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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 22, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)
[English]

PETITIONS

COVID-19 MANDATES

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition on behalf of Canadians who want a permanent end to the ArriveCAN app, the vaccine mandates and all COVID mandates. Currently, the government has only suspended some of the mandates, but thanks to opposition pressure, they will be getting rid of the ArriveCAN app and the border mandates.

The petitioners note that other countries around the world have removed all of their vaccine mandates and restrictions. The petitioners are calling on the government and the Minister of Transport to end all federally regulated COVID-19 vaccine mandates and restrictions.

YAZIDIS

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Canadians. The plight of the Yazidi community is well known around the world, with the genocide that happened and the unfortunate situation Yazidis are in today. Eight years after that, they still live in fear, they are still in unlivable conditions and they are still in IDP camps.

This petition calls on the government to, one, cancel the refugee status document requirement for G5 and community sponsors under PSR, at least for Iraqi and Syrian religious minorities; two, using ministerial discretion and/or public policy, designate Iraqi religious minorities for refugee resettlement under the various sponsorship programs; three, allow private sponsors to name Iraqi religious minorities for inclusion under the BVOR and JAS programs; four, facilitate the private sponsorship of Yazidis and deem these applications above SAHs' allocations; and five, speed up the processing of in-Canada and overseas PSR applications at ROC-O for Iraqi religious minorities.

The petitioners are essentially calling on the government to have a better and more efficient way to get people who are being persecuted into Canada.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a huge privilege and honour to table a petition on behalf of constituents from my riding.

They cite that Canada's electoral system, from its very inception, has always been a first-past-the-post system, unfairly resulting in either a Liberal or Conservative government with virtually no impact on the popular vote, leading to distorted Canadian values. They cite that proportional representation is a principle that says that the percentage of seats a party has in Parliament should reflect the percentage of the people who voted for that party, so if a party gets 40% of the popular vote, they should get 40% of the seats.

They cite that under a first-past-the-post system, like the current system in Canada, a party can win a majority of seats and all the power with less than half the popular vote. They also cite that other countries, such as Germany, Italy, Ireland, New Zealand and the Netherlands, have progressed past the first-past-the-post system, and many states are seeking to implement ranked choice voting so that all votes are calculated.

The petitioners are calling for the government to move to a proportional system.

SENIORS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by many residents of Winnipeg North asking for the government to take into consideration the many different programs that our seniors are very much dependent on, whether it is GIS, OAS or many of the different senior support programs that are supported, such as New Horizons and so forth. They are asking the Prime Minister and, in fact, all members of Parliament to be strong advocates for our seniors in all regions.

*Government Orders***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

COST OF LIVING RELIEF ACT, NO. 2

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.) moved that Bill C-31, An Act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion.

I am thankful for the opportunity to rise today in the House to open this important debate on Bill C-31, an act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing.

These days everyone is feeling the effects of the increased cost of living. This situation is particularly difficult for families. We know that all parents want what is best for their children.

However, with inflation the way it is, oral health care may be out of reach for the more than one-third of Canadians who do not have dental insurance and their children.

That is why, this week, we introduced a bill that proposes a Canadian dental benefit to help families who are having difficulty paying for dental care for their children. The introduction of this benefit is the first step toward a comprehensive, long-term national dental care program.

Investing in oral health is about more than just avoiding cavities. It is essential to overall health. By making routine dental care more accessible to Canadian families, we can prevent children's minor oral health problems from becoming major issues that are more costly, painful and difficult to address. For example, poor oral health is linked to major chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

Poor oral health clearly places a heavy burden on children, parents and the health care system across the country. The direct and indirect costs affect us all, and we can all benefit from the improvements that proper oral health care can bring to the overall health of the Canadian population.

[*English*]

The proposed Canada dental benefit is a first important step toward that goal. The proposed benefit would start by helping children who are more in need, because when it comes to poor oral health, kids have the most to lose. Many oral diseases can begin in

the preschool years, and tooth decay is the most common chronic disease in Canada for children. That is also true around the world.

In Canada, the treatment of dental problems is the leading cause of day surgery under general anaesthesia for children under the age of five. Once again, these dental problems are not shared equally among all kids. Research shows that dental diseases tend to be found mostly among children from lower-income families, indigenous children, new immigrants and children living with disabilities or who have special health care needs. The good news is that with the right amount of care, these oral health issues and the longer-term health problems they create are preventable.

[*Translation*]

Here is how the Canada dental benefit would work. Beginning in late 2022, parents whose adjusted family net income is under \$90,000 and who do not have access to private dental insurance can claim the Canada dental benefit for their eligible children under 12.

The Canada Revenue Agency, the CRA, will administer the benefit. Parents will be able to apply through the CRA's My Account portal or their contact centre. If eligible, they will receive an initial payment that they can use to see a dentist with their child.

We want to eliminate as many obstacles to accessing dental care as possible by making sure that families do not have to cover dental expenses they cannot afford.

The Canada dental benefit will provide up to \$650 per year per child under 12. It will be available to eligible families and children and will not be taxed.

We realize that it is essential for Canadians with urgent dental care needs to get funding quickly and easily. That is why the benefit will be offered to claimants before the dental care is provided. That money can be used to cover oral health services offered by any independent, regulated oral health care provider in Canada.

In the event a person has paid for care before applying for the benefit, they can apply for the benefit retroactively, as long as the care was received during the eligibility period and was not reimbursed by another program.

If this bill is passed, Health Canada and the CRA will work closely together to ensure that Canadians receive their benefits as quickly as possible.

The CRA has the necessary resources and experience to offer this program thanks to its vast, secure infrastructure and its long-standing experience in delivering services to Canadians. The CRA will verify compliance before and after the payment to protect itself against fraud and ensure that the program is being used as intended.

Government Orders

If the bill is passed, Health Canada will act quickly to ensure that Canadian families who qualify for the Canada dental benefit are well informed about how to apply for it.

In collaboration with the CRA, Health Canada will launch a national public education campaign to inform qualifying families about the program and will oversee the implementation of the benefit.

• (1015)

[*English*]

As I mentioned, the proposed Canada dental benefit is an interim benefit. This measure would provide immediate financial support to low- and middle-income Canadian families, allowing them to begin addressing their eligible children's dental care needs sooner rather than later. While this interim program is in place, the Government of Canada will take the necessary steps to build a comprehensive, longer-term dental care program. That includes engaging with key stakeholders, including the provinces and territories, indigenous organizations, dental associations and industry to help inform our approach to implementing a long-term Canadian dental care program.

This past summer, for example, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement and I launched a request for information with industry representatives, and Health Canada reached out to provinces and territories to better understand what is needed to successfully implement a long-term Canadian dental care program. What we learned through that process will help inform our approach as we work toward a permanent program.

I am pleased with the progress our government continues to make on this front as we develop and take necessary steps to put in place a robust, sustainable long-term dental care program for Canadians. I look forward to providing more details on that front in the coming months.

[*Translation*]

If passed, this bill will help hundreds of thousands of Canadian children who do not currently have access to dental care because of the cost of that care. Bill C-31 proposes an interim benefit, because children, whose teeth are still developing, are a priority for our government and for anyone who cares about oral health.

That being said, in closing, I would like to take a moment to talk about timelines. In budget 2022, our government committed to helping our youngest Canadians access dental care by the end of the year. Our goal is to ensure that children under 12 can access the Canada dental benefit by the end of 2022. I therefore urge all hon. members of the House to support this bill, an act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing, without delay.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, a question immediately came to mind when I was listening to the speech by the health minister, the same minister who refused to have any discussions with the provinces about health costs and what to do about health care.

Did the minister consult the province of Quebec, the government of Quebec and, above all, the health minister of Quebec about establishing its dental care program for children?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, before answering definitely yes to the last question, I would like to correct the introduction a little. The introduction to the question suggests that we have not worked together over the past few months. I suggest that my hon. colleague speak to his counterpart, Quebec's health minister—even though he may be a little busy right now—and check with him about all the exchanges we have had over the past year, which led to positive health outcomes, especially in the fight against COVID-19. Those outcomes have been significant for the country and certainly for all Quebeckers.

• (1020)

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would love to know whether the Minister of Health realizes that Quebec already covers dental care for kids under the age of nine.

Did he factor that into his program? How does he plan to compensate Quebeckers whose taxes will be paying for benefits that are allocated elsewhere in Canada? Quebeckers already pay for such a program and our health care system is in need of funding.

This all boils down to one question: When will the minister look at increasing health transfers and letting Quebec do its job?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, there is good news for children in Quebec.

Quebec's system partially covers dental care for children up to the age of nine and we are proud of that. The good news is that the Canadian government is going to expand that coverage to older children and to more types of care.

Preventive health care is essential in Quebec and all across the country. We want the sick to be properly looked after, and we also want to prevent people from getting sick. The additional coverage that our government is providing through the Canada dental benefit will give hundreds of thousands of kids under the age of 12 in Quebec access to better preventive dental care.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for this bill. I am glad the NDP was able to force the government to take action to ensure that dental coverage would be provided to Canadians, starting first with coverage for children under 12 and subsequently for seniors and people with disabilities, and so on.

With that being said, it is, of course, important to make sure that indigenous children who get dental services elsewhere would also have access at least the equivalent level of service under this bill.

Could the minister please confirm if that would be the case?

Government Orders

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, there are two different things. First, NIHB, as the member knows, covers most dental care services, and other health services, for indigenous peoples. We have been investing more resources into that program, and we will be investing more resources over time.

Second, this is a key part of the House agenda over the next few days. We really hope that all parties will support this piece of legislation, which is going to be key in supporting issues around the cost of living for so many Canadian families and, certainly, the health care and dental health care needs of so many children in our country.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the minister's comments on this, but my question remains. The government cannot even afford the Canada mental health transfer, which has been promised for a very long time, and it cannot manage the Canadian health care system now, so why is it introducing new legislation for something else that it would not be able to manage?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, we all know, and I am sure the member knows this as well, that health and health care are global. It is all part of an entire body. It would be unfortunate to say that we should treat one part of our body or mind and not treat the other parts. They are all connected, and that is why investments in dental care, mental care, long-term care, home care and community care are all important. We are not going to choose which aspects of people we need to invest in.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to address the House about the measures the government is taking to make housing more affordable for Canadians.

Since 2015, our government has made housing a priority. Housing was at the heart of the last budget. Now, however, Canadians are increasingly feeling the effects of the increase in the cost of living. That is why we need to redouble our efforts and work together to develop an ambitious plan.

In 2017, we adopted the national housing strategy, the first of its kind in Canada's history. This 10-year plan is supported by investments totalling more than \$72 billion. The main objective of the national housing strategy is to create more housing for vulnerable Canadians, including seniors, women and children fleeing violence, indigenous people, veterans, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

The strategy has already been very successful. For example, last year in Quebec we announced \$100 million to renovate low-cost housing, including 517 units that had been abandoned for years. We are continuing to adjust and broaden the strategy to keep up with the constantly changing situation. We are proposing new investments in a number of programs, as well as the extension and acceleration of financing for existing programs, which are helping the situation.

Although we are working hard to make Canadians' lives more affordable, we recognize that many of them need immediate addi-

tional assistance. This is why we are proposing Bill C-31, which provides a one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit, consisting of a single payment of \$500 to approximately 1.8 million renters who are struggling to pay their rent. This one-time federal allowance will be available to Canadians with adjusted net incomes of less than \$35,000 for families, or \$20,000 for individuals, and who pay at least 30% of their income on housing.

In Hochelaga, 70% of the population consists of renters, with over 24% paying more than 30% of their income on rent. This payment will double the commitment we made in the 2022 budget. We will therefore be able to help twice as many Canadians as we initially promised. This one-time payment will be in addition to the Canada housing benefit, which is currently jointly funded and provided by the provinces and territories. The Canada housing benefit, launched in 2020, was developed jointly with the provinces and territories. With joint financing of \$4 billion over eight years, it provides direct financial support to those who are struggling to pay rent.

Canadians have told us loud and clear that affordable housing is one of their major concerns, and we agree. The pandemic and its effects on the economy brought to light and exacerbated the precarious housing conditions in which many people live. One of the main causes of unaffordable housing in Canada is insufficient supply. Housing supply is not keeping up with demand. This problem was aggravated by the pandemic and, as we know, goes well beyond the borders of major cities, affecting small towns and rural communities as well. Creating more housing units will increase affordability for all Canadians. It is urgent that we build additional affordable housing units, especially for those experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

That is why the rapid housing initiative will be extended for a third time. Announced in the 2022 budget, the third round of the rapid housing initiative includes \$1.5 billion over two years, starting in 2022-23, to create at least 4,500 new affordable housing units to meet urgent needs across the country. Thanks to the excellent participation of our municipal partners and others, the first two rounds of the program exceeded all expectations. Overall, the third round of the rapid housing initiative will fund the construction of 14,500 housing units for the most vulnerable Canadians.

Government Orders

It is also important to mention that the national housing co-investment fund, which brings together numerous partners to build affordable community housing for the most vulnerable Canadians, will receive \$13.2 billion in funding. It is one of the main pillars of the strategy and the most important program of its kind in Canada's history.

● (1025)

The national housing co-investment fund addresses supply challenges in two significant ways. It helps to renovate aging affordable housing units in poor condition and to build housing units near public transit, workplaces, schools and other services families depend on. To date, the program has received more than \$5.8 billion in loans and contributions. This funding will make it possible to provide stable and safe affordable housing to more than 117,000 Canadian households.

Federal programs like the national housing co-investment fund are important, but we are aware that we need to work in collaboration with others, including the provinces and territories, municipalities, and private and non-profit organizations in order to get results. That is why we want to support our municipal partners in their efforts to increase housing supply. We will be launching a fund to accelerate the construction of housing units. At the municipal level, there are often obstacles and delays at the project development stage. This fund will allow Canadian cities to act more quickly. We expect this initiative to increase the annual supply of housing units in the largest Canadian cities, with a target of 100,000 new units by 2025.

We are making significant progress in implementing our national housing strategy, but there is still much work to do and many obstacles to overcome. Our partners at every level of government and in every sector are committed to working with us to find solutions to improve Canadians' lives.

In conclusion, I urge all members of the House to work together to address the pressing need for housing. Above all, I urge them to immediately support the one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit so that we can send out the \$500 payment that so many Canadian renters need as soon as possible. I hope that 1.8 million Canadians will have access to these funds.

● (1030)

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really believe we need an answer on this side of the House to understand the atrocious management that we have seen, the heavy hearts we have that the Canada mental health transfer has not been realized. Now we see another government program.

How does the government propose to manage things when we know clearly from its track record that it cannot really, as my dad would say, manage a marble game?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. This topic is personal for me, since I myself live with young adults, one of whom is experiencing serious mental health issues.

I think that, as a government, we have done what needed to be done. We signed agreements with the provinces that included the issue of mental health in health transfers. We will continue to work with the provinces to support Canadians across the country with their physical and mental health needs, and especially their housing needs.

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, the hon. member across the aisle is from the riding of Hochelaga, which is known for having a large number of low-income families.

What does she have to say to all of the low-income families whose taxes will be used to send payments to families with children between the ages of 0 and 9 in the other provinces, while their own situation remains the same?

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, what I can say is that more than 15,000 families in Hochelaga are receiving the Canada child benefit, which was not the case four years ago. We are talking about families receiving \$600, \$700, \$800, \$900 or \$1,000 a month to help meet all their needs. For the most vulnerable families in Hochelaga, this makes a big difference on their paycheque at the end of the month.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to the speech made by my colleague from Hochelaga, and I noticed that three important words were missing from her speech: New Democratic Party.

Prior to the election, the Liberals had absolutely no interest in funding dental care for the poor and middle class. We forced the Liberals to provide that coverage. They did not want to offer the Canada housing benefit to the most disadvantaged, who are struggling to pay rent. We forced their hand. They did not want to increase the GST credit. The NDP forced the Liberals to do it.

Now they need to go a step further and tax the richest billionaires and big corporations that are taking advantage of inflation to line their pockets.

They might as well continue using our ideas.

● (1035)

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is also my riding neighbour, for his question.

I prefer to use the word “collaborate”. To me, the spirit of collaboration is working with all MPs in the House to improve people's quality of life. My colleague and I agree on that. I will continue to collaborate with every member of Parliament who is willing to work with all Canadians to improve their quality of life.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when we look at the legislation, it is important to note that what we are doing is helping society deal with a very serious problem. Teeth decay and surgeries as a direct result of children not having a dental plan are having a profound impact on other aspects of quality of life and health care costs.

