP-Liberal government and its Bloc allies came along and said they would uncritically take all of the recommendations and present them to government as recommendations for the next budget, which we will hear about on Thursday of this week. That is farcical.

I think you understand that, Madam Speaker. That is not the way the financial affairs of this country should be run because we are facing a massive debt that future generations are going to have to pay. It is irresponsible to take every recommendation that comes into committee and then say to government that they want it to implement those recommendations. That is grossly irresponsible.

I have grandchildren. The 13th is on its way. I do not want to saddle them with a debt that they cannot manage to pay. Today, we know that interest rates are on their way up, so we have the problem of inflation and rising interest rates. Those are the twin scourges that are going to really impact future generations of Canadians. How are they supposed to pay for all of this? I lament for the future of our children, grandchildren and the many generations to come. Right now, they are not going to have a balanced budget. We will be running deficits for the next 50 years, based on what the Parliamentary Budget Officer has suggested.

By the way, that does not take into account all of the promises the Liberal government had to make to its NDP partners. There is pharmacare to be added on. There is dental care to be added on. There is defence spending. By the way, we as Conservatives strongly support beefing up our defence and our Armed Forces, as a country. They have to take all of that into account. They have to prioritize. We as Conservatives would prioritize defence spending, but for the rest of it there was no prioritization that took place. It was grossly irresponsible. I do not want to leave that kind of a country to my children.

We have the right to expect better from parliamentarians. We have a right to expect better from the Prime Minister and the finance minister. I know the Prime Minister has said that he does not pay attention to monetary policy. That shows in his performance and the poor performance of our economy, where we are now seeing massive inflation setting in. The inflationary pressures facing our country are immense, and they are going to get worse before they get better.

● (1825)

At least, that is what the Governor of the Bank of Canada recently said. Things are going to get worse before they are going to get better when it comes to inflation.

Why do we have inflation? Yes, we have supply chain constraints. Yes, we have problems with skyrocketing commodity prices, but one of the reasons we have this problem in Canada, especially in the housing market, where houses have been basically priced out of reach for millions of Canadians, is excess liquidity. In other words, the government has borrowed and spent so much money over the past two years that it has flooded the market with dollars that are chasing a limited number of goods, including a limited number of houses across Canada. That is when inflation sets in.

This is the environment that faces coming generations. I do not want my children and grandchildren to have this hanging around their necks, yet the government has had no plan to manage that massive debt load. There is no plan to ever return to balance. There is no plan. We have asked, month after month and day after day, in the House in question period, where the finance minister's plan was to fight inflation. How is she going to address the skyrocketing cost of living, or the cost of groceries, with families going hungry, or the cost of gasoline? Parents want to drop off their kids at school or take them to hockey or music lessons, and they are realizing that a tank of gas costs double what it did just a year ago. That is not the kind of world we want to live in. That is not the kind of world we want to leave to our children.

Again, I know this is a sobering thought on the debate we are having today. There are 222 recommendations to spend without a critical eye being placed on each one of those recommendations. There is no critical eye on how future generations are going to pay for all of this. We, as a country, can do better. The government should do better, and some day a Conservative government will do better.

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy listening to the comments from the hon. member for Abbotsford. They tend to be measured and are sometimes on point, but most often are off point, I would say.

In three days' time, or thereabouts, we will see the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, who I have a great amount of faith in, deliver a budget in the House that moves Canada forward as we have been doing since 2015.

When we talk about leadership, I always say that we have responsible leadership. That is what we have provided Canadians, day in and day out.

Regarding inflation, we see every country in the world battling inflation these days. We are, too. We know supply chains are returning to normal, but when the member talks about a plan, we have presented a plan. We had a management plan in last year's budget: in the fall economic statement. That was there. Many of the questions that the member opposite raised were things that we have done or we are doing, and we have fiscal guardrails in place in terms of where we move forward. I have young kids, and we are going to leave a brighter economy for them.

I ask the hon. member this. Are the investments that are ongoing today not the right investments, including our social fabric and today a $2-billion announcement by General Motors, with the Conservative government in Ontario and the Liberal government—

● (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to give the hon. member a chance to answer.

The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I would remind the member that Canada has the worst record of the 30 OECD countries when it comes to attracting investment, and he knows that. When we are at a place where the world says that Canada is no longer a good place to invest in, we should be concerned.

My friend referred to this debt management plan that was incorporated into last year's budget. Do members know what that debt management plan was? It was a trajectory. There was no firm target. We asked the Liberals, time and again, here in question period when the budget would be balanced. The finance minister never, ever gave us an answer.

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

[*Translation*]

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

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.

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, I request that the motion be adopted on division.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, thousands of my constituents, and other Canadians from across the country, signed a petition I put forward on improving the number of flights from Canada to India. They are calling upon the Government of Canada to renegotiate the air transportation agreement with the Government of India to allow for direct flights to Amritsar Airport.

My constituents understand that this will not take place until the war in Ukraine, the invasion by Russia, has ended. That said, they are still hopeful that the Government of Canada will move forward in good faith with our good friends in India to improve this agreement to allow for those direct flights. It is good for the economy, and it is good for the cultural ties, especially between my riding and the Punjab region of India.

UKRAINE

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to table two petitions.

The first petition is signed by my constituents in my riding of Battlefords—Lloydminster. It calls on the Government of Canada to take several steps to further support Ukraine. This includes the establishment of a no-fly zone over Ukraine, the provision of additional lethal weapons and to increase humanitarian aid.

The second petition also calls on the Government of Canada to work with our allies to close the airspace over Ukraine and to provide direct military assistance.

In the face of Putin's indiscriminate attacks and unjustified aggression in Ukraine, the petitioners are urging Canada to stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, for the cost of not standing up to Putin's aggression is far too great.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the opportunity today to present a petition on behalf of the hard-working, passionate students of Notre Dame College School in the city of Welland. This petition calls upon the House of Commons to adopt human rights and environmental due diligence legislation.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions I want to present to the House today. I am thankful for the opportunity.

The first petition is in support of Bill S-223. This is a bill that would make it a criminal offence for people to go abroad and receive an organ without consent from the donor. The goal of this bill is to combat the scourge of forced organ harvesting and trafficking. The petitioners note that this legislation has been before various Parliaments in the same form. It has passed the Senate unanimously three times and has passed in this House once unanimously in a previous Parliament. In light of the scourge that organ harvesting and trafficking is, the petitioners are hopeful that this Parliament will be the one to finally get it done.

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights the situation of Mr. Huseyin Celil, a Canadian who continues to be detained in the People's Republic of China. The petitioners note that they are happy to see that Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor were released after 1,000 days of unjust detention, but there are at least 115 Canadians still being detained in China, which includes Mr. Celil. He is a Uighur human rights activist and Canadian citizen who was taken from Uzbekistan and sent to China. The Chinese government has refused to recognize the obvious fact that he is a Canadian citizen and has denied him access to family, lawyers and any kind of consular services.

The petitioners want to see the government elevate this case. There has been relatively less engagement on this case than some other consular cases. They want the government to demand that the Chinese government recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular and legal services in accordance with international law, to formally state that the release of Mr. Celil from Chinese detainment and his return to Canada are a priority of concern equal to the unjust detentions of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, to appoint a special envoy to work on securing his release and to seek the assistance of the Biden administration and other allies around the world in achieving his release.

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling highlights concerns about a commitment made in the Liberal 2021 election platform. We know the Liberals do not always keep their election commitments, and hopefully in this case they will not.

The petition is with respect to their wanting to politicize charitable status determinations by denying charitable status to organizations with a pro-life perspective. This could apply to hospitals, houses of worship, schools, homeless shelters and other charitable organizations that do great work serving our communities. This proposal in the Liberal platform amounts to the application of a values test to charitable status, similar to what we saw with the values test that was applied to the Canada summer jobs program. It would politicize charitable status determinations and put the great work that many charities do at risk.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis, without discrimination on the basis of those views and without the imposition of another values test, as well as to affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

POLITICAL BELIEF

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is also about fundamental rights and freedoms. It raises concern about the phenomenon of political discrimination in Canada—that is, people who are facing discrimination or unfair treatment as a result of their political positions. I tabled a private member's bill on this issue, Bill C-257, and this petition is signed by those who are in support of it. The bill would add political belief and activity as prohibited grounds within the Canadian Human Rights Act. The petitioners want to see the House support Bill C-257, which would ban political discrimination and defend the rights of Canadians to peacefully express different political opinions.