I wonder if the member could provide her comments in regard to the benefits of helping our children at this time.

[Translation]

Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Here is a brief response. We need to do everything we can to lower the cost of living for people across the country. All members of Parliament should vote in favour of every bill and every program we introduce to improve people's quality of life and help them with housing, health care and mental health. That is what we want to achieve by introducing this bill.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, in my 18 years in politics, I have never seen Canadians suffer as much as they are suffering now. I just criss-crossed the country and met a lot of people. In fact, 93,000 people registered for my events. I make a point of listening to all their stories, and I never leave the room until I have spoken to everyone who wants to meet me. I heard some heartbreaking stories.

We are talking about young people, 35-year-olds, who have done everything they were supposed to do. They earned a degree and they are working hard, yet they are still living in their parents' basement or in a small, 400-square-foot apartment because the price of housing has doubled since this Prime Minister took office. Our housing bubble is the second largest in the world. Yesterday we learned that the percentage of Canadians who own their own home is at its lowest level in over 30 years.

When the Prime Minister took office, Canadians were paying 32% of their income on average to maintain a mid-size house. Now, the average family has to pay 50% of their income just to keep their house. This increase is due to higher costs, but also to an increase in interest rates, which this government had promised Canadians would not happen for a long time. It told Canadians not to worry, to go ahead and take out big loans, since interest rates would remain low for a long time, and there would never be any negative consequences. Now we are seeing interest rates rises 300 basis points, or 3% in simple terms.

This phenomenon is not only affecting the housing sector, it is also affecting the price of food. I will take this opportunity to read out some headlines, because even the media is starting to notice a problem. "Rents are so high in Toronto that students are living in homeless shelters." "Inflation: Child hunger a major concern in Canada amid skyrocketing food prices." "GTA food banks say they're facing the highest demand in their history." "Nearly 6 million people in Canada experienced food insecurity in 2021, U of T study says." People can no longer pay for food. Some single moth-

ers are even watering down their children's milk because they cannot afford food.

As for gas prices, I met a young man who works in the mines in northern Ontario, and he told me that he could not go see his dying parents in Thunder Bay because diesel was over \$2 a litre. He was not able to say goodbye to his own parents.

What is the Prime Minister doing to respond to this crisis? First, he is trying to divide people by attacking them because he thinks that if Canadians are afraid of one another, then they will forget that they cannot pay their bills. The Prime Minister is keeping in place vaccine mandates that every other country has lifted. He is still insisting on the use of the ArriveCAN app, which really does not work. He is trying to divert people's attention away from the cost of living by dividing Canadians and creating problems and division.

The next part of his plan involves increasing income taxes and taxes on gas, heating and food. The first thing the official opposition has called for since I became leader is for the government to do away with the tax hikes so that Canadians can keep more of their paycheques in their pockets and so that energy, gas, heating and other costs become more affordable.

● (1040)

That is our role, here in Parliament, to turn pain into hope. Canadians need hope. The comment I heard most from the people who attended my events was "Thank you for giving us hope". For the first time, people believe that things can improve, and they will. We can change things.

The first thing we need to do is axe all the tax hikes, but we also need to control spending. Today's inflation is the result of a spendthrift government. The government's spending is increasing the cost of living. The \$500-billion inflationary deficit increased the cost of what we buy and the interest that we pay. Inflationary taxes are increasing costs related to our businesses and our workers who provide products and services. The more the government spends, the more things cost. That is "Justinflation".

Government Orders

We can reverse this trend by introducing legislation to limit government spending. This will subject politicians to the same economic rules that families have to follow. When a family increases spending in one column of their budget, they have to cut spending elsewhere. They have to find a dollar to spend a dollar. The same principle should apply to governments. During the Clinton years, the United States passed a law that helped Americans balance their budget and pay down \$400 billion in debt. It was, at the time, the largest debt repayment in the United States. As soon as the law was struck down, Americans were plunged back into a deficit. This is proof that we need to put legal limits on politicians' spending and that politicians should have to follow the same spending rules as single mothers and small business owners.

Furthermore, instead of just printing more money, we need to produce more of the things that money buys, produce affordable food, energy and natural resources here in Canada, and we need to build more houses. We need to remove the barriers that the Prime Minister has put in place.

Let us start with food. The Prime Minister increased farmers' taxes. That increases the cost of fertilizer and of the energy needed to produce food. Now he wants to limit the use of fertilizer. That will require farming more land to produce the same quantity of food. Tractors and other equipment will have to cover a larger area, burning more diesel and other fuels. More food will have to be imported. Bringing this food from other countries to Canada will again require using more energy.

Did we not learn during the COVID-19 crisis that it is irresponsible to rely on other countries for what we need?

We should be able to grow our own food here, in Canada. Our farmers are the best in the world. We should remove the barriers that the government has put in place. We will cancel these taxes on farmers, scrap the government's plans to reduce the use of fertilizer and eliminate the paperwork that is so expensive for our farmers.

Second, we will provide incentives to our municipalities to cut their red tape. At present, Canada has the lowest housing units per capita in the G7, even though we have the largest land area. That is ridiculous. That is why housing prices in Canada are the second highest in the world relative to household income. With regard to home ownership, Vancouver is the third most expensive market in the world, and Toronto is the sixth. A Conservative government will tie the dollar amount for infrastructure in big cities where housing prices are too high to the number of houses built.

● (1045)

This will encourage them to cut red tape and reduce the cost of building permits so that more housing can be built. Every time a federal government funds a public transit station, we will make sure there is intensive densification in the surrounding areas so that young people can live in homes and apartments next to public transit.

Third, we will sell 15% of the 37,000 federal buildings so that they can be converted into housing and create millions of homes that our young people could buy in order to start a family.

Instead of importing foreign energy, we will get rid of laws like the ones arising from Bill C-69 and others to allow energy to be produced here in Canada. This will create jobs and make the cost of energy more affordable. It will increase Canadians' purchasing power by raising the value of our dollar. When our energy sector is strong, our dollar goes up. The value of the dollar is tied to our purchasing power. When the dollar is low, it costs more to buy anything on international markets. Let us strengthen our dollar, produce our own energy and end oil imports.

By the way, where are the Liberal and NDP environmentalists to protest the foreign oil we are importing? Why are we funding dictators? We should be funding Canadians' paycheques here at home.

Finally, we want to give Canadians back control of their lives, in the freest country in the world, where the dollar keeps its value so that Canadians can have the life they work so hard to build. We should be a country that rewards hard work, a country where people can keep more of their money. We need to reform the tax system so that hard-working Canadians who contribute to the economy can keep their hard-earned money and provide better for their families. We should be a country that encourages and supports those who work hard, take risks and help build our country.

[English]

It is good to be back in the House, but would it not be nice if our young people could have a home? That is what we should be working towards. Unfortunately, yesterday we learned that the rates of home ownership are at their lowest levels in a generation. House prices have doubled under this Prime Minister. In fact, when this Prime Minister took office, the average family could afford their monthly housing costs with 32% of their paycheque. That has rocketed up to almost 50%. Vancouver is the third-most overpriced housing market on planet Earth. Toronto is the sixth. We have the second-worst housing bubble on planet Earth. No wonder nine in 10 young Canadians say that they cannot even dream of affording a house.

Now, from housing to food, we see the headlines. Even the media has noticed: "Rents are so high in Toronto that students are living in homeless shelters"; "Child hunger a major concern in Canada amid skyrocketing food prices"; "GTA food banks say they're facing the highest demand in their history"; and "Nearly 6 million people in Canada experienced food insecurity in 2021, U of T study says".

Government Orders

Then there is energy. I met a young man in northern Ontario who said that he could not afford to put the diesel in his car to go and see his dying relatives one last time, who are hundreds of miles away in Thunder Bay. I met a working man, an energy worker ironically, in St. John's, Newfoundland, who said that the rising cost of gas meant he could not afford to replace his boots so he was taping them up with duct tape.

• (1050)

Canadians are suffering, and why is this happening? The cost of government is driving up the cost of living. Half a trillion dollars of inflationary deficits means more dollars chasing fewer goods, leading to higher prices, bidding up the cost of the goods we buy and the interest we pay. Inflationary taxes drive up the cost of businesses and workers to make our goods. The more Liberals spend, the more things cost. It is just inflation, and Canadians are paying the price for it.

What has been the Prime Minister's response? His first response was to attack the people who were suffering, to call them horrible and disparaging names, to divide and distract. His strategy is simple. He thinks if people are afraid of their neighbours, they will forget that they cannot pay their bills, so he keeps in place divisive and unscientific vaccine mandates to shut truckers out of their ability to transport goods across the border and soldiers, who have served our country bravely and loyally, out of their jobs. He does this all to stigmatize and attack so a single mother who is putting water in her kid's milk might forget, he hopes, how badly she is suffering under his watch because she will be afraid of her fellow citizens. It is time to replace fear with freedom. It is time for us all to unite.

The Prime Minister's second approach has been ever predictable. He wants to raise taxes with a new tax hike on paycheques that will take effect on January 1, meaning that Canadians will take home less of what they earn. Small businesses will have to pay a higher cost for every single person they keep on the payroll, forcing many to make the painful choice of laying people off. A few months later, on April 1, April Fool's Day, he will continue to carry out his plan to triple the carbon tax. He wants to increase gas taxes, home heating taxes and, indirectly, food taxes because, of course, food requires energy. This is going to make things worse. The Conservatives have made the demand that the government must cancel all its tax increases on our workers and our seniors so that their paycheques go further and their energy becomes affordable.

We in this House have a duty to transform the hurt into hope. That is what Conservatives will do, because things can get better. There is nothing wrong with Canada, with our country, that cannot be cured by what is right with this country. We have the answers that will counter this inflation and reinforce the purchasing power of Canadians.

We will call for a cap on taxes so that Canadians pay no more to the government and can keep more for themselves. We will call for the government to cap its own spending, and it can do this by simply following the same rules that everyday families follow. If a family decides it wants to build a porch in front of their house, they cancel their vacation or, better yet, they go out and find a deal on lumber and look for a way to keep their vacation costs down so that

they can do both but for the same budget. This is how small businesses function as well, but not government.

The great Thomas Sowell said that the number one law of economics is scarcity, that people always want more than there is to have and that the number one rule of politics is to ignore the number one rule of economics, because politicians are the only creatures in the universe who do not have to live with scarcity. The birds in the trees, the fish in the seas, all must make maximum use of limited resources, but the politician just passes the cost on to someone else in higher inflation, debt and taxes. A "pay-as-you-go" law would force politicians to make the same either-or trade-offs that everyday Canadians make in their lives.

The principle is very simple. If the government brings in a new dollar of spending, it should find a dollar of savings to pay for it. All of the existing spending that is in the budget goes ahead into the future, but when the government steps into this House to introduce a new measure, it should accompany it with savings to pay for it. The government did this in the United States during the 1990s and that allowed the American government to balance its budget, pay off \$400 billion of debt, have booming job growth, record-low unemployment and a massive increase in prosperity, but as soon as it let the law lapse, it went right back into deficit, proving that politicians need the same legal limits on their spending that families follow every single day. Our families have been pinching their pennies long enough. It is time for government to pinch its pennies, too.

• (1055)

Instead of just creating more cash, why not create more of what cash buys? Why do we not grow more food, build more house and produce more Canadian resources right here in our country instead?

Let us start with houses. As I have said, we have the fewest houses per capita of any country in the entire G7, even though we have the most land on which to build. Why? Local government gatekeepers stand in the way.

In Vancouver, the cost of government gatekeepers, that is permitting, delays, consultants and taxes, is \$600,000 for one unit of housing. It is about \$350,000 in Toronto. This prevents people from owning a home.

I propose is this. The government should link the number of dollars big overpriced cities get for infrastructure to the number of houses that actually get built, so we have an incentive for them to remove the gatekeepers, lower the costs and increase the speed of building permits so we can get more houses.

Government Orders

Let us require every federally funded transit station be pre-approved for high-density housing around it, so our young people do not even need to own a car. They can live right next to transit. Let us sell off 15% of the underutilized and overpriced 37,000 federal buildings, so we can convert that into housing. Let us create millions of new homes, so our newcomers, immigrants, young people and working-class people can re-establish the dream of home ownership.

Let us put an end to importing overseas oil into this country. Where are the protesters? Where are the Bloc, the NDP and the Liberal protesters standing in Saint John, New Brunswick to greet all those big tankers coming from overseas? They say that they are against oil, but they have no problem if that oil comes from foreign dictatorships. There are 130,000 barrels of overseas oil every single day arriving at our shores and taking our money back to their countries at the same time.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister violates his own sanctions against Putin by sending back a turbine so the Russians can continue to pump gas into Germany, so the Germans can fund the Russian war against Ukraine. It is incredible. Those members are against pipelines in Canada, but in favour of maintaining the turbines for Russian pipelines that fund foreign wars.

Meanwhile, we have 1,300 trillion cubic feet of natural gas that could be used to free Europe from its dependency on Putin, meanwhile bringing back paycheques to this country. We have the ability to produce it cleaner than anywhere else on planet earth. In fact, the shortest shipping distances to both Asia and Europe from North America are right here in Canada.

What else do we have in Canada that allows us to liquify natural gas so it fits on a ship? Cold weather, which is our most abundant natural resource. That actually lowers the cost of liquefying natural gas by 25%. With Quebec, Newfoundland and British Columbia hydro, we can do it emissions-free. Why do we not ship our clean Canadian natural gas to Asia to shut down coal-fired plants there and ship it to Europe to break European dependence on Putin? Let us turn dollars for dictators into paycheques for Canadians.

Let us make work pay again in our country. Let us stop punishing people for the crime of getting up early in the morning and putting in a hard day's work. According to a Finance Canada document, if a single mother with three kids who earns \$55,000 a year goes out and earns another dollar, she loses 80¢ of that dollar to government clawbacks and taxes. If she makes \$25 an hour, she takes home \$5 of that. No one should work for \$5 an hour. That is below minimum wage, and yet our tax and benefits system punishes her for trying to work a little harder so maybe her kids can go to camp in the summer or maybe they can join the little league team.

• (1100)

We should reward hard work in our country. We should set out to reform our benefit and tax systems, so that every time someone works harder, takes another shift, earns a bonus and gets up a little earlier they keep more of what they earn.

My parents raised me to believe that it did not matter where I came from; it mattered where I was going. It did not matter who I knew, but what I could do. That is the country I want my kids to

inherit. I want this to be a country again where it does not matter where people start off. If they work hard, if they take risks, if they study, if they learn, if they build and if they contribute, they can achieve anything they want. Right now, people do not feel that way, but hope is on the way.

We are going to bring change to our country. We are going to put change back in your pocket and we are going to make this the freest country on earth.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments are coming. I would ask members to please tone it down so we can allow for those.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I just want to note that in the speech we just heard the member spoke about putting “change in your pocket”. I wonder if that is appropriate in this place.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): This becomes a point of debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, questions and comments.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to start by congratulating the Leader of the Opposition on his recent victory.

What we are fully aware of, and I think Canadians are quite aware of it as well, is that during his leadership contest, the member started off by talking about Bitcoin and cryptocurrencies as a solution for people to invest.

I already hear the heckles coming from across the way because they do not want me to bring this up, but I have a sincere question for the Leader of the Opposition.

He started to change his position on it and pretty much stopped talking about it right around the time that cryptocurrencies took an absolute dive and anybody who was investing would have seen their investments absolutely devastated. Therefore, I have a genuine question for the Leader of the Opposition.

Has he had an opportunity to reflect on that position and perhaps has he evolved his position on that and would he be willing to share that with the House?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the only way for all Canadians to avoid inflation is for the government to stop causing it in the first place. The Canadian dollar is the only national currency and will always be the only national currency of our country. Unfortunately, the government is devaluing the purchasing power of that currency.

Government Orders

With a half-trillion dollars of inflationary deficits, it has driven inflation to its highest levels in 40 years. It has doubled housing prices, which has reduced the purchasing power of the dollar in terms of real estate by half. That is what we have to fix. We need to reinforce the power of the Canadian dollar by cancelling the inflationary deficits and inflationary taxes that have caused this inflation crisis in the first place.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the new leader of the Conservative Party on his election. I just want to remind him, however, that the leadership race is over and that we are debating Bill C-31.