VACCINE MANDATES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition is with respect to the travel mandate. The petitioners note that the Government of Canada is requiring all domestic travellers to be fully vaccinated, yet travellers who test negative and wear a mask while travelling are extremely unlikely to transmit the virus. An estimated 0.5% of COVID-19 cases in Canada occurred through travel exposure, but that was prior to the imposition of any testing requirement for travellers. The petitioners note that mobility rights are protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that freedom can only be limited when those limitations are demonstrably justified, as there are other mechanisms, such as regular rapid testing and tracing, that can be used as alternatives for those who choose not to be vaccinated.

● (1835)

Petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to allow any Canadian who has tested negative for COVID-19, and who is prepared to wear a mask, to travel by air, sea or rail. They also call on the government to ensure that rapid testing is affordable and accessible in order to ensure the effective protection of public health.

● (1840)

VITAMIN D AND COVID-19

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling also relates to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is about the importance of vitamin D. It notes that an early systematic review of applicable scientific literature found that blood vitamin D status can determine the risk of being infected with COVID-19, the seriousness of COVID-19 and mortality from COVID-19. Additionally, it further recommends the public maintain appropriate levels of vitamin D to be able to cope with the pandemic.

Petitioners cite various other statistics involving the relationship between low vitamin D levels and higher risk from COVID-19. Petitioners note that people get vitamin D from sunlight exposure, so during the season when Canadians are less likely to spend time outdoors, increasing awareness of vitamin D is particularly important.

Petitioners call on the Government of Canada to take the following actions: recognize the emerging scientific evidence that low levels of vitamin D are associated with worse outcomes from COVID-19 and work to increase public awareness of the importance of individuals maintaining recommended levels of vitamin D.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I encourage the member, and if he has 100 petitions, that is fine. The issue, more so, is that the member should be showing maybe a little more courtesy by respecting the fact he should be making his presentation on each petition relatively short and brief, out of respect for all members of the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The Chair has often encouraged members to do precisely that, to have a very short presentation of each petition, but the hon. member definitely has the right to present however many.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I am summarizing the petitions as they come forward. I have tabled multiple petitions on the same topics in my time as a member of Parliament, as members are aware, and this is because these reflect issues of great passion for my constituents, and they are issues my constituents want to hear raised on a regular basis.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will continue with the next petition, which is in support of the energy sector. In my province petitioners are concerned about the ideological agenda of the government, and its fellow travellers in the NDP, as it seeks to shut down our energy sector. They note that the consequences of these actions will be the loss of wealth, prosperity, opportunity and wellness for Albertans, and Albertans are very concerned about this.

Petitioners want the government to take the following actions: formally recognize Alberta's place as an equal partner in the federation and remove any barriers to Alberta being able to develop its resources without interference. Finally, petitioners want the government to ensure unfettered access to international markets for these resources.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is with respect to the ongoing Uighur genocide. Petitioners highlight various news items about the horrific treatment of Uighurs, including forced sterilization, forced abortion, coordinated suppression of birth rates, organ harvesting, invasive surveillance, separation of children from families, forced labour, destruction of cultural sites and many other abuses.

Petitioners note that this genocide has been recognized by the House, but not as yet by the government, and therefore the ask in this petition is that the government formally recognize that Uighurs in China have been and are being subjected to genocide and also to use the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Foreign Officials Act, or the Magnitsky act, to sanction those who are responsible for the heinous crimes being committed against Uighurs.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I begin this evening's Adjournment Proceedings by acknowledging that we are here on the territory of the traditional unceded lands of the Algonquin nation. To them, I say *meegwetch*.

I raised this question initially on February 9, 2022, and it relates to the Trans Mountain pipeline. It is amazing, the timing, but that day marked exactly two years since there had been any public accounting of the costs to the Government of Canada and the people of Canada on the purchase of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Actually, the Prime Minister did respond to my question and say that the Government of Canada believed that the oil and gas sector and profits to its pipeline were still important in making the transition away from oil and gas, but within, I think, 24 hours later, the question and the Prime Minister's answer were rather overtaken by events, as I had foreshadowed. We were overdue for a financial accounting on the Trans Mountain pipeline. I think it was the very next day when that accounting came forward, and Trans Mountain Limited reported that they were, in fact, way over budget.

Let us just review where we are. By the way, the same day that report came out, our Minister of Finance said there would be no more public money into Trans Mountain, so in the time that I have tonight I want to canvass two things. This is an economic loser and, in light of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report today, we need to cancel this project.