This bill is yet another federal encroachment on the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, which brings me to the subject of health transfers.

My colleague's speech was very long indeed, but it did not include a single word about health transfers. I have been here for three years, and every time I ask Conservative members a question about health transfers, I get the same meaningless answer. They say they are going to sit down with the premiers and then make a decision. The problem is that the premiers of Quebec and the provinces have already sat down together and have already figured out that they need health transfers to go up to 35%.

Now that the Conservative Party has a new leader, will it finally commit to giving Quebec and the provinces the 35% health transfer increase they want? Is the party ready to provide a meaningful answer? Does it have a different answer now?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the member is right about the fact that the Liberals are creating new programs when they cannot even manage the existing ones. Our health care system is already in crisis, and the federal government has done nothing to fix it. The government is doing nothing to protect our borders from people crossing illegally and from gun smugglers. This government cannot even issue passports.

Why should we believe that this government can manage the housing crisis and dental benefits? A government that cannot assume its existing responsibilities should not be taking on new ones.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I too offer my congratulations to the Conservatives' new leader. I am a little perplexed, though, because in his 20-minute speech, we did not hear a single mention of dental care, one of the major components of the legislation we are debating this morning.

I have heard from constituents, seniors, who cannot chew their food; from parents who cannot afford to get their kids the basic dental care they need; and from people who work in dental offices, who see everyday Canadians who cannot afford the procedures they need.

A year ago, the Conservatives voted against our motion to create a national dental care plan. I am wondering if the leader of the official opposition intends to continue that legacy.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the member is quite right to say that Canadians are suffering under the policies that he is supporting. He is a part of that costly coalition.

Everything that is happening in Canada is the paradise for which the NDP has been dreaming of all these years. They are now realizing all of the policies they always wanted. Basically, we have an NDP prime minister. What has that given us? Forty year highs in inflation, double the housing prices, record-low home ownership rates, people who, like the member said, cannot afford the basics of life. That is the consequence of that costly coalition of bigger government and smaller citizens whereby Canadians are carrying this heavy load.

Here is the question. Why would we trust the government to create new programs when it cannot run the programs it already has? It cannot protect our borders. It cannot keep out the guns. It cannot stop the crime even though the Criminal Code is a federal responsibility. It cannot even deliver a passport. How can we expect it to run our lives?

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, my congratulations as well to the leader of the official opposition.

I understand that he is concerned with the rising cost of housing, particularly for young folks. On that we can agree. However, in his speech, he skipped right over institutional investors, pension funds and real estate investment trusts that are treating the housing market like stocks, making huge profits on the backs of young people and other low-income folks for whom he says he wants to stand up.

Does he agree that homes should be places where people live and not treated as commodities in which that folks trade? Is he not also concerned that there is nothing in the bill to address that, like removing preferential tax treatment for real estate investment trusts?

• (1110)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, it is no surprise that institutional investors have been able to outbid everyday working-class Canadians for housing. Why? Because the government flooded the financial system with \$400 billion of newly created cash. When it pumped that cash into the financial system, it went into mortgage lending. Who is preferred to borrow that money? Wealthy, well-connected institutional investors. They got their hands on that money and they used it to bid up housing prices out of the reach of the working class, meaning that young people, who not long ago would have been able to afford a home, are now permanent renters.

We need to change this system. We need to stop the money printing, ensure that we have a financial and monetary system based on hard, sound money.

Finally, we need to incentivize local government gatekeepers to get out of the way, deliver faster and more affordable building permits, so we can get houses built for our youth.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the official leader of our opposition for not only winning our Conservative leadership race recently, but also for laying out a clear vision as to how we can actually fix all of the problems created by the Liberal government.

It seems like we have seen this movie before. I look back to when Pierre Elliott Trudeau was the prime minister of Canada and we saw inflation go out of control, because of out-of-control government spending and sky-high interest rates. I bought my first chunk of farm land back in 1984 and I paid 21.5% interest on my mortgage. That was because of irresponsible Liberal government programs and increased money being spent, which affected our economy.

Is this a problem again of Liberal times always being tough times? Does the official leader of the opposition think that this is again, like father, like son?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the Liberals are like the Bourbon dynasty: They learn nothing and forget nothing. They are right back to the same policies.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau ran monstrous money-printing deficits. Of course, that led to 12% inflation, 12% unemployment and then ultimately 19% or 20% interest rates. If we combine unemployment and inflation, we get the misery index. It reached a record-smashing 24% under the first Trudeau, which delivered the highest suicide rates in Canadian history in 1983.

My earliest memories are of that time, and my parents suffered because, while they were school teachers and did not lose their jobs, they got hit with those interest rate hikes just like everyone else and lost their rental properties. We ended up having to move to a smaller place because of that. We were among the lucky since we were able to get into a home.

We are following the same policies. We have 40-year highs of inflation. Inflation is higher than at any time since the last Trudeau. If we do the same things, we get the same results.

The good news is that after Canada was liberated from Pierre Elliott Trudeau, we spent a lot of years doing the exact opposite: shrinking the size of government, reforming our taxes, opening up our economy and standing up for working-class people. That is exactly what we are going to do again, and we are going to get even better results next time.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We have a question of privilege from the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED THREATS AGAINST A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am sorry to have to interrupt today's debate, but this is an important question of privilege. I will be as brief as possible.

I rise on a question of privilege regarding threatening comments made by Mr. Dale Smith, an accredited member of the parliament

Privilege

tary press gallery, following a question I raised in the House yesterday. I am raising this issue as soon as possible after having been made aware of these comments.

Mr. Smith posted the following comments on Twitter yesterday: "Genuis tries to include lyrics from 'Bohemian Rhapsody' in his question, and I cannot adequately tell you how lame it is. When horses are this lame, you shoot them. #QP."

Mr. Smith said he thought I was lame, and that when horses are lame, we shoot them. This is not normal political discourse, and I ask how I should respond to a comment like that. Some would say, "Oh, surely he was joking." However, the problem with so-called jokes implying threats toward public officials is that as the target of these comments, I am somehow supposed to understand and be okay with a threat on the basis of someone's presumed intentions. I am just not okay with this.

If there is context to such a threat, not everyone is going to understand that context. Mr. Smith has 26.3 thousand Twitter followers. His tweet about me has, at the moment, 122 retweets and 824 likes. The process by which violence is incited against public officials is one in which comments are made that do incite violence that may or may not be serious, but then others pick up on them.

Furthermore, I do not think I should have to explain to my wife, my five young children or my parents what level of risk is associated with a violent comment like this. The plain language is going to be interpreted a certain way, especially by those who are close to me.

In the current climate, we should all know the risks associated with explicitly inciting violence against public officials. There is significant precedent for recognizing threats against members as constituting a violation of privilege. Page 198 of the second edition of Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* tells of an incident in 1758 when the Nova Scotia House of Assembly proceeded against someone who made threats against a member.

In a ruling on September 19, 1973, Speaker Lamoureux, at page 6709 of Debates, stated that he had "no hesitation in reaffirming the principle that parliamentary privilege includes the right of a member to discharge his responsibilities as a member of the House free from threats or attempts at intimidation."

On February 6, 1984, the member for Peace River rose on a question of privilege arising out of a telephone conversation between a member of his staff and an official in the office of the president of Canada Post Corporation. The member alleged that the official had been abusive. The official complained that the member for Peace River's office had not cleared questions asked by the member in the House with the president's office and warned that if this was not done in the future, the member could expect little cooperation from Canada Post.

Privilege

The member for Peace River argued that this was an attempt to inhibit his freedom of speech, influence his actions in the House and hamper him in his role as spokesman for the official opposition. The Speaker, on February 20, 1984, ruled the matter to be a *prima facie* question of privilege.

On March 24, 1994, at page 2705 of Debates, Speaker Parent described the seriousness of the issue of intimidation this way: “Threats of blackmail or intimidation of a Member of Parliament should never be taken lightly. When such occurs, the very essence of free speech is undermined. Without the guarantee of freedom of speech, no Member of Parliament can do his duty as is expected.”

All of these past cases involved a threat from a person who did not have parliamentary access. Mr. Smith is currently an accredited member of the parliamentary press gallery, which gives him relatively unfettered access to the Hill. He may be up in the press gallery some time today. He may follow me in the halls or hang around outside our caucus room waiting for me. I should not have to consider whether or not I will encounter someone who has made a threat to me in the halls of Parliament. That current reality of access impacts my ability to perform my functions as a member of Parliament.

Mr. Smith is an accredited member of the parliamentary press gallery, and the gallery has its own policies and its own responsibilities. The press gallery's own website says the following regarding “Generally Accepted Journalistic Principles and Practices”:

Misuse of this access by any one member or member organization could erode the professional relationship that exists between the institution of Parliament and the Parliamentary Press Gallery, leading to negative consequences for the ability of members to perform their work.

As a result, accreditation is a privilege—not a right.

Madam Speaker, you have a responsibility to protect the rights of members, and I have no doubt that you will discharge that responsibility promptly and properly.

The press gallery also has responsibilities, and I would like to see the gallery take swift action to revoke Mr. Smith's privileges. This is an opportunity for the gallery to show that they do take seriously the issue of threats made against public officials. At the very least, Mr. Smith's privileges should be immediately suspended pending further review. I do not want to see a person who has made threats against me in the gallery anytime today or in the future.

• (1115)

I note that today, Mr. Smith is doubling down on his comments and accusing those who raise concerns about this behaviour of so-called rage farming. He has made it clear that he does not see his behaviour as wrong and that he will not relent.

I hope that all members of the House, along with the many principled and thoughtful members of the press, will be able to stand together in denouncing these kinds of threats and in defending our democracy and the security of public officials from these kinds of statements.

While in this case it is my privileges that have been violated, I know that politicians and journalists receive these kinds of threats in other contexts. This case is fairly unique because of the prominence and position of the person making the comments. When peo-

ple like Mr. Smith make comments like this, it gives other people a feeling of licence to behave in the same way. Under these circumstances, and for the good of all members, the press gallery and the House must take a clear stand.

Madam Speaker, if you find this to be a *prima facie* question of privilege, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

• (1120)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, on the question of privilege by my hon. colleague, I rise in my capacity as the shadow minister for public safety to add to his remarks about a tweet sent out last night from a member of the parliamentary press gallery who insinuated that my hon. colleague should be shot dead. This is incredibly serious and I would ask that you give it your full attention and investigate further measures that can be taken.

This comes at a time when we are increasingly aware of threats of violence against members of Parliament and politicians of all stripes at all levels of government. This comes at a time when female journalists have felt brave enough to speak out against the violence they are receiving online. This comes at a time when the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance was threatened very aggressively and harassed over the summer when she was touring Canada.

This comes at a time when politicians have all experienced an aggressive person at the door, at events or when walking down the street, and we stay quiet. We do not want to seem like we are whining. We do not want to complain about it, and we certainly do not want to encourage others to act in a threatening manner.

I can say that I have certainly been threatened. I have certainly been aggressively pursued and shouted at by people far larger and more intimidating than me. We try to slip away. We try not to encourage them. We shrink ourselves down and try to remove ourselves from the violent situation. However, as the shadow minister for public safety, I feel that I have a strong responsibility to stand up against the bully who insinuated violence against my colleague.

We know in the House that we are going to encounter a lot of criticism, sometimes very personal criticism, and we just have to take it with a stiff upper lip; we all do. However, when someone insinuates that we should be shot dead, a very clear line in the sand must be drawn and must be drawn immediately and clearly.

Government Orders

This individual in particular is a member of the notable parliamentary press gallery of Canada, which is supposed to have the highest ethical standards of journalism in this country. They are supposed to lead by example. Just as we have a public obligation, they have a public obligation. They have a responsibility to investigate this in full. They have a responsibility to lead by example and send a message that this is completely unacceptable.

As my colleague mentioned as well, this man who sent the tweet out insinuating that my dear colleague should be shot dead for his question in question period yesterday could be up in this gallery today looking down at me, looking down at my colleagues, looking down at Liberal members, NDP members, Bloc members and Green members. When members get up with their courage to ask a question to the best of their ability, that man could be tweeting out criticism and insinuating that they should be shot dead in a tweet. That is unacceptable behaviour.

Madam Speaker, I would ask that you ensure this is quickly and swiftly investigated in full, and I would appreciate if the strongest consideration was given that the individual be banned from West Block, that a discussion be had with the parliamentary press gallery and that he be removed from the parliamentary press gallery pending further review or permanently.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for raising this issue, which really affects us all. It was directed at him, and I certainly sympathize with how that must have felt, to see that member of the press gallery openly calling for him to be shot after he did not like the question that was asked.

I would like to point out that, as we move around the very building we are in right now, we can see that the House administration has put up signs in every hallway and near every entrance to stop harassment. They are signs with a big red stop sign that encourage all who work here, staff, MPs and visitors, to stop and call out incidents of sexual harassment, bullying and intimidation. I just wanted to flag that.

We have all been seized with this, as an institution, over the last few years, and members must, after every election, take training to make sure we are aware of the very highest standards of professionalism as to how we conduct ourselves individually, how we structure our offices and how we expect our staff to interact with each other. We gladly do that. In fact, members of Parliament from all parties got together to enhance the code of conduct for members and their staff.

As my hon. colleague pointed out, there is a direct relationship with the parliamentary press gallery. Its members' accreditations for security run through the House administration. I believe it is entirely reasonable for you and the Speaker's office to look into this matter to find a prima facie case of privilege. To not find a question of privilege, I believe, would seriously undermine the efforts that are constantly being made to make this building and this environment more safe and secure.

I sincerely hope that you, Madam Speaker, will find for my hon. colleague's question of privilege.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise here as a member of Parliament, but first and foremost as a man and a citizen of this world. As a citizen, what I saw yesterday was completely unacceptable. We see intimidation all around us, but I do not recall ever seeing it this bad.

I am also speaking as a former journalist. I was a journalist for 20 years, including six years as a parliamentary reporter at the National Assembly. I even served as president of the National Assembly's parliamentary press gallery for over a year. I know what a great privilege it is to be a journalist, and even more so when you have direct, daily and even physical, immediate access to our elected decision-makers.

We must have zero tolerance for intimidation of this kind, especially since this individual has access to places we frequent. The member did a good job describing the reality of the situation. As a former journalist, I call on all journalists to take a very strong stand against this utterly unacceptable situation.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to thank the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for raising this serious issue through a question of privilege. I also want to thank the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul for her interjection, as well as the official opposition House leader for his.

[*Translation*]

I also want to thank the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

This is certainly an issue that we will take seriously, and the Chair will make a ruling soon.

* * *

COST OF LIVING RELIEF ACT, NO. 2

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, An Act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am seeking the unanimous consent of the House to share my speaking time with my admirable colleague, the hon. member for Beauport—Limouilou.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to share his time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker: It is agreed.

The hon. member for Mirabel.

Government Orders

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I would like to take a moment to thank my constituents in the beautiful riding of Mirabel for putting their trust in me one year ago today. Every day, I am reminded what an honour it is to represent them.

I have been thinking about my constituents. I was thinking about them yesterday. I was thinking about them this morning. I was thinking that last year, the people of Mirabel, along with all Quebecers and Canadians, voted in a minority government. They voted in a government that was meant to work with the other opposition parties, discuss with them and be constructive. That is what the people of Mirabel wanted. That is what Quebecers wanted. That is what Canadians wanted.

A minority government is not necessarily a weak government. It can be a government that is strong because it seeks consensus, engages in dialogue, listens and communicates with the provinces and Quebec. A minority government can be a strong government if it goes about things the right way. However, what the current Liberal government decided to do is an admission of weakness. It has rejected the mandate it was given. Rather than doing the work that Canadians and Quebecers asked it to do, this government decided to give in to the NDP's laundry list of demands to circumvent democracy.

There is a reason we are presented with flawed, convoluted, last-minute bills like Bill C-31. Drafting good bills, especially budgetary and financial bills, takes time, thought, preparation and consensus. To top it all off, the bill before us today deals with health care.

It is important to note that dental health is part of overall health. What is more, this is a field in which Ottawa does not know what it is doing. It does not have the expertise or the jurisdiction. It is not set up for this.

This summer, the people of Mirabel saw that the federal government was unable to issue passports, so they are not convinced that they want the federal government messing with their teeth. We understand. That is fair. What is worse is that there is no connection—

• (1130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I will remind the member that he cannot hold up documents during his speech, especially when they have the party logo on them. I am reminding the member as he knows full well that he is not supposed to do that.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I apologize. I am sorry for having to be told and I will be sure not to do it again.

Bill C-31 has no teeth and has nothing to do with dental health. It does not meet dental needs. It is not insurance, and it is not dental insurance. This bill reflects a total lack of understanding of the existing programs in Quebec and also in other provinces.

I am going to explain what Bill C-31 really does. All it does is top up the family benefits and the Canada child benefit that already exist. The Bloc Québécois asked for targeted measures to help families with children, low-income families, taxi drivers and people currently affected by rising prices. However, all the government is saying is that it will top up the Canada child benefit for families

with an income of less than \$90,000 a year to help them deal with the increased cost of living. Now the NDP is telling the government that this bill has no teeth. The government says that those who want the benefit should submit the dentist's bill, even if it is just for \$1, \$2 or \$3 for strawberry-flavored fluoride, for example, and they will be fully reimbursed.

The Minister of Health is an economist, so he should know that there are no assurances in that. He should know that this program may help families, but instead of increasing their benefits, the government wants them to submit their receipts to the Canada Revenue Agency, fill out forms in triplicate and use the My Account portal. We all know how well MyAccount works and how much everybody loves using it. The government wants people to fill out paperwork, and if they do not have the money to pay for care up front, then they need to fill out even more paperwork to get the money up front and eventually receive care. Ordinarily, if the NDP were not here to get in the way of families and these benefits, the government would give the people money and they would go to the dentist or wherever. This bill is a benefits increase disguised as a dental program where families are asked to spend their time filling out paperwork. I congratulate the NDP.

This whole thing is meant to give the NDP members a chance to parade around their ridings, lying through their teeth about having achieved something for dental health. I have news for them: They have been shafted, and on top of that, families will to deal with red tape. This is unacceptable.

It is especially unacceptable because Quebec is getting shafted even more than the NDP on this issue. To qualify for this Canada child benefit top-up, the child's dental care must not be fully covered through private or public insurance. However, since 1974, Quebec has had an extremely progressive policy for children under 10. It covers most of the services that families need. This program could be enhanced, which would be possible if Ottawa would provide health transfers. This program means that Quebecers who go to the dentist for routine care do not have to pay a cent. They are not eligible for this federal money. What should Quebecers do, ask for strawberry-flavoured fluoride or an extra filling? Should we ask for additional services and try to spend more at the dentist, just so we can get a benefit that could have been enhanced, by consensus in the House, at the touch of a button? This is all because of the little deal reached between the Liberals and the NDP. The Liberals do not want to talk to the Bloc Québécois, the Conservatives or the Greens in order to work the way a Parliament should work.

Not surprisingly, when the Liberals unveiled Bill C-31, they came off looking kind of foolish. The day they made the announcement, there just happened to be a press conference in Quebec where people in the field, people who had spent more than just a couple of weeks thinking and talking about the issue, people who are very familiar with the issue, asked the Government of Quebec to increase public coverage in Quebec and urge Ottawa to boost health transfers. These people were asked what they thought of the federal government's Bill C-31, which will not actually cover any additional services and will get families tangled up in red tape, forcing them to take the kids on fun family outings to the Canada Revenue Agency instead of helping them with their homework.

• (1135)

Unions, seniors' advocacy groups and the poor responded quite eloquently to Bill C-31. I want to read from a document that I have here. The response is so clear that I could not have said it better myself. They said that it is nonsense.

That is what people in the know are saying. For years, they have been asking for services, for real coverage. They are asking to be able to go to the dentist under an existing program and have the services already covered.

We have gotten to this point because the federal government broke its promise to negotiate health transfers with the provinces. Since the start of the pandemic, the Prime Minister has been telling us that there is a pandemic going on, that now is not the time, that it is too soon. The government said that once the pandemic was over, it would negotiate increased health transfers with the provinces, as Quebec and the provinces are calling for. Everyone agrees on increasing health transfers, except the federal government. When it comes to health transfers, the government has no money, but when it comes to things the NDP wants, there is always money available.

The pandemic is over. The temporary EI measures are set to be lifted on Sunday. Some 60% of workers in Quebec and Canada who are receiving EI will be left high and dry, on the basis that the pandemic is over. It does seem to be over, since Bill C-31 would implement measures to increase families' purchasing power, given that we are in the midst of a postpandemic surge in inflation, which we hope is temporary.

Enough with this nonsense. People need real care. Children need real dental care. The provinces are the experts here, and that is how it should be. The government must keep its word.

I want to conclude by saying that we will vote in favour of the bill because we support the principle. I think it needs some work in committee. With a few fillings, some fluoride, a good brushing, a rinse and a few amendments, this bill might just pass the smell test.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad the member is going to be supporting the bill. It is a good piece of legislation. There are some provinces that actually advance dental care more than other provinces. The legislation we are talking about would assist thousands of children in all regions of the country, including in the province of Quebec, where I

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would see it more so as complementing the services Quebec currently offers.

Why, in any fashion, would the Bloc prevent a federal initiative that would provide badly needed dental care to children of all regions of our country?

• (1140)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, I am starting to have some experience here, so I know not to expect the member for Winnipeg North to actually listen to my speech. I said that the bill is full of cavities, but, speaking of care, there might be a way to make it better.

I understand that the member comes from a province that does not have a progressive provincial dental insurance program like Quebec does. I understand that it is not part of his culture to know that Quebec already has this type of program. The government is not helping families by duplicating the program, by complicating it and by creating obstacles for families who want an increase in family benefits. Rather than giving them money, the government is telling them to go to the CRA to have their claims verified. How is that good news for families? I would like someone to explain that to me.

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

I am more hopeful and optimistic than he is because, last year, in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, when I met up with people in parks or went door-knocking, people really seemed to care about dental coverage whenever we talked about it. Not everyone has supplementary insurance or coverage through some kind of public plan, so people really want this.

After the Liberals voted twice against NDP proposals to make dental care available to the poor and the middle class, we used our leverage in the House to force the Liberals to do just that, for the benefit of families, workers and anyone who cannot afford dental care. By the end of the year, dental care will be covered for kids aged 12 and under, and by next year, it will be covered for teenagers and seniors. This is good news for poor and middle-class Quebecers, and it is all thanks to the work being done by the NDP.

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon: Madam Speaker, the NDP member just demonstrated the problem.

The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie is going to tell his constituents that they have dental insurance. However, when parents in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie go to the dentist with their nine-year-old child, they will realize that they still have the same insurance they had before, the one from Quebec, and they will have to ask for a slightly higher receipt and get services that are not covered in order to get the full amount.

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It seems that the member spends a lot of time in parks like Molson park. I hope he will take the opportunity to tell people that to get better benefits for children they will have to waste a lot of time with CRA and maybe even suffer through an audit if the dentist cancels their day. I wish him luck at the parks.

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, allow me to begin this first speech of the fall session by taking the time to salute my constituents in Beauport—Limoilou, not only those who re-elected me just a year ago, but all my constituents since I share my days with them. What brings us together goes beyond partisanship and politics, and so I send them my regards.

My speech today should be of interest to my constituents because it is about things that affect their daily lives, things they work hard for, in other words, rent, dental insurance, quality of life and so on.

I will talk about two things: the dental benefit and the rent support program.

This spring, when we were getting ready to vote on the budget implementation bill, some members in the House stated loud and clear that they were voting in favour of the bill in order to keep one of their promises, which was one of the reasons they reached an agreement with the Liberal Party, namely the implementation of dental insurance.

However, the current bill does not actually establish dental insurance. A benefit and insurance are two completely different concepts. Insurance pays for all or part of the dental care a person receives in a year. A benefit is an amount of money given at some point during the year. Too bad if it does not cover all the costs, but it is nice if it does.

In this case, we are talking about \$650 a year for a family earning less than \$70,000 in that year. I have four children. There have been times in my life when my spouse and I have made less than \$70,000 a year. Quebec covers some dental care, but not basic care like annual scaling and cleaning, or sealing pits and fissures in adult teeth to prevent cavities. It was over \$400 a year for basic care for my four children. Two of them required appointments every six months. I am fastidious about dental hygiene. There are years when we had to cut our budget to make sure our children saw a dentist. There are years when they did not see one at all because we could not afford it.

In addition to not adequately covering people's needs, getting the benefit is going to be a pain, because parents have to claim it through CRA's My Account portal. As my colleague said, that means parents need access to a computer and the Internet, which not everyone has. When people have to cut spending, the Internet is often one of the things they let go of. Parents also have to trust a system that has either lost data or been hacked in recent years. Sounds great, right?

Why not set up a simpler process, such as using health cards? True, health cards are within the purview of Quebec and the Canadian provinces, not the federal government.

Need I remind the House that dental care is health care and is therefore under the jurisdiction of the governments of Quebec and

the Canadian provinces? Quebec has dental insurance, as I said earlier. It used to be much more comprehensive, but is only partial now. When federal health transfers were pared down in the 1990s, Quebec and the Canadian provinces had to make tough choices. One of those choices was to reduce the age of eligibility for free dental care from 18 to 10. My father did not have to pay for my dental care because it was covered.

The federal government is once again infringing on an area of Quebec or provincial jurisdiction rather than fulfilling its constitutional duty with regard to health transfers. It is rather ridiculous that the separatist party in the House is the one reminding the federal government of its constitutional duties. The government wants to look like the great saviour when it is actually the one that has been causing these problems since the 1990s. Basically, the government is pulling a Perry, the firefighter who set fire to the Montreal Parliament building in 1849. He knew how to set fires and put them out.

• (1145)

By cutting health transfers, the federal government knew full well that the burden would fall on the shoulders of Quebec and the provinces rather than on its own. It knew that Quebec and the provinces would be forced to cut public services and programs. It knew that those cuts would tarnish the reputation of Quebec and the provinces. It knew that, as a result, over time, any separatist movement in Quebec or the other provinces would be undermined. However, the bad news is that the opposite is happening. What is good news for Quebec and the provinces may not be good news for the federal government.

The federal government is the main reason for the cuts in Quebec and the provinces, the same federal government that, today, is setting itself up as the great saviour of services and keeps repeating that it is not an ATM. I would like to remind the federal government that the money in that so-called ATM belongs to citizens. That money did not grow on trees. The federal government needs to abide by the constitutional agreements and increase transfers to the amount called for by Quebec and the provinces. That is a good deal, because they are only calling for 35% when, under the agreements, the federal government should be paying them 50%.

Some are sure to argue that the current bill introduces an interim measure for two years while a real insurance program is being created. What will happen in two years? There will probably be an election. The interim measure might end up being in place longer than expected, to the point of being seen as permanent. It is kind of the same thing with employment insurance, which has its share of problems. We are told the situation is temporary and that improvements will be made. That was supposed to happen this summer. The reform will be put off indefinitely even though the government says it is urgent. We have heard that before.

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In the parliamentary process, suggestions can be made in the form of amendments introduced in committee. The first suggestion would definitely be to respect constitutional agreements regarding health transfers. The second may be to give Quebec and those provinces that may choose to do so the option of opting out with compensation. Doing so would be in line with the Constitution in that it would keep the federal government out of jurisdictions that are not its own.

I now want to briefly talk about my daughter's experience as a renter. My darling Zoé managed to find a place to live 20 minutes from her work and 40 minutes from her school by bus. The apartment is two rooms, in a dark, unheated semi-basement. The cheapest she could find was \$900. The \$500 a year would represent around 0.46% of her housing costs. That does not include food. She is fortunate that mom and dad can help her, but that is not the case for everyone. The figure of 0.46% in no way commensurate with inflation, which is hovering around 7% and is even higher for rents. It makes no sense to me when someone claims that taking 10% off of \$2,500 makes a housing unit affordable. That is more expensive than a mortgage and it makes no sense.

Sending this cheque is not unlike patching a crumbling wall with a glue stick. The wall needs to be fixed. In other words, we need programs that are sustainable and predictable. It is ridiculous that an organization would go through the hassle of creating an entire housing program only to be told, "sorry, but the deadline has passed". The organization wasted \$35,000 to \$50,000 on expertise and wages that turned out to be completely useless.

Starting in 2016, 100,000 units per year were supposed to be built in order to meet the growing demographic need. 2016 was six years ago, so we are talking about 600,000 units. Things are not getting any better. I would hope that no one here has had to cut up towels to make diapers, like I did. I hope that no one here has had to stock their cupboard with beans, instant rice, peanut butter and bread to feed their family, like I did. I hope no one has had to roll their pennies to buy milk. That is where unaffordable rent gets us.

• (1150)

I still have laundry—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I apologize to the hon. member, but her time is up. I am certain she will be able to elaborate on that during questions and comments.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I disagree with much of what the member has said. For the Prime Minister, the government and the constituents I represent, the Canada Health Act and the health and general well-being of Canadians from coast to coast to coast are things we are greatly concerned about. That is why we have invested historic amounts of money. Never before has a federal government given as much money toward health care as this government has. That is why we have invested in things such as mental health and long-term care.

Today's bill is all about providing dental care and making it affordable for children under the age of 12. Is this member, and the member who spoke before her, trying to say that it does not complement the system in the province of Quebec? Not all provinces are equal. Is she saying that not one of her constituents would benefit by this program? If she is, she is wrong.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, my colleague's propensity for putting words in my mouth is incredible.

I did not say that no one would benefit from this. I said that these services fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the Canadian provinces. If a Canadian province, such as his, wants to have access to dental insurance, real dental insurance, not a temporary cheque, then so be it. However, the other provinces, the ones that want to manage this jurisdiction of service delivery on their own, should have the right to opt out with compensation.

• (1155)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. I was touched when she talked about how people are going through tough times, how they are struggling and living off of rice and peanut butter. As the cost of living goes up, we are seeing more and more of that in our communities.

I am quite proud of what we have been able to accomplish by forcing the Liberals to bring in measures that will really help people. Yes, the money for dental care this year is a temporary measure. It is not real insurance yet. We are working on adding teens, seniors and people with disabilities next year. Other measures, such as doubling the GST/HST credit, will help people in need who are having trouble paying for groceries these days. We also talked the government into a \$500 Canada housing benefit top-up for people who are finding it hard to pay the rent. That extra \$500 will help 580,000 Quebecers.

For all these reasons, I think today's bill is good news for the people of Quebec.

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, yes, this is certainly good news, but it is temporary.

Perhaps some will say that I live in a fantasy world, but, in my mind, the government's goal and our objective in this Parliament should be to protect the dignity of the most vulnerable in our society, and not just to win the next election, but really for the long term. This program is nothing more than paltry cheques that amount to temporary band-aids on the gaping wounds that are the insufficient health transfers and the deeply flawed building programs that have been in place since 2016, at least.

There is currently a shortage of 600,000 homes. If we had had an adequate supply of housing, prices would not have skyrocketed the way they did.

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Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to commend both of my colleagues who spoke before me for their speeches.

I do not know if the Liberals found it painful to have to create this program, perhaps like having a tooth extracted. This is not dental insurance. The Liberals are sending a cheque for dental care in order to save face with Quebec and Canadian families. This is not a dental care program.

Would my colleague not agree that this is counterproductive?

Mrs. Julie Vignola: Madam Speaker, I completely agree. A cheque is not insurance.

What we need to do is work on bringing in real insurance with the right to opt out with compensation for Quebec and the Canadian provinces that wish to administer that insurance themselves.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the context of the situation we are in right now and what is going on across our country. Over the past summer, I spent a lot of time travelling and hearing people's stories. Canadians are going through a tough time right now. They have already been through a difficult time with the pandemic and now, on top of those struggles, which people have gotten through and continue to feel, we have a cost-of-living and inflation crisis that is driving up the cost of everything.

That means that people are struggling to pay for everything, to buy their groceries, to put food on the table and gas in their cars, but what I heard from people that really struck me was their feeling that, no matter how hard they work, no matter how much they are doing everything that, in their minds, they need to do and doing everything right, they are still falling behind. That is a very difficult thing to feel. It makes one feel very hopeless and frustrated, and understandably so. When people are doing everything right, they should be able to have the respect and dignity to put food on the table, pay their bills and take care of their families.

[Translation]

Clearly people are struggling. When I talk to Canadians across the country, they tell me their story. They tell me that they work very hard, but even so, it is becoming harder and harder for them to make ends meet. They cannot afford to buy the same food they used to, and they cannot get what they need. That is the reality. They fear for the future, and they are frustrated. I understand that because that is the reality.