First, let us start out where we were. When it was a Kinder Morgan project before the National Energy Board and I was an intervenor, Kinder Morgan's estimate of costs of construction were $5.4 billion. By the time we bought it, like a bunch of suckers, it was up to $7.4 billion estimated costs. That went to $9.3 billion. By 2020, it was over budget to $12.6 billion. That was our last update. When it was updated once again, we were now over $21 billion with over another year to wait.

We say we are not going to put any more public money into it, but this has been purchased by a Crown corporation. The Crown corporation borrowed $15 billion against the Canada account, which means we are already spending $700 in interest a year. Beyond that, the people of Canada are going to be on the hook forever if this thing is allowed to be built because Trans Mountain's deal with its customers, in terms of the tolls it charges, only allow the customers to be charged for 25% of any cost overruns. The 75% remaining will come back to the people of Canada once again, so we know this project is massively over budget, massively costing too much and that the Crown corporation itself has said that we are in the vicinity of over $21 billion. The project is still not even half complete.

With the remaining less than a minute I have, let us just drill down on the obvious. With today's report plus those before it from the International Energy Agency and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world has a consensus that if we are going to hold to what we promised to do in Paris and hold no more than 1.5°C global average temperature increase, we must massively reduce our emissions of fossil fuels. We must, according to today's report from the IPCC, make sure that 2025 is the peak of our emissions forever and come down from there. Building this pipeline will destroy our Paris commitments. Building the pipeline is a threat to our future and will inevitably involve more costs to the people of Canada.

● (1845)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the member knows, just last week we released our 2030 emissions reduction plan. It is one that sets out a very ambitious and achievable sector-by-sector approach to get us there. The plan builds on actions that have already been taken by many to reduce our carbon footprint, including by indigenous peoples, businesses, provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, civil society and many Canadians across the country.

I want to point out to the member that, as she already knows, our emissions reduction plan builds on existing initiatives. It includes a robust price on carbon pollution, a ban on unabated domestic coal-fired electricity by 2030 and an upcoming clean fuel standard. Last week's plan includes more than $9 billion in new investments to cut pollution and grow our economy. Among them are measures to make it easier for Canadians to switch to electric vehicles, to green our homes and buildings, and to help industries adopt the clean tech solutions to make our energy grid even cleaner. There are also many other initiatives.

I believe the member opposite knows that the global clean energy transition cannot happen overnight, but neither should Canadians or people around the globe drag our heels on this. We cannot just end oil and gas production with a snap of our fingers without risking energy security, here and around the world. We also recognize that the energy sector has the know-how, the skills and the financial clout to bring about clean technology through breakthroughs that we have been able to see thus far. Many others have already been targeted.

That is why we need to maximize the value of our resources, which is one of the reasons we remain committed to the Trans Mountain expansion project. TMX is creating thousands of good-paying jobs right now. Once operational, it will unlock new global markets. This will generate billions of dollars in new revenues to fund clean energy solutions, which is a goal we all want to get to. It is also creating additional investments and job opportunities for many indigenous people and many companies within Canada; therefore, it is advancing our government's commitment to reconciliation as well. I want to stress that TMX will not undermine our climate change efforts or our ability to reach the targets that we have set and committed to.

As the member acknowledged in her speech, the project's price has risen. This is the result of project enhancements, safety and security requirements, construction delays that were caused by COVID-19 and B.C.'s extreme weather events last summer, as well as new financial costs. It is not just one thing that has contributed to this; it is a whole gamut of factors that have led to this increase.

The project is now half-built. Trans Mountain Corporation will seek third-party funding if it needs further funds to complete the project. I know the member understands this. I share her passion and desire to see things move more rapidly on climate change, but there is a process to get there so that Canadians can all be a part of that exciting change in a way that we can manage sustainability within our country.

● (1850)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, it is not the government's fault that we are out of time. I have been working on this issue since the 1980s. I was there when we signed a commitment at the Rio Earth Summit. Government after government has kicked this down the road, but it is the unlucky fortune of the current government to be in a place where we cannot kick it down the road anymore. The current plan put forward by the Minister of Environment does not do what is needed because, if it succeeds, it is going to get to 40% below 2005 levels by 2030, which is wholly inadequate. It also includes an increase in oil and gas production by 21% by 2030.