• (1200)

[English]

I also understand what that is like because I have lived it. I remember the difficult times my brother and I had. When I was going to university, I had a kid brother that I had to take care of, and I had to work a bunch of jobs to make sure that I was able to put food on the table, not only for myself, but also for my younger brother. The worry and fear of not being able to take care of a loved one really weighs on a person. It is a lot of pressure, and a lot of families are experiencing that right now.

At the same time, while workers' wages are not keeping up with inflation, CEOs' salaries are skyrocketing. CEOs are not having any struggles. Their wages and salaries are going up while those of workers' are lagging behind. It is clear that is wrong and it should not be this way. In fact, it does not have to be this way.

There is a war being waged right now on workers and working families across this country. We are witnessing a massive transfer of wealth from hard-working, honest Canadians to the pockets of billionaires, and behind every billionaire is a Liberal or Conservative government that allowed the exploitation and disrespect of workers, the brutality of corporate greed and tax loopholes that stole wealth from Canadians. Billions of dollars of taxpayer money in corporate welfare went directly to CEOs and wealthy corporations.

Behind every working family in this country are New Democrats fighting for and demanding respect and dignity, forcing CEOs to pay what they owe and making sure that government has Canadians' backs, because it is hard-working Canadians, the workers and not the greedy CEOs, who make our country an incredible place. That is why, for the past number of months, we have been pushing hard on the government to respond the needs of people.

Last spring, we said that we should double the GST tax credit to put more of Canadians' own money back into their pockets to deal with everything becoming more expensive. The Liberals said no. The Prime Minister and the Liberal government were too busy saying it was not their fault and that it is worse in other countries to act to find solutions to support people in this time. Had the government shown leadership when we demanded more money to be put back in Canadians' pockets, people would have had \$500 in their pockets earlier to pay their bills over the summer.

[Translation]

That is the problem with the Liberals. When people need help, they study, they consult, they find excuses not to take action. In the meantime, people are suffering. When it is wealthy CEOs making demands, the Liberals spring into action. That is the problem.

[English]

We have seen this again and again. When wealthy CEOs come knocking, Liberals and Conservatives leap into action. These measures could have made a massive difference in people's lives if they had been passed earlier. People would have been able to have this respect and dignity over the summer. It could have helped families get ready for their kids going back to school.

That is the issue with the Liberals. They are too busy pointing fingers elsewhere and saying it is not their fault and that it is worse in other countries. That might be true, but it does not help the family who is looking at its bills right now and asking what it will do to pay them.

It is frustrating we need to force the government to act every time people need support. Then there are the Conservatives, who think everyone should just be on their own. They want to inflame the anger and frustration Canadians rightly feel, but they do not want to provide any solutions that would actually make people's lives better right now. A family that is struggling to pay its bills wants some respect and dignity now. A family that cannot afford for its kids to go to the dentist needs that support immediately. That is what we are doing.

● (1205)

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives' approach has always been to let people fend for themselves. If people are having a hard time paying for day care or medication or if they have lost their job and need help, the Conservatives tell them to figure it out. Canadians have seen the results of this approach. The ultrarich reap the benefits. Ordinary people suffer and are ignored.

[*English*]

I want to be clear about what we are facing right now in this country. We are facing a cost-of-living increase and rising inflation that is being driven by corporate greed. We are experiencing "greedflation". No one else wants to talk about that. No one else wants to point to the fact that, while workers' wages have not kept up, CEO salaries have skyrocketed and wealthy corporations have seen massive profits. They have taken this moment in time, this crisis, as an opportunity to jack up their prices beyond increased costs, which is why they are experiencing these massive profits, and people are hurting.

Inflation is not the workers' fault, as many folks want to suggest. It is the result of CEOs seizing on this difficult moment and increasing their profits, which is hurting Canadians.

When we asked both the Liberals and the Conservatives about doing something to take on this corporate greed, both said no time and time again. They said no to making CEOs pay what they owe. They said no to making sure the wealthiest corporations are paying what they owe. They are fine with rich CEOs doing what they want while workers continue to struggle to make ends meet.

New Democrats believe it should not be the workers who need to pay the price. It should not be on the shoulders of workers that we tackle the rising cost of living. It should be wealthy CEOs, those at the very top, who contribute what they owe so we can tackle what we are going through right now.

On what we are experiencing and seeing right now in the House, the solutions being proposed and presented, I want Canadians to know very clearly that we have been fighting for them from the beginning. We have been fighting for them since we have seen the cost of living rise. Because we have fought for them, 12 million Canadians are going to receive up to \$467 back in their pockets. Because we kept on fighting for them, Canadians are going to be able to have their kids' teeth looked after. Because we kept fighting for them, those who are having a hard time paying their rents are going to get respect. Because we fought for them, these things were possible.

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[*Translation*]

Thanks to New Democrats, who kept on fighting and did not give up, workers will have money in their pockets. Had we given up, 12 million Canadians would not be receiving up to \$467 to help them make ends meet. Had we given up, two million Canadians would not be receiving an additional \$500 to help pay the rent. Had we not fought, parents of children under 12 years of age would not be receiving \$1,300 over the next two years to pay for their children's dental care.

● (1210)

[*English*]

In the last election, my team and I committed to Canadians that we would fight to make sure we made their lives better. We listened to what Canadians told us was important. So many people across this country said, "We are hurting and we cannot take care of our kid's teeth" or "We are struggling and we need respect and dignity". We heard them. We listened to Canadians, and we are delivering. It is because Canadians raised these concerns that today we are debating, in the House, solutions to solve the problems they told us they are up against.

We heard the heartbreaking stories of Canadians who had to choose between paying the dental care bills for their kids or putting food on the table. No one should have to make that type of decision.

When we were campaigning, we reached out to Canadians to hear how our policies would help them and what they were going through that they needed support on. One of the stories I think a lot about was when I spoke with Adam, who has two kids, both under 12. He told me that both of his kids needed about \$1,000 each of dental care. Although he is earning a decent salary, with all the bills that he has to pay, he is not sure that he can afford it. He will have to take out a loan to pay for his kids to get their teeth looked after. He told me that he had thought many times about waiting until their adult teeth came in, and I could hear in his voice the guilt and shame that maybe he was being a bad dad because he was considering putting off the care that his kids needed because he just could not afford it. I told him that it was not his fault, that he was doing everything right, and that we needed to do better to make sure he could get his kids looked after.

I had the opportunity to talk to Adam after we were able to secure this massive victory for people, and I asked him, "What does this mean to you?" I cannot explain his voice, the lifting of guilt, the optimism, the hope. He said he was going to be able to look after his kids' teeth, that this was going to make a huge difference in their lives, and it was only possible because of this program.

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That is what this means to so many Canadians. There are so many people out there who are struggling with what they can do for their kids, but they do not know if they afford it and they are having to make impossible decisions. Parents should never be put in that position, and we are taking a step forward to make sure that parents do not have to make those decisions.

With the interim benefit, for a family who has a child under 12, for one child, they will receive \$650 per year. In a less than two-year span, about 18 months, they will receive up to \$1,300 per child. In the case of Adam, for his two children, that will be \$2,600. He will absolutely be able to take care of his kids' teeth. That is going to make a huge difference in Adam's life, in his children's lives and for hundreds of thousands of families across this country.

[*Translation*]

Once it is up and running, this national dental care program will provide coverage for seven to nine million Canadians. Families will save at least \$1,200 a year. This program will change lives and stop people from having to seek emergency treatment for problems that could have been prevented.

[*English*]

Unfortunately, all of this could have been implemented years ago. Years ago, when we put forward our dental care plan in this very chamber, in this Parliament, both the Liberals and the Conservatives teamed up to vote against it. We could have had this program up and running already. Millions of Canadians could have accessed it. On two previous occasions, specifically in the House, we put this plan to a vote and both the Liberals and the Conservatives voted against it. Now we are proud to say that it is moving forward and we are going to make it happen.

I also want to point out that the leader of the official opposition does not believe Canadians should get this dental coverage, despite the fact that he has no problem with having his own dental care coverage since his mid-twenties, which has been paid for by the public. He thinks it is wrong that families in Canada that do not have coverage should get dental care coverage. I would like to see how he explains that to the nearly nine million Canadians who are going to get this dental care benefit. Why does he think they do not deserve dental care when he has been benefiting from it, through taxpayer dollars, for nearly two decades?

We believe fundamentally that, as a nation, we are stronger and better when we take care of one another, when we lift each other up. We are better when we look out for one another. Because of New Democrats, every Canadian in this country, when this plan is up and running, who needs care and does not have coverage will be able to look after their teeth. That is a massive step forward.

I also want to talk about another major concern when it comes to the cost of living. We know, in addition to these major steps that we have taken, there is a lot more that Canadians need. Another major concern when we talk about the cost of living is housing. We know in this country, no matter where a person lives, people are feeling squeezed when it comes to finding something in their budget to either own or rent. People are often giving up the dream of owning because it is just so expensive. We want to make sure that Canadians have that respect and dignity. We want to make sure that Cana-

dians have the ability to find a home that is in their budget. That is why we forced the government to change the definition around what is affordable. If a private developer receives public money, what they are building has to be a home, it has to be a project, that is truly affordable.

I want to talk about some of the differences that I have made when it comes to that definition. A lot more needs to be done, but this is a big step forward in where we are putting our money. Previously, under the Liberal definition, a housing project only had to have 20% of the units affordable. In a city like Toronto, under their definition, \$2,229 for a one-bedroom apartment was considered affordable. We have changed that definition. Now a building has to have at least 40% affordable. The new definition of an affordable one-bedroom apartment has to be \$1,256, which is a massive reduction. That is a huge difference.

We know this is going to help but it is not all. We need to invest massively in building more not-for-profit housing, in co-operative housing and in housing that is there for people when they need it, whether it is to rent or to own. We know we can do that if we make it a priority.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

More than ever before, people want politicians to roll up their sleeves and work hard for them, not for rich CEOs. They know that CEOs' interests will be represented, and that is what has caused so much frustration. If we want to change the situation, we have to help them.

[*English*]

We know that for so long decisions were made that benefited those at the top and benefited CEOs. Canadians are demanding that we make decisions that benefit them, their families and workers. That is what we are here to do.

These three initiatives that are before the House are big steps forward, but we know a lot more is needed. We are going to continue to fight for Canadians to make sure they have the respect and dignity they deserve, to be able to own and afford a place they can call their own, to be able to find the means to support their family, to put food on the table and to pay their bills. We see them, we hear them and we are going to fight for them.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments the leader has made. In listening to the debate today, it is disappointing to see that the Conservatives, in contrast to the government and the NDP, seem to not want to support our children. This bill is focused, in terms of children under 12, in providing a benefit that will truly have a positive impact. Then there were the concerns expressed by the Bloc members that the people of Quebec would not necessarily benefit from the program.

Does the leader of the New Democratic Party not agree that today it is time for us to have a national footprint on the issue of dental care and that this is a good starting point, dealing with kids under the age of 12?

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Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, this is an important step forward to provide that care for kids under 12.

However, I want to be clear that this could have happened a lot earlier if the Liberals and the Conservatives had not voted against it the previous two times we introduced this bill. We will move forward and continue to fight to make sure families get support and help so that Canadians across this country can take of their teeth and move forward in a healthy way. We can make that happen. We are confident that we can force the government to do that.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP talks a lot about affordability, the pressures Canadians are facing, respect and dignity, and how his party is fighting for Canadians.

Is this done by propping up the Liberal government, by voting with the Liberals to increase taxes, to increase bureaucracy, to increase red tape that makes life difficult for everyday Canadians? For example, the New Democrats have been supporting the failed carbon tax that does not work, but it does make food more expensive and home heating more expensive. It makes driving kids to and from sports more expensive.

Why does the leader of the NDP brag that he and his party are fighting for Canadians when they keep voting for tax increases and increased bureaucratic red tape?

• (1220)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, what we have before the House are three concrete ways that, instead of just talking about it or inflaming anger, we are actually going to give people respect and dignity.

We are going to give more money back into people's pockets. We are going to give people the respect to be able to pay their rent. We are going to make sure families are able to look after their teeth. Those are concrete steps to make people's lives better, rather than what the Conservatives have been doing, which is inflaming a lot of anger and building on that anger, but not really doing much beyond that to make people's lives better. We have concretely put forward proposals that would change Canadians' lives. We are proud of that. We know that there is a lot more that needs to be done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what I have been hearing from my colleague, the leader of the NDP, is nothing new. He is always promoting greater federal interference in provincial jurisdictions and, in particular, Quebec's jurisdictions.

He made an impassioned plea for better dental care. I completely agree that we need better dental care. However, does the member not realize that Quebec already has a dental plan for families with children under 10?

A new federal program like the one being proposed would do nothing for all of these Quebecers. If the Government of Quebec wanted its fair share, it could decide to make cuts to ensure that Quebecers have access to this new benefit. Is my colleague aware of the negative impacts this bill would have on some Quebecers?

That is what we would have to do if we wanted to be consistent and wanted to get our fair share. That is not what I want, however. I want better coverage. What we ultimately want is for the federal government to give proper compensation to Quebec.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, Quebec always has the right to opt out with full compensation.

I want to share a story. I was in a taxi in Quebec City. The driver told me that the most important thing for him was dental care. This senior citizen said that he really appreciated the fact that I was trying to implement that kind of program. He never mentioned infringing on jurisdictions. He said that he wanted a dental care program.

Perhaps my hon. colleague should try talking to people. Ordinary people want programs that work. Ordinary people do not talk about jurisdictions or interference. They want us to help them and respect them. They want to be able to get dental care.

That is exactly what we are going to give our seniors across the country over the coming year. They will be able to get dental care, and that will be done while respecting jurisdictions. However, I still want to point out that ordinary people do not talk about that. We respect Quebec's jurisdiction and will continue to do so.

People want respect and programs that help them, and that is exactly what we will give them.

[*English*]

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to share a story of a couple, with three kids, in my riding. She is a person with a disability. He is making under \$50,000. When they heard about this announcement, he said that it could not come fast enough and she said that it would be life-changing. Last year, when the Liberals and Conservatives voted against dental care, they made this family struggle for another year.

We have three approaches in the House: the Conservatives, who leave these families to fend for themselves; the Liberals, who have to be forced into doing the right thing; and, the New Democrats, who are going to keep fighting for people.

Could the member please speak about the people with disabilities, the seniors and the families with kids under 18, for whom we will keep fighting?

• (1225)

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and dear friend raises a really important issue. People waiting for this care could have got it earlier. We want them to know that we are fighting for them, and by next year there will be a national federal program that will cover children 18 and under, seniors and people living with disabilities. This will provide so much help those people. As the hon. member for Victoria mentioned, it will be life-changing.

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I want the family she mentioned to know that we will be fighting for it. We are going to ensure it gets that respect and dignity. We will ensure that members of the family are able to take care of their teeth. We are going to make that happen.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the efforts of the leader of the NDP to get this support to Canadians across the country. That being said, a \$500 cheque does not address the fundamental market conditions that are benefiting institutional investors, leading to increased rents for seniors on fixed incomes and young people being priced out of the housing market altogether.

I know the member agrees that more needs to be done. I wonder if he could share what he thinks all parliamentarians could do to rise past the partisanship and work together to ensure that homes are places for people to live and not commodities for investors to trade.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, the hon. colleague has raised a real concern with which Canadians are faced. The fact that first-time homebuyers are competing with corporations that have billions of dollars to purchase properties to make more profit is unfair. It is a fundamental problem we are up against. We need to get at that. That is why we have called for changes to the way we approach housing.

Financialization and commodification are serious problems that need to be addressed. Housing should be about people being able to find a place to call their own, a place to live. That has not been the case for a long time now. There are specific changes we can make to the tax laws that will disincentivize property flipping or corporations from purchasing properties and to ensure that home ownership, being able to find a place to rent or own, is for families, people and workers. That is something we can do. We have to make it a priority.

The Deputy Speaker: Before proceeding to the next speaker, we have a point of order from the hon. member for Oshawa.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I want to bring to your attention that this morning, at around 10 a.m., when the House of Commons began sitting, I was waiting to be accepted into the Zoom meeting. As it is Thursday, Routine Proceedings is the first item on the agenda, which is a very important part of any sitting day. While I was waiting to be accepted into the meeting, the session began.