We do not have another chance. As the IPCC said today, it is now or never, and the stakes could not be bigger. The government is not missing a political target: It is condemning our children to an unlivable world, and that is not hyperbole. That is a fact. We only have so much time. We have to shut down Trans Mountain and have no new fossil fuel infrastructure.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for raising this matter many times in the House of Commons. I also want to acknowledge and thank her for her lifelong, strong environmental advocacy on many issues that have affected Canadians and our planet. I know that, in her experience, she will recognize that the Government of Canada is known around the world for having one of the most comprehensive and ambitious climate plans right now. It is a plan that will reduce emissions by 40% below 2005 levels by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.

I want to mention some of the things that are in our emissions reduction plan because they worth highlighting. One is how our government will work with the oil and gas sector to cut methane emissions by at least 75% by 2030—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Dan Mazier (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, the cost of living continues to rise at record rates. In January, inflation in Canada surpassed 5% for the first time since 1991. Last week, we learned that the low-cost dollar store, Dollarama, plans to start selling items for $5 to keep up with inflation. I am sure many Canadians remember when Dollarama was indeed a dollar store. It was not that long ago.

Why is this important? The reality is that many Canadians rely on low-cost stores for essential goods. Canadians want to stretch their income as much as possible. They want to save what they can so they can get ahead one day. However, now Canadians are struggling to get by, never mind about getting ahead.

The price of fish is up 5.5%. The price of bread is up 7.5%. The price of fresh fruit is up 8.2%, and the price of meat is up 10.1%. As inflation continues to rise at record rates, it impacts Canadians on fixed incomes even more. Seniors, in particular, will not see an increase in their income for a long time, if ever, to keep up with the rising cost of living.

I spoke to a mother who told me that she could not afford to buy healthy food for her children. When the price of fresh meat and produce becomes unaffordable, Canadians fill their grocery carts with low-cost goods that lack the nutrition needed to live a healthy life. However, this is not just about food. The rural Canadians I represent are asking how much higher can gas prices go. Everyday errands, such as driving to work, are becoming unaffordable, and rural Canadians, in particular, do not have the option to take a bus or a subway. There is no alternative to filling up their gas tanks. They rely on their vehicles to live their lives.

It is clear that the value of one's hard-earned dollars is becoming worth less and less, and this government is directly responsible. The Governor of the Bank of Canada admitted that the Liberal carbon tax is directly fuelling inflation, and the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer reported what Canadians knew all along, that the carbon tax is leaving the majority of Canadians worse off financially.

The reality is that this Liberal government has no understanding of fiscal responsibility. This is the result of a Prime Minister who has piled on more debt to our nation than all the previous prime ministers combined, and now Canadians are paying the price every single day. Canadians know that higher spending today means rising inflation tomorrow. Canadians know that higher debt today means, unfortunately, higher taxes tomorrow.

This week, the new NDP-Liberal government will present its budget. Canadians are wondering how much more money this government will cost, so, I will ask for them: How much more money does this government plan to spend before it will turn the money-printing machines off?

● (1855)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to respond to my hon. colleague from Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa this evening. I thank him for raising this important question on inflation and affordability, because all Canadians, at this point in their lives, are feeling the pain of inflation. All of us are feeling the pinch of affordability. No matter what riding we represent in Canada, we are dealing with individuals, day in and day out, who are seeing the difference.

I want to remind my hon. colleague that the current price increases for many of these goods, including gasoline and groceries, are the result of a global phenomenon driven by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the unprecedented challenge of restarting the world's economy following the COVID-19 pandemic. My colleague knows that. Other members of the opposition know that as well.

Quite simply, the idea here is that the price of goods quite often depends on events that are out of our control, thousands of miles away from where we live in our communities and in Canada. The member understands that. He understands this reality. Our government is focusing on targeted support measures here at home in our own country to help those families who need help to make ends meet. We have been doing it since the beginning of COVID-19, and we continue to do it. We will not turn our backs on Canadians, regardless of how many times the member opposite stands in the House and tries to blame the government for things that are out of our control and no matter how many times he stands in the House and complains because we give increased benefits to seniors, to people with disabilities, to people on low incomes and to families with children.