I am not a big fan of a hybrid Parliament, but if it is to be used, then it must be used in a fair way. I am asking you, Mr. Speaker, to please ensure that those of us trying to log onto the online meeting are accepted and online before starting the session. Those of us who logged online early, before the session started, have the right to participate fully.

I am sure this was just an anomaly for today, as it has worked fine in the past, but I felt you should be made aware of it, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member. The Internet being the way it is, once again, the camera actually did not key to show in the House of Commons. We will go back and look at the log-in sequence to ensure that everything was working correctly for today.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Davenport.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the most hon. member for Halifax West.

As always, it is a true honour for me to rise in this venerable House to speak on behalf of the residents of my riding of Davenport.

I will be speaking to Bill C-31, an act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing. More specific, I will be speaking about how the federal government is working to immediately make accessing dental care for children across Canada more affordable through the Canada dental benefit. This is important to families in my riding of Davenport, particularly those families that do not have access to dental insurance and whose household incomes are below \$90,000.

Indeed, Canadians are feeling the rising cost of living, particularly through higher food prices and rent. While inflation is a global challenge caused by the pandemic and Russia's illegal and unjustifiable invasion of Ukraine, it is important for our government to help families weather the impact of higher costs by putting more money back in the pockets of the middle class and those who are working hard to join it.

The introduction of Bill C-31 by our Ministers of Health and Housing is a critical step in improving oral health for children and delivering on our commitment to financially help Canadians deal with the rising cost of living. By helping families afford the dental care their children need, this new benefit would support families that need it the most, when they need it the most.

Helping Canadian families weather the impacts of inflation by working to put more money back in their pockets this year is a priority for our government. This investment in dental care for children without dental insurance would build on the strategic investments our government is making to support Canadians, by making life more affordable and building an economy that works for all, while at the same time helping our youngest members of society get off to the right start and have healthier oral health while suffering less pain.

Since 2015, our federal government has cut taxes for the middle class and raised them on the wealthiest 1%. We have delivered a Canada child benefit and raised it every year, to continue putting more money back in the pockets of nine out of 10 families with children, and we will have cut regulated child care fees in half on average by the end of this year for families across the country. These are just a few examples of how we are delivering support for lower and middle-income Canadians.

The federal government has also taken steps to support our universal health care system through a one-time top up to the Canada health transfer of \$2 billion to the provinces and territories to help reduce backlogs for surgeries, building on the \$45.2 billion provinces and territories will receive this year.

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Our federal government has taken important steps to make a real difference for families across the country, and I am incredibly proud of the significant long-term sustained investments the government is making to help deliver a more affordable and better quality of life for families across Canada.

That being said, we know that dental care is an integral facet of the overall health of Canadians and that poor oral health can have costly personal and financial repercussions.

It is estimated that the negative impacts of poor oral health account for productivity losses of over \$1 billion per year, as well as approximately two million missed school days annually. This outcome increases public spending in cost-intensive health care areas, such as cardiac and emergency care. By making dental care more affordable for middle-class families, we believe the Canada dental benefit would help greatly reduce these costly and serious negative impacts.

We also know that cost is a significant barrier to accessing dental care for many Canadians. Among children, much of the burden of dental disease is concentrated in children from low-income families. That is why we have introduced this legislation to break the cycle of poor oral health for the youngest Canadians and to help ensure families can afford dental care for their children.

- (1230)

We estimate that over 500,000 Canadian children could benefit from this investment and that the cost of this targeted investment is estimated to be \$938 million. It is absolutely a worthwhile investment and the legislation, if passed, will make it more affordable for parents to take their children to see a dental professional, so children across the country can receive the care they need.

The Canada dental benefit for children without insurance under the age of 12 will help parents with income under \$90,000 purchase needed dental care for their children. The Canada dental benefit would provide direct payments to eligible applicants, totalling up to \$650 per year, per child for dental care services for applicants with a family income of under \$70,000. It would be \$390 for those with a family income of \$70,000 to \$79,999, and \$260 for those with a family income of \$80,000 to \$89,999. Parents or guardians of eligible children who have dental needs would need to apply to access payments.

Our federal government will be taking action to ensure that Canadians receive the benefit as quickly as possible. The legislation would give the Minister of Health authority to implement this application-based upfront benefit payment to eligible Canadians later this year.

The targeted implementation date for the Canada dental benefit is December 1, pending parliamentary approval and royal assent for enabling legislation. The program would cover expenses retroactive to October 1, so long as the child remains eligible on December 1.

Canadians will be able to apply for and receive the benefit upfront before accessing dental care. Eligible Canadians can apply via the Canada Revenue Agency's secure My Account portal or by calling the Canada Revenue Agency's client contact centre.

Our federal government will ensure that applications will be processed quickly, automatically in many cases, with payments received within a week for individuals requesting direct deposit.

We understand that dental care needs vary from one child to the next, which is why we are providing flexibility for the Canada dental benefit to be used for any dental care provided by a regulated oral health professional licensed to practise in the applicant's province or territory.

This flexibility will position parents to have discussions with their oral health care provider to determine the most appropriate dental care treatment for their children.

It is important to note that the Canada dental benefit will not reduce other federal income tested benefits, such as the Canada worker benefit, the Canada child benefit and the goods and services tax credit.

Our federal government will ensure that Canadians receive the information they need to apply for and receive the Canada dental benefit. Through a joint collaboration between Health Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency, a public education campaign for the Canada dental benefit will be launched, with tailored messaging providing essential information on who qualifies and how to access this funding.

Our federal government will engage with stakeholders, such as provincial and territorial dental associations, to promote the Canada dental benefit and provide essential information for qualifying families to be able to understand how the benefit will work for them, recognizing that the Canada dental benefit is the first stage of the government's plan for making dental care more affordable for Canadians.

I am pleased to also see that our federal government is committed to providing dental care to Canadians and continues to take needed steps to build a comprehensive, national long-term dental care program.

Just to remind everyone, federal budget 2022 proposes to provide funding of \$5.3 billion over five years and \$1.7 billion ongoing to deliver a dental care program for low-income Canadians and to help provide dental care for Canadians who are unable to access care because of the cost and/or because they do not have dental insurance.

The legislation strikes the right balance between ensuring that the immediate needs of low and middle-class children are met, as well as setting the ground work for a comprehensive dental care program.

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I know that this benefit will help many families, not only in my riding of Davenport but families right across the country. I ask all members of the House to join us in supporting this much-needed legislation.

• (1235)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just two days ago in a speech, the deputy governor of the Bank of Canada, Mr. Beaudry, said that in hindsight, governments and central banks should have withdrawn stimulus measures earlier to keep a lid on inflation. Why is the government ignoring his advice completely and adding \$4.5 billion in additional stimulus spending, which will make inflation even higher? These benefits will be eaten up by additional inflation in no time flat.

• (1240)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, we are ensuring that we invest and make targeted investments in Canadians, and we are providing support to our most vulnerable Canadians and to those who need it the most.

This is not a big spending plan. It is very targeted. Economists have already opined that it is not anticipated, in any way, to add to inflation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my hon. colleague realizes that the \$500 given annually to low-income families to help them pay for housing works out to just \$42 a month, the equivalent of less than a week's worth of milk for a family of four. The cost of milk for a week is now between \$50 and \$60. This is just a band-aid solution that fails to address much more significant needs, including the urgent need for well-built housing. There is a shortage of over 600,000 units.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, housing is a huge worry not only for the residents of my riding of Davenport but for all Canadians. That is why our government, since we were elected, has announced a national housing strategy, to which we have allocated \$72 billion.

As part of that housing strategy, we have also introduced the Canada housing benefit to help the most vulnerable Canadians at the lowest end of the income scale afford their rent. There is a one-time top-up as part of Bill C-30 and Bill C-31, which are all about providing targeted investments to Canadians who need it the most. We are providing an additional \$500 on top of all the other benefits we are providing to Canadians at this particular time.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about an economy that works for everyone. Well, the PBO put out a report recently and cited that the top 1% of families in this country hold 25% of the wealth while the bottom 40% hold 1.1% of the wealth.

Meanwhile, we are seeing grocery store chains, banks and oil and gas and telecom companies make record profits, while groceries, bank fees, gas and wireless fees go up. Greedflation has taken hold. We live in a country that has the lowest corporate tax rate

in the G7. Meanwhile, children cannot get their teeth fixed and we have seniors who need help.

When are the Liberals going to address the greedflation? We know that the Conservatives, who are the gatekeepers for those big corporations, are not going to address it. Is the Liberal government going to do something about it? I ask because we are waiting and those people desperately need help. We are glad to see the Liberals finally vote in support of our measure on dental care, but what took them so long?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Mr. Speaker, I agree. We should ensure that every Canadian pays their fair share of taxes.

We have already announced that we are permanently raising the corporate income tax rate by 1.5% on Canada's largest, most profitable banks and insurance companies, and we have introduced a recovery dividend of 15% on the excess profits of these institutions during the COVID pandemic. We have also implemented, effective September 1, a 10% luxury tax on private jets and luxury cars worth more than \$100,000, and boats and yachts worth more than \$250,000.

On the point of providing supports to Canadians, we have been doing so since we were elected in late 2015. We increased taxes on the top 1%. We reduced them on the middle class. We have increased the Canada workers benefit three times. We introduced the Canada child benefit. We introduced national child care.

We have been there for Canadians. We will continue to be there for Canadians moving forward.

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a privilege to rise here in the chamber on behalf of the good people of Halifax West, and especially today as we debate Bill C-31, an important and timely piece of legislation that would put money back into the pockets of some of the families that need it the most.

[*Translation*]

I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-31 and talk about what the federal government is doing to make life more affordable for families across the country as quickly as possible.

• (1245)

[*English*]

Over the summer, I heard from many about the local challenges that global inflation has brought to my community. It just takes looking at the price of groceries at the supermarket to know why affordability is so top of mind for my constituents and for all Canadians.

Let us be clear from the get-go: Inflation is a problem for Canadians, but it is not a Canada problem. Countries around the world are living through the same difficult moment of high inflation, fuelled largely by Russia's barbaric war of choice, the still-present COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain disruptions. This is a fact, but it is not an excuse not to act to make things easier for Canadians. That is what we are doing with Bill C-31, taking steps that are practical, prudent and targeted, because we know inflation is hitting hard and we understand that not every household is feeling the pinch in the same way.

Let us acknowledge a simple truth: Lower-income households have to spend a higher proportion of their household income feeding the family. When prices at the grocery store increase, as we have seen, the relative hit to their family budget is going to be greater than for others. It is the reason we are introducing measures that are very intentionally designed to support those feeling the sting of inflation the most.

Bill C-31 would enact two important measures to address the cost of living: the Canada dental benefit and a one-time top-up to the Canadian housing benefit. Let me speak first about the Canada housing benefit.

The top-up we are proposing would deliver a \$500 payment to 1.8 million renters who are struggling with the cost of housing. This more than doubles the government's budget 2022 commitment, reaching twice as many Canadians as initially promised. It would be available to applicants with an adjusted net income below \$35,000 for families, or below \$20,000 for individuals, who pay at least 30% of their adjusted net income on rent.

In these thresholds, we see proof that our government's focus is squarely on helping those facing the greatest hardship from the current moment. I think of the seniors on fixed incomes, the low-income students trying to keep on top of everything and the single parents. This top-up would put \$500 in their pockets to keep food on the table and pay the rent and utilities. It is support that renters and families in my riding need now. I certainly hope we can move quickly with Bill C-31 so we can get the CRA application portal launched and relief into the hands of the people of Halifax West.

The bill before us would also provide for the Canada dental benefit, the first step in our work to establish a comprehensive national dental care program for families making less than \$90,000 a year. The benefit would be provided to children under 12 who do not have access to dental insurance, starting this year. Direct payments totalling up to \$1,300 per child under 12 over the next two years, which is \$650 per annum, would be provided for dental care services. That is significant new money for families and it is also an acknowledgement that dental health, like mental health and prescriptions, cannot be separated from health care as if it is somehow different.

Let us remember how much this is needed. A third of Canadians currently do not have dental insurance. In 2018, more than one in five Canadians reported avoiding dental care because of the cost.

In inflationary times, it is not hard to imagine that even more uninsured Canadians may be putting off necessary and routine care to help with their family's bottom line. Half a million Canadian

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children stand to benefit from the Canada dental benefit, and it will not reduce other federal income-tested benefits that families rely on. This measure too is targeted to ensure we are investing our dollars in supporting those most in need.

That is why it is easy for me to support this bill. It is prudent, directed and builds upon the other parts of our affordability plan, namely the enhanced Canada workers benefit, reductions in child care fees, increases in old age security, the Canada child benefit, the doubling of the Canada student grant and many other supports. These are concrete and practical steps that leave more money in Canadians' pockets and protect their purchasing power.

There will certainly be more for us to do to make life more affordable, but the bill in front of us is a significant and timely step forward in that work.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

I encourage my colleagues in the House of Commons to vote in favour of this bill.

[*English*]

I hope we can all support it and continue to look for solutions to the affordability challenges our constituents face.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way mentioned there is a lot more the government can do to increase affordability for Canadians. One thing I would suggest is abolishing the carbon tax, because it is a tax on the most basic of necessities, like food, home heating and fuel in vehicles to get from point A to point B.

There is one thing, though, that I want to mention. I received lots of calls in my office throughout the summer regarding passport delays. I definitely like decreased red tape and programs that are very effectively run.

Does the member believe that her government will be able to successfully and efficiently run a dental care program with little wait time, little red tape and quick service delivery?

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Mr. Speaker, red tape reduction is something I strongly believe in. Certainly, when I was a cabinet minister in my own province of Nova Scotia, we worked extremely hard on red tape reduction. In fact, we won provincially on that.

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Right now, the implementation of the dental health plan we are talking about is targeted, and the government has been working extremely hard with the provinces and territories, but also with the CRA, in order to implement it effectively.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I need my colleague's opinion. My thoughts are along the same lines as my Conservative colleague who spoke earlier.

As we know, the government has been dealing with numerous issues related to existing programs such as passports, employment insurance and so on. Considering that anyone could have predicted how complicated it would be to get this new benefit or cheque to mesh with the programs already in place in some provinces and in Quebec, would it not have been simpler to finally agree to the unanimous request that Quebec and the provinces have been making for years now?

Would it not have been simpler to increase health transfers to the provinces so that they could apply the funding to a dental insurance program, if they so choose, or improve other health care services? Would it not have been simpler, in light of how complicated everything is right now, to do that rather than add another layer of complex management?

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Mr. Speaker, I somewhat agree with my colleague, but health care must be an immediate priority for all governments, provincial, territorial and federal. This will not stop the provinces and territories from investing in their own health care systems. The idea is to complement those provincial investments.

[*English*]

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke about the cost of living and the government's approach to that. It is great to see the Liberals finally supporting our long efforts on dental care. What she did not address is anything to tackle the massive profits being made by oil and gas corporations, grocery giants and these other companies that are benefiting from this crisis that Canadians are facing right now.

The U.K. government, a Conservative government, saw this opportunity and put in place a 25% excess profit tax on the oil and gas companies in that country. That would go a long way toward providing the revenue to put back into Canadians' pockets and provide the kind of support Canadians need. Would she support that kind of initiative here in Canada?

• (1255)

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab: Mr. Speaker, I am getting all kinds of questions about so many topics. It is wonderful to be able to debate them all, but right now this bill is targeted at two very important issues. Those are issues that are deliberate, targeted and really help the people who need it the most right now. I am very pleased to know my colleague across the way is in full support of those benefits.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and be able to contribute to the debate we are having today on affordability. It is very timely, because Canadians are experiencing the result of the practices that this Liberal government has undertaken,

which have really fuelled the inflationary fires that are burning across Canada. What we are experiencing is a made-in-Canada inflationary crisis. The more this Prime Minister spends, the more things cost. It has been referred to as "Justinflation".

The proposals that the government is bringing forward will not address this inflation and in fact are going to add to the inflationary pressures that Canadians are facing. Its inflationary deficits are driving up taxes and costs at the fastest rate in more than my lifetime. Year-over-year inflation is higher than it has been in 40 years.

For two years, Conservatives have been warning the Liberal government about the consequences of its actions and how much it would hurt Canadians, and it is hurting Canadians right across our country.