We have increased the child tax benefit. For the first time in 15 years, our government provided an increase to the northern tax deduction to help people who live in the north, who suffer the most significant problems with affordability and cost of living. We continue to fund programs through Nutrition North and through other subsidy programs that help bring down the cost of living. We have negotiated a $10-a-day community-based early learning and child care program with every province and territory in Canada. We have cut taxes for middle-class families. We have brought in incentives for homebuyers, and we have increased payments to families in regions all across the country. For example, in Ontario, that increase was $745. In Manitoba, it was $832. In Saskatchewan, it was over $1,000. Are these the investments we have made as a government that he wants to see cancelled, that he does not want to reach the families who need them?

We cannot have it both ways. We cannot talk about the need to support families at a time when the cost of living is going up and inflation is contributing to that, along with COVID and along with a war that is going on around the world, and then, the next day, talk about the fact that the government is spending money on Canadians. We do not get to have it both ways.

What I will say is that, when their government was in power, they did not add money to the Canada pension plan. They did not increase old age security or the guaranteed income supplement or goods and services tax rebates to the municipalities or northern tax deductions. Absolutely not, in fact, they did the opposite. They were looking for ways to pick money out of people's pockets by making seniors have to be 67 years of age—

● (1900)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa.

Mr. Dan Mazier: Madam Speaker, there it is again. The Liberal government has no idea how their spending is impacting Canadians. Whether it be the Liberal carbon tax or their escalator tax on beer and wine, whether it be their refusal to pause the GST for fuel purchases or interest payments on record-level national debt, whether it be their expensive climate change policies that have failed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or their billion-dollar firearm buyback that will do nothing to address crime, the list goes on and on.

Canadians are tired of paying the Liberal government's bills. How much more debt will this NDP-Liberal government add to the backs of hard-working Canadians with their budget?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Madam Speaker, we are the government that supports Canadians. We are the government that supports the very fibre of social programs that help families thrive in this country, programs that create new opportunities for them and for their children.

I want to say that the member opposite knows that Canadian families are being impacted by high inflation. He understands that we have to pay more for goods such as groceries and gasoline and that the contributing factors are those that are happening abroad with a war and without coming out of COVID-19. It has nothing to do with the fact that we as a government have supported Canadians through some of the toughest times in their lives.

I want to make it clear that I make no apologies for the investments that we make in Canadians. Whether they are seniors, whether they are people with disabilities or children or new immigrants, all Canadians deserve to have an affordable way to live, and we will continue to work with them to make that happen.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, the more time I spend here, the more time I hear the word "file". There is the mental health file, the housing file, the disabilities file, the climate file. I cannot stand it, because the word "file" reduces deep systemic injustices into political speak. The fact is that climate is not a file. It is about whether we choose to continue living on a habitable planet.

Bill McKibben, who has been writing and organizing around the climate crisis since the eighties, would say, "Winning slowly is the same as losing." This morning we had a reminder of that when climate scientists at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued their latest warning. The co-chair's report says, "It's now or never". If we want to limit global warming to 1.5° C, we must decrease and plateau emissions at the latest by 2025.

The scientists who wrote this 2,900-page report went on to say that they have a high confidence that unless countries around the world step up their efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions, the planet will be on average 2.4° to 3.5° C warmer by the end of the century, sailing past the target of increase by a maximum 1.5° C.

The UN Secretary-General went on to say:

> We are on a pathway to global warming of more than double the 1.5-degree limit agreed in Paris. Some government and business leaders are saying one thing—but doing another.
>
> Simply put, they're lying. And the results will be catastrophic.

Back at home, what do we have? We have a so-called emissions reduction plan that tells Canadians a fairy tale that somehow we will keep increasing oil and gas production and give oil and gas $50 billion in a new subsidy for carbon capture and storage, a completely unproven technology, and the carbon intensity of the oil will magically disappear.

What is actually true? One recent study from the Netherlands found that the majority of carbon capture technology they looked at, 32 out of 40, actually emitted more carbon than they captured. More recently, over 400 academics and climate scientists and experts around the country shared that "carbon capture is a false climate solution."

Even if we take the government at face value that there is $9.1 billion in new investments in its plan—and to be clear, there are some constructive investments in that plan—the unfortunate truth is that those investments are overshadowed, not only by that $50 billion I just mentioned but also by the $21.4 billion on the Trans Mountain pipeline, the cost of which has ballooned, which intends on increasing oil from 300,000 barrels to 890,000 barrels a day. As well, the government is ambiguous on its decision with respect to Bay du Nord, an oil drilling project off the coast of Newfoundland that would not even begin until 2028 but would allow drilling for another billion barrels of oil. All of this means that the government is gambling with our children's future.

I am not interested in hearing what others have to say about the plan; the only bar that matters is that of climate science. I wonder, knowing the hard work that parliamentary secretary is putting in and her good intentions, whether she can tell us if she—

● (1905)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy today to rise to speak about the emissions-reduction plan because it is ambitious and it is achievable. It is a plan that provides a road map across all sectors of our economy. This is not about one file, as the member opposite just stated. It is about taking an approach across all sectors to reduce emissions and to make sure that we build a clean future, sustainable jobs, and a strong economy going forward.

The plan is about healthier communities. It is about reliable and affordable energy, good jobs and clean air. It is important that, as an early deliverable under the Canadian Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act, the plan is that the road map goes sector by sector with the measures needed for Canada to reach its ambitious and achievable emissions-reduction target of 40% to 45% below 2005 levels by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2050, in a fair and affordable way.

The scientific and economic imperative to reduce emissions is clear. As countries and businesses around the world race to transform their operations to net-zero emissions, it is critical that Canada be a leader and not be left behind. To create good jobs, grow a strong economy and build a brighter and healthier future for everyone, enhanced climate action is needed in our country today.

The member opposite mentioned not speaking about the accolades from the outside world, but it is important to mention that the plan has received support from environmental groups and the scientists who work behind them. It has received support from climate scientists such as Andrew Weaver, who was the head of the Green Party in B.C.

There is support from many actors, including industry, to show that this is a strong road map going forward. From transportation to the oil and gas sector to heavy industry, agriculture and building waste, every sector in every region has a role to play in meeting Canada's 2030 climate target. This plan includes, as was mentioned, $9.1 billion in new investments and a suite of new measures to help mobilize Canada toward a truly sustainable economy and becoming a leading competitor in the global transition to cleaner industries and technologies. For example, the plan makes it easier for Canadians to switch to electric vehicles by committing $1.7 billion to expand the iZEV purchase incentive program for light-duty vehicles and to make zero-emission vehicles more affordable.

Canada is uniquely positioned to be a global leader in this century of climate mitigation and adaptation, thanks to our abundance of natural resources, a highly skilled workforce and a strong financial system. This plan builds on the strong foundation set by the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change and the strengthened climate plan. Since 2015, the government has delivered $100 billion in investments for climate action, and these efforts are working. Thanks to the actions of millions of Canadians, we have been able to halt our once upward trend of the emissions curve and bend it downward. This road map will build on this progress and chart the course to lowering emissions by 40% below 2005 levels.

Carbon capture, utilization and storage, CCUS, is a significant opportunity for Canada. Projections show it will play a critical role in enabling a prosperous net-zero economy in Canada by 2050. It is a tool in the tool box, but it is not a silver bullet, nor have we said it would be. It is an important tool for us to use. It is an important component that will help us to tackle emissions—

● (1910)

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

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, if it is not a silver bullet, why are we giving them $50 billion for it? The fact is that this is not about whether the government wants to pat itself on the back or cite others who are. To get to 1.5°C means at least a 60% reduction by 2030. This is the first plan that is saying that the government is not actually going to do the range anymore: It is going to let go of the 45% part and aim for 40%. The potential pathway in this plan actually only adds up to 36%.

The question for the parliamentary secretary is the same. It is whether the government is going to choose to rise to the moment that we are in, to move past the partisanship of it all, and to invest in the kinds of climate solutions that we know are required not just for a potential pathway, but to ensure that we put together the proposals and the investments we need to—

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

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Madam Speaker, it is important to note once again that the emissions reduction plan does chart a course across all sectors. However, the oil and gas sector is Canada's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, and we will not be able to reach our target without significant contributions from our highest-emitting sector.

The emissions reduction plan presents modelling of the most economically efficient pathway to meeting Canada's 2030 target, and this modelling projects that the emissions from the oil and gas sector could decline by about 31% from 2005 levels to reach 110 megatonnes in 2030. This is a guidepost for action and will guide the Government of Canada's work with industry, stakeholders, the provinces and territories, indigenous peoples and others to develop a cap on oil and gas sector emissions.

Canada is positioning our industries to be green and competitive by helping industries adopt clean technology on their journey to net-zero emissions. This is the work we are doing and we will continue doing it.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The motion to adjourn the House is now 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 7:14 p.m.)

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