What we have heard from this government this week is not the announcement of a dental plan. We heard a plan that the Liberals have concocted that is going to satisfy part of the deal with their coalition partner in the NDP to keep them in power, to prop them up. It is another example of the Prime Minister's failure to meet his promises, all the while printing more cash and borrowing more money that is going to stoke inflation.

I would like to note for everyone following the debate and for hon. members in the House that dental care programs for low-income children exist in all provinces and territories, save for Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, in addition to the 70% of Canadians who already have coverage.

It is important that we look after the health care of Canadians, and they have been doing this thing in Canada for a long time, since before I was born, where health care was a provincial responsibility. It was solely the jurisdiction of provinces. If there is a plan to meet with the premiers to discuss health care and the Prime Minister wants to do that, the premiers will be delighted.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I hear that the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader wants to contribute to the debate, and I hope that when he rises in questions and comments, he is prepared to tell the House and all Canadians that the Prime Minister is going to answer the call that the premiers have been making for two years to meet with them to discuss the state of health care in Canada.

Now, if the Right Hon. Prime Minister found his way to that meeting, he would hear that they are not looking for a dental care program. That is not what the provinces are asking for right now. However, if the Prime Minister is considering another line of work and interested in running to be a provincial premier, I am sure he can explore those job openings and see what is available. I hear that the Liberals' sister party in Ontario is looking for someone, so perhaps the member for Papineau could find a spot in Ontario.

However, this promise is only more inflationary spending. It is not a dental care program, and it is outside the jurisdiction of the federal government. The level of government that is responsible is not looking for the federal government to execute on it.

The Liberals have also talked about housing, which is so interesting, because Canadians could be confused. However, I think it might be intentional, that the government is looking to confuse them, because the Liberals love to talk about how much they have spent on housing.

• (1300)

No government has ever spent more on housing than this Liberal one, they will tell people. If we measured success by how much the Liberals spent and not by how many houses were built, they would be the international galactic champions of housing. Unfortunately, what we have seen is the doubling of house prices under the Liberals.

The result of that is that 30-year-olds are living in 400-square-foot apartments that they are paying \$2,300 a month for, if they can find an apartment, and if not, they are living in mom or dad's basement and their dreams of home ownership are slipping away, if they have not been crushed already. In Vancouver, it is \$2,600 a month for rent. In Toronto, it is \$2,300 a month for rent.

Six in 10 Canadians will not qualify for what we will call the inflationary spending cheques. The few renters who see that \$500 one-time boost, which represents less than a week of rent in the average housing unit in Toronto or Vancouver, are simply going to ask, "What is next?"

I am glad they are asking what is next. The Liberals have pumped more money into the economy, and they have created more inflation. That is what we have heard from big banks and from economists, that what they are doing is inflationary. It is going to diminish the value of the dollars that people earn, including those cheques that they just received, which will not go as far. Of course that does not speak to the fact that we are now going to have to pay interest on the money the Liberals borrowed to send those cheques that are going to diminish their spending power.

It is a terrible situation that the Liberals are perpetuating. There are solutions, and I look forward to sharing those with members as we move through this conversation today. What is it that we need to solve?

First, let us take a look at one of the major pain points that Canadians are feeling every month: food prices. Canadians are facing 10% food inflation right now. It is the fastest that it has gone up in over 40 years. What does that look like for the average Canadian family? It is between \$1,200 and \$2,000 more per year that they are spending on groceries. It is an extra \$2,000 haircut that they are taking before they even spend a dollar.

These are some of the items this is having a dramatic effect on: butter is up 16.9%; eggs, 10.9%; fish, 10.4%; breads, 17.6%; pasta, 32%; fresh fruit, 13%; oranges, 18.5%; coffee, 14.2%, and the list goes on and on. Let them eat soup, some might say, but that is up 19.2%.

While Canadians are struggling just to put food on the table for their families, furnaces are clicking on across the country as we speak. As the mercury drops, people are going to look to heat up their homes. We live in one of the world's coldest climates. Heating is not a luxury here, just like for many folks in rural and remote

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communities, driving their car or truck is not a luxury. It is part of how they have to live, to get to work or to doctor's appointments, or to get groceries.

The carbon tax is punishing Canadians for behaviour that the government says is bad, should be discouraged and needs to be corrected. The Liberals are going to tell us, in their questions and comments, that members are forgetting about the money they send back.

• (1305)

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has already said that the claims the government makes that Canadians get more back than they pay in do not work. This is some kind of weird Ponzi scheme the government has cooked up, and it is just that, a scheme. Canadians are not getting more back than they pay in. They are worse off, and emissions continue to go up. Tree planting from the government has stayed the same. That is that it has not planted any, but it has promised to.

Canadians would expect that, when Canadians are feeling that pain of the carbon tax going up and the price of food going up, they could ask what else the government could do. It is going to increase taxes on paycheques in January of this coming year. There is no break in sight for Canadians, and the government members will say that it is not a tax.

Let us get real here. If it looks like a tax, sounds like a tax, and Canadians take home less money at the end of the month, then it is a tax. That is exactly what the Liberals are proposing for January 1.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I hear some excitement coming from those joining us from home. Canadians are rising up. We can hear in the House of Commons that they have had enough. They are at a breaking point with these prices. All the while, the job creators and the makers in our communities, not the takers but the makers, are the small businesses. We hear all the time that they are the backbone of our economy. I could not agree more. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business reports that one in six businesses are considering closing their doors and 62% of small businesses are still carrying debt from the pandemic.

We have this risky situation that the government has created and is perpetrating on Canadians where everything is more expensive. It is more expensive to do business, more expensive to feed one's family and more expensive to get to work. These hard times that have come do not need to be this way. However, following an election that was called in a very cynical move by the Prime Minister to exploit the divisions that had been created, there was a Parliament where a coalition needed to be cooked up so the government could stay in power. Therefore, Canadians are not seeing that real relief.

What does that look like? Seniors are having to delay their retirements. The home ownership we talked about is disappearing because people do not have any time to dream about home ownership. They are too busy trying to come up with the money to pay their \$2,600-a-month rent. People are worried.

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Conservatives are offering hope for Canadians, which is a big contrast to what they have seen from the government, particularly over the last year. We are going to focus on Canadians' paycheques and make sure they are able to take home that money they worked so hard to earn. We are going to focus on making sure taxes are not going up. It is not very difficult because we know that anyone who does not run a deficit in their home every month has to make choices about what they are able to put in their monthly budget. If we add something, we have to take something away. If the government is going to propose new spending, what is it going to stop doing so that it can afford it and so that Canadians can afford it?

I have heard a very interesting line from the government during the last two years. It is that it has taken on debt so that Canadians do not have to.

• (1310)

I do have some news: That debt is borne by Canadians. They will say interest rates have never been lower, but that is not the case. We now see interest rates that are marching on. It is not free money. Canadians are going to have to pick up the tab for it. We need the government to make sure Canadians can see a light at the end of the tunnel that promises some hope.

We are going to have to scrap the old way the government has been doing things. We are going to have to look at what it is that Canadians really need. They need to heat their homes, feed their families and dream they are going to be able to do better than the generation before them, but that is not what has been put on offer by the government.

Lower taxes are something I hope we can all agree on, as well as making sure that everyone can afford a home, not just spending a lot and calling that a housing plan. I would hope that is something we can all agree on.

We need to address the root cause of what is driving this inflation in Canada so that people are not experiencing this crushing inflation on the cost of their food. Let us say that next year global inflation starts to recede and is at 5%. They are still paying 5% more on the 10% that it went up the year before. It is time to stop the damage that is being done.

We hear often that it is a global phenomenon that they had no control over, but it is cold comfort to people across the country when the Liberals throw their hands up and say, "Well, it's pretty bad everywhere else. We're kind of better than the other guys." Whether one lives in Victoria-by-the-Sea on Prince Edward Island, Victoria in British Columbia or on Victoria Island in Nunavut, that word salad will not fill bellies. It is getting a lot tougher to do that as food prices continue to march up. They need to see action, not excuses from the government. What is that action going to be? I really hope the plan is not just higher taxes. I really hope the plan is not to borrow more money to dump into a housing plan that is not building more homes. They are driving up the prices.

We are going to focus on Canadians. We are going to focus on their paycheques. We are going to focus on their dreams of home ownership. We are going to focus on their retirement because that is the dream that we all have. That is the dream that people have when they come to this country. We want to keep that dream alive. What

the government is proposing today is not help. It is a distraction. It is just more for the government.

An hon member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I hear a voice. It sounds like a member who is as upset with the government as I am is trying to join in. It seems they could not even afford the gas to come to the House of Commons today.

• (1315)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the member is very experienced. He talks a lot in the House. He should know that we are not to refer to the presence or absence of anybody in the House. Suggesting a member cannot afford to get here in person certainly would, at the very least, indicate that the individual is not here.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much.

I will say that those of us who have to join in on Zoom should make sure to leave their microphones off unless they are intervening in the discussion at hand.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, it does not seem, even with new made-up parliamentary secretary roles, that they have enough people over there to be able to get everybody together and get them briefed that it is safe for them to come back to work. They can do that.

We will help the member out so he can afford gas. We are going to help Canadians afford more by ending the carbon tax and the paycheque tax. We want to help Canadians, and to give them hope and not fear, which is what the government has been peddling.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, those were interesting comments, but not so much on the dental benefit, the legislation we are talking about. The member seemed to get carried away in some other areas.

Having said that, maybe I will try to get some clarification for Canadians on the issue of our children. We have a substantial piece of legislation that is going to provide dental care for thousands of children under the age of 12. To be very clear, the Conservative Party of Canada opposes this legislation. It does not support the federal government having a role in providing dental care for children under 12.

Is this the same sort of contrast we see when the Conservative Party also says it does not support child care? Does the current Conservative Party still believe that it is going to trash the national Canada child care program?

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Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that we had to wake up the parliamentary secretary to join the debate. He seems to have missed a couple of things.

Conservatives created child care in Canada. He may have heard of the universal child care benefit, which we started. Members will remember that Liberals at the time said that, if we were to give Canadians money, they would blow it on beer and popcorn. We do not believe that. We think that parents should be able to make choices about how they can best care for their children, so we are happy to be able to do that.

We are also very sure, as Conservatives, and again I could perhaps offer to table some information about how things work in Canada for the parliamentary secretary, that health care is a provincial responsibility. The parliamentary secretary can do what he wants to do, or not do, with health care, as the government has been ignoring it. The Prime Minister continues to ignore what the premiers are asking for, and we will certainly not do that. We will respect provincial jurisdiction and work with the premiers to make sure that we take care of the health of all children in this country. We are extremely dedicated to that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before I ask a question, I would like to say that my thoughts are with our constituents and everyone in places like Nova Scotia, the Maritimes, the Magdalen Islands, the Lower North Shore and Newfoundland, who are bracing for hurricane Fiona. I want to express my support as the storm looms, and I hope everyone in your area stays safe.

Earlier, I was listening to my colleague from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, and he sounded a lot like a Bloc member speaking English. Much of what he said was exactly what the Bloc has been fighting for for ages: provincial jurisdiction over health care. I found that very interesting. Earlier, my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean asked the Leader of the Opposition a question after his lengthy speech. He asked him whether he supported the provincial and Quebec premiers' unanimous demand for an unconditional increase in health transfers to 35%. We could not get an answer out of the Leader of the Opposition.

This despite the fact that my colleague's speech seemed to indicate his strong support for respecting provincial jurisdiction. Was my colleague suggesting that the new Conservative Party intends to increase federal health transfers in response to the demands of Quebec and the provinces?

• (1320)

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, it is really important because it underscores a problem we have in the federation when the Prime Minister refuses to meet with the first ministers to even discuss health care. Members may think it is brave of me to speak for the leader of His Majesty's official opposition, but I can tell them that he is going to meet with the premiers on health care. We would make sure that provincial jurisdiction were respected because it has been ignored under the Liberals.

Liberals are so confused, in fact, that they are still talking about Stephen Harper. What are Conservatives talking about? We are talking about the future for Canadians, their retirement, their pay-cheques and hope, and that is what we are going to keep doing. Liberals are stuck in the past.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

I am going to stand for a second and just remind everyone of the task at hand, which is debating the bill before us.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not once did my colleague talk about the greedflation that has taken hold in this country. We know in Canada we have the lowest corporate tax rate in the G7. How is that playing out? We have homeless people and people who cannot get dental care. We see big corporations like grocery stores, the big banks, big oil and big telecom all having record profits. Meanwhile, grocery store prices are going up, as are bank fees, fuel prices and telecom fees.

The member said that these are hard times and that it does not need to be this way. I agree. The Conservatives in Britain had the courage to charge their big oil companies a 25% excess tax on oil and gas profits. Where is the courage for these Conservatives? Where is the consciousness, because it is unconscionable that people cannot get dental care yet we have greedflation. The gatekeepers are truly the Conservatives standing up for these big corporations. It is 1% of the families in this country who hold 25% of the wealth. Meanwhile, 40% of families only hold 1.1% of the wealth. This is unacceptable, and it does not need to be this way.

When will the member deal with the greedflation that has taken a grip on this country?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to take this question from the hon. member because he asked about courage. I am going to show that courage right now to him and to all Canadians. We are going to stand up against and we are going to call out the partners in crime who are pickpocketing Canadians, who are perpetrating greedflation, because as—

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order from the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am being heckled before I even make my point of order.

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The member just said “partners in crime”. Is he suggesting that the Liberal government and the Liberal bench is participating in criminal activity, and to that extent, is the NDP partnering on that crime? That is extremely offensive, and the member should remove that comment immediately.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, we have had very interesting conversations in here today about people using turns of phrase. I find it interesting—

• (1325)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: That is debate.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, it is on this point of order. I had not even finished my comment, so I am not sure if the member has a guilty conscience, but I did not accuse the Liberals of committing a crime.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: He referred to the NDP as “partners in crime”.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I have not recognized the member.

Now, I will recognize the member, but I will also say let us keep the tone down for a few moments while we look at this point of order.

The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands has the floor.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes referred to the NDP as “partners in crime”. In doing so, he is suggesting the Liberal bench, the government and the Liberal members of Parliament, are engaging in criminal activity. He is also extending that to suggest the NDP are partnering in that criminal activity.

I suggested to you moments ago that you make the suggestion to the member to remove that comment. You asked him if he wanted to do that. Instead, he doubled down on it. I would suggest you ask him once again—

The Deputy Speaker: I did not have the opportunity to say anything because I recognized the member on the same point of order.

I will suggest to the member to maybe retract that and find another line of phrase. Trying to suggest we are in the pockets of others is probably not correct.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni is rising on the same point of order. I do not want this to go on forever.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, on that point of order, what is truly criminal is that these big corporations are hoarding all the profits while people—

The Deputy Speaker: We have really descended way too far into debate, and I apologize to the House for letting this happen.

I will ask the member to stand and maybe retract the words. I know, they all said the same thing. Everybody is saying the same thing, so I am going to ask the member to maybe rephrase it and answer the question appropriately, because we are still in questions and comments.

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes has the floor.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, the greedflation Canadians are experiencing is from the Liberal government harvesting money from Canadians, on the backs of hard-working Canadians, with higher taxes. Its coalition partners, its partners in collection, are punishing Canadians.

If they want to give Canadians a break, if they really want to deal with greedflation, they could cut taxes. Canadians would keep more money in their pockets and the amount of wealth in this country would increase for people other than the government and its partners in collection.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is my first opportunity to speak today on Bill C-31, so I want to put on the record that I support it and wish it would go further.

I want to ask my hon. colleague from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes this. He made the claim that health care is provincial. I wonder if he is familiar with the 1982 case, *Schneider v. The Queen*, in which the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that our Constitution does not say that health care is provincial. It does not speak to health care and it is one of those areas of mixed jurisdiction, federal and provincial. The criminal law power, which is federal, is the source and the derivation of many federal law and federal government decisions to protect our health.

Lastly, the Canada Health Act is the federal statute that governs our universal single-payer health care system, which we must fight to the death to protect, because without it a lot of people will die.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Mr. Speaker, there was a lot going on there. What I will say is this. The current government is not collaborating with the premiers. It is not collaborating with the provinces. It is not delivering on a dental care program. What it is doing is fuelling inflation, failing to own up to the mistakes it has made and failing to address the consequences of inflation that are crushing Canadians every single day and making food unaffordable.

People having to choose between heating their homes and feeding their families is unacceptable. Canadians deserve better. It is time for the government to cut taxes, to cap its spending and, frankly, to deal in hope instead of the division and anger we saw from the member for Kingston and the Islands.

• (1330)

Mr. Michael Coteau (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Humber River—Black Creek.

I am honoured to be here today to speak to Bill C-31. This bill means a lot to the community that I represent, and I know that it means a lot to many members in this House.

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I grew up in a community where many people struggled to pay the bills. This is not a new phenomenon in my community, but something that occurs all the time. In my constituency, we see people who drive Uber and who check out groceries. I have had many conversations with people in my community, and I know from them that people are struggling.

In my neighbourhood, there are people who struggle with vacancy decontrol and landlords who want them to leave so they can bring new people in and raise the rent. My constituents are also very concerned with home ownership. It is a very important issue to people in my community.

However, make no mistake: The people of Don Valley East and the people in my neighbourhood where I grew up are hard-working people, and they believe in the Canadian value that we are so much better when we actually work together as Canadians, when we stick together. It is part of our value set as Canadians. They are also very thankful for the type of country we have where, if one works hard, hard work can pay off, where we have great quality schools and a strong health care system, and where one can speak freely about issues and live the way one wants to live.

Speaking on Bill C-31, I was a bit offended by what I heard from the opposition. I want to remind people back home in Don Valley East and people in this House that we are talking about a dental plan for children under 12. We are talking about a \$500 subsidy to help people pay the rent. That is what we are talking about, and with what we are hearing from the opposition about all of these different issues, I want to bring it down to this one point. What we will vote on with Bill C-31 is whether we, as members of this House, should come together to put in place a program to support children when it comes to dental care.

Should we put in \$500 to help people? I have heard a few people say that \$500 dollars will not do a lot. I can tell members that in my community, \$500 goes a long way when it comes to paying for groceries, bills and helping with household income. It is a huge amount.

I have been here for a year, but I have watched this government over the last several years govern, and from the very beginning, back in 2015, addressing affordability and making life easier for Canadians has always been part of the mantra of the government. It is why my riding of Don Valley East has supported the government since 2015, because we are feeling the high prices of gas, the cost of living and the cost of groceries.

In fact, recently I did a survey in my community, and I was pretty surprised. It is the first survey I did, and I sent it out to everyone in the community. We got about 5% people who sent the survey back or went online to fill it out, so we had about 1,800 actually fill it out. However, 44% of the respondents said that affordability was one of the top three issues that they faced as constituents, and over 70% said that they had experienced some form of affordability issues over the last year. To me, this is very telling of where we are as Canadians today.

We have gone through so much with COVID over the last three years, with the global economy and now the war in Ukraine. Every-

thing has shifted in this country, and things have become a lot more challenging for Canadians to purchase.

I do the grocery shopping in my house for my family and also for one of my family members who cannot go to the grocery store. I do it every week for that particular family member and my family. I have noticed the price of flour, baked goods and other things go up, as we all have. However, the opposition will point fingers at this government and say, "You are responsible for the price of these baked goods that have gone up." Despite popular belief from that side of the House, we are not baking cakes and bread or growing grain or wheat on this side of the House. We are putting in place measures to help people take on some of these challenges that have been impacted by global affairs.

• (1335)

We know that when COVID hit, there was a huge shock to our system and to the economy in this country. We lost three million jobs in Canada. There was a 17% decline in our economic output. Our GDP fell by 2.1%, and even the exchange in Toronto fell by 37%. These were huge numbers. The system was disrupted and we lost a trillion dollars from those markets.

When we look at the war in Ukraine today, we know that prior to the war, 10% of all global wheat supply came from that region. We also know that 15% of corn came from that region, as did 15% of world barley production. Eighty per cent of sunflower oil came from that region too. When we see the cost of baked goods, the cost of wheat and the cost of products in grocery stores going up, there are many different factors in place.

The question in the House really is, where do we go from here? What do we do? How do we respond to it?

There are two approaches that are emerging in the House, one from the opposition and one from the government. As I said, the approach by the government has been here for the last seven years, and it is about looking for ways to create more opportunity and invest in people. The members opposite vote down bills like this that would directly support a child of 12 years old or under. To me, it is quite remarkable.

I want to go back to Bill C-31 just for a minute because Canadians need to know that when members of the official opposition have an opportunity to vote on this bill, they will have the opportunity to support a bill that would allow young people under 12 to have basic dental care and that would put \$500 more in the hands of Canadians who need it to pay bills and pay rent. The Conservatives are going to have a very clear option, and the vote that will eventually come to the House will really define the two approaches the opposition and the government have. They are two opposing approaches to how we look forward and build a stronger country to support all people in this great nation of ours.

This bill would provide \$500 to nearly two million low-income renters in this country and would provide \$1,300 over two years to 500,000 children. This is a huge step in the right direction for this government and for those who support this bill.

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When this government came into power back in 2015, it took many steps to look for ways to create more opportunity for Canadians. It lowered taxes for the middle class. It increased the Canada child benefit. It helped seniors by increasing old age security. Remember, the previous government, at one of those critical decision points that define governments or define parties, raised the eligibility for old age security to age 67 rather than its current age of 65. Of course, the best example I could give is what has taken place over the last year with the introduction of \$10-a-day child care.

At the end of the day, we are investing in children and investing in families. We are looking for ways to strengthen opportunity for Canadians. We are looking for ways to better position Canada so it can continue to have a trajectory that provides a bright future for all Canadians. I am very proud, on behalf of the residents of Don Valley East, to stand in the House to fight for children and make the right decision to support kids who need help and families that need help during these difficult times.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, respectfully to my hon. friend, there seems to be a bit of a confused sense of who is responsible for what. He says the federal government does not impact the price of gas or groceries and does not prepare cakes; it is not the one making and setting the price for this. This seems to ignore the fact that the federal government is responsible for fiscal policies and, indirectly, for monetary policy that clearly shapes the price of goods.

Let us talk about a more direct case of responsibility, that is, the price of gas. The government has what the finance minister calls the carbon pricing scheme, or what we call the carbon tax scheme, perhaps. She has said, and it has been said by other members, that this exists to raise the price of gas. That is the whole logic behind those who defend this policy. They say that we need to raise the price of gas because, allegedly, that is going to be good for the environment. However, the government could make a simple choice and not raise taxes on gas.

Will the member acknowledge that the price of gas, if nothing else, is actually something the government has a significant impact on and support our proposal to have no new taxes?

• (1340)

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about our responsibility. We do have a responsibility in the House. The question that will be posed to members of this legislature, to members of the House, is whether to invest in young people.

I throw the question back to the member. Will he be supporting children here in Canada and in his home province to make sure they have very simple dental care? Will he take on the responsibility that his constituents sent him here to the House for and represent their interests? Will he actually end up supporting a bill that supports kids who are 12 and under? It is a very simple question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I wonder if he could clarify something for me.

I am concerned because Quebec already has a program that covers a good portion of dental costs for children under 10. Quebec

taxpayers are accustomed to their tax dollars being used for this. I cannot even guarantee that it will be used only for dental care. Someone can submit a receipt for \$100 but get \$650 back and do whatever they want with the other \$550. This is not a dental insurance program; it is throwing money out the window. Besides that, I also want to know whether the government has thought about how it plans to compensate Quebec taxpayers, who pay for their own dental care and who will pay for that of other provinces.

Why is the money not being transferred to the governments that have the jurisdiction to do this, that is, the 10 provinces?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the House and the federation we have created as Canadians are sometimes complex. I am learning, after spending almost a year here, that it is a very complex House and there is a very complex relationship between the provinces and the federal government. However, I do know that the \$10-a-day child care initiative, which I believe created 37,000 new spaces in Quebec, is a big win for Quebec and a big win for Canadians.

We need to continue to look for ways to make investments and work out those details to ensure that they are in the best interests of Quebec and the best interests of the Province of Ontario and the rest of our partners across the country.

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke eloquently about how dental care is going to make a huge difference for families. As he looks around at his Liberal colleagues, I note that most of them voted against dental care just a year ago.

I am curious if he could put himself back to a year ago. Families were struggling. Families needed dental care. Would he have voted with his Liberal colleagues against dental care then?

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, the nice thing about the House is that we have the ability to work together. It does not matter what party we are from. It does not matter what part of the country we are from. We have the ability to work together. I am very proud of the relationship we have been able to build in the House so that like-minded people can come together to actually get something done.

I think it is a huge accomplishment that we were able to introduce Bill C-31, which would actually, at the end of the day, make lives better for Canadians, especially for children under 12. I am very proud to support this bill.

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• (1345)

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be back, glad to see you back in the chair here in the House and glad that we are getting on with the work that is important for all our constituents and for our country.

I want to speak to Bill C-31. Just in case viewers have lost track given previous speakers, what we are actually focusing on in Bill C-31 is part 1, the dental benefit act, which would provide interim dental benefits for many low-income families. Part 2 of Bill C-31 would enact the rental housing benefit act, which proposes a \$500 one-time payment to eligible families with net incomes of under \$35,000. Part 2 would empower the CRA to process the applications and payments for a one-time top-up payment of \$500.

Bill C-31 is the beginning of a program for those most vulnerable, and it is our children under 12 who are going to benefit from that particular program. I would ask members to take a moment to think about when we were all in school. There were children who had significant dental problems. They were often bullied, abused and picked on. If this followed them through much of their lives and they continued to not be able to afford dental care, getting to high school and then the workplace and still not having the money required for the dental care they needed, what was that doing to their self-esteem and self-confidence as they tried to move along?

I would suggest that dental care is far more important than a lot of us might pay attention to. It is why I am so happy today to stand in support of Bill C-31. It is going to start us down a pathway of providing dental care to children under 12 of low-income families. This is the beginning of a new program that I think will clearly benefit all of Canada.

When we look at having to compete in the overall world, we need to be presentable. When we look at some of the homeless folks we see living on the streets, we notice one thing: They are all very badly in need of dental care. How long has that been? Have they been in that situation for many years? Is that part of what destroyed their self-confidence and self-esteem so that at one point or another in their life they are living on the streets?

Trying to tie it back, I think dental care is extremely important, and I am glad to stand today to support it along with the top-up on rental housing. As I said, when we think of dental care, we think about health and we think about finances, but dental care issues reach far beyond those two basic essentials. It is therefore of the utmost importance.

Let us think about it for a second. As I mentioned earlier, a person's healthy smile means healthy digestion, a healthy heart, healthy lungs and other respiratory organs and good overall health, because all of this is affected by bacteria in our mouths. Some of us may not realize that dental inflammation is a high risk for the brain for one simple physical reason: It is all located in the head.

Even more so, one's healthy smile is a social indicator that may affect the perception of our personality by other people. It is an indicator of one's well-being, which affects one's confidence and thus performance. If we talk to some of the folks who are struggling in our shelters and ask them what their life was like, clearly many of them do not have the confidence to go looking for a job, partially

because of their appearance. Again, this goes back to their dental health.

However, given all of dental health's importance, it is not widely accessible. People are hesitant to address their dental health issues because it is expensive. For some it can be frightening as well. For many of the single-parent families that I represent and some of the low-income families, talking about going to the dentist is out of the question. They do not have any coverage whatsoever. To have to go to the dentist and put out \$500 or \$400 is just not possible for them. That is the kind of thing that gets put off, and eventually they have to deal with it but it could be much later on. It is about not having the resources.

• (1350)

As we move forward in our talks on dental care, I would hope we look at what the costs are in dental care. It is extremely expensive to go to dental school and become a dentist. We need to look at all avenues if we are going to try to improve the self-confidence of Canadians, avenues such as being able to become a dentist without having to mortgage one's house and whole future. It is very reflective in the prices that are paid and that is what prevents a lot of people from being able to access the help they need.

When we talk specifically about children's dental health, those limitations apply even more. For parents, especially in a tough financial situations, it is very difficult to convince themselves and their kids to go without groceries for a week because they have to go to the dentist.

A third of Canadians do not have dental insurance. In 2018, more than one in five Canadians reported avoiding dental care because of the cost. I do not think that is an unusual thing. An awful lot of people avoid going to the dentist until they are in severe pain. They certainly are not going for the average six-month check up and the kinds of regular things they should be doing. They go when they have no other choice than to get some assistance.

Our job, as representatives of all these families in Parliament, is to help the parents who struggle financially by investing in their children's health care to ensure we have done everything possible to help these kids grow up into healthy, socially active, confident and productive adults, future parents themselves.

With Bill C-31, our government makes a first step, or maybe I should say a leap, in ensuring an essential aspect of Canada's health care, namely dental care, is more accessible for those who need it. This support program would start with children under 12 in the period starting in October 2022 and ending in June 2024. The support would be allocated to uninsured families with an annual income of less than \$90,000.

Government Orders

The list of reasons why dental health is important can be very long, but it always comes down to one thing: one's well-being. Well-being or happiness is a fuel for everything good we wish for our country: healthy families, active communities, a blooming economy and all other important things about which we care.

When we are talking about health care and child care, we have things that are necessary for a healthy Canadian society. I introduced a bill for first reading, which is coming up for second reading, Bill C-284. It calls for a national eye strategy. Apparently 75% of the blindness happening in Canada could be eliminated by more investments and more research. That bill will be coming up for second reading in November. It is about the health of Canadians overall. We can save money in a lot of different ways by ensuring we are making investments early on.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to questions and comments, I want to remind everybody that as they start to come in, the sound level tends to go up. Also, for those who are often in the lobbies, please ensure to keep the tone down, because the noise does bleed into the chamber. We forget what it is like when all members of Parliament are actually in the chamber.

Questions and comments; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the government member who just spoke. The government talks often about how much money it is giving to people, saying that it is going to give them more money here and more money there.

Does the government appreciate that it does not generate its own money? The money it gives away, it takes from either present people or from future generations. In fact, the government is doing that now with its planned scheduled tax increases on January 1 and April 1 of next year.

First, does the government acknowledge that any money it spends has to come from citizens or future generations? Second, does the member agree that now is not the time to be raising taxes?

• (1355)

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer my colleague's question. It is good to see him on the floor again. We have gone back and forth between us on a variety of issues.

I believe in investing Canadians. All our money does not come out of mid air. It comes from Canadians. It comes from each and every one of us. It is what we do with that money that matters. Investing in Canadians and giving them back the very money they have given to us in programs like eye care and health care, and investing in the right businesses that will grow the economy, all of those are important things that we have a responsibility to do to ensure that Canada continues to move forward. Money only comes from one place, and that is from each and every one of us.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am really glad to hear the Liberal member's speech. The Liberals have finally seen the light: the importance of a national dental care program, something they did not see when they voted with the Conservatives against the motion that the NDP put forward just a year ago.

With that being said, we are looking forward to getting this program delivered for the people who need dental care services.

The member also talked about housing. Part of the problem with the housing crisis is the fact that the Liberals cancelled the national affordable housing program back in 1993, and the Liberals and Conservatives since that time have done nothing to address the financialization of housing, where REITs and corporate landlords are treating housing like it is a stock market.

Does the member agree that action needs to be taken now to stop the financialization of housing, so we can ensure people who need affordable housing will be able to access it?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I will try to bring the temperature down a bit. We are here to debate and to discuss, but I do not want anyone to have a heart attack in the sense of trying to get a point across. The issue of housing—

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I asked legitimate questions of the member and for her to insinuate that the tone I am using is somehow going to cause me to have a heart attack is deplorable. It is patronizing and it is unacceptable. I would ask for an apology.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for the point of order. I would ask the member for Humber River—Black Creek to maybe retract and rephrase.

The hon. member for Humber River—Black Creek.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely did not mean to offend the hon. member. I know her passion when she speaks in the House, and I quite often applaud it and agree with many of the comments. However, I am very proud of what our government has done when it comes to housing. We have invested billions and billions of dollars across Canada with our rapid housing initiative, but all these things take time. They do not just materialize overnight.

I was told recently that a house that used to take eight months to build now takes 22 months to build. We cannot create them in mid-air, but the funds are there. It is happening all the way across the country, and I look forward to seeing some of those housing developments in the riding of my hon. colleague.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really interesting. Yesterday, we were debating supports for people with disabilities. It is historic legislation. Today, we are again bringing legislation that would be there to help people. Children under the age of 12 would be able to receive benefits, which would be a significant achievement.

Could my colleague provide her thoughts on why it is so important that we have a government that truly cares and delivers for people in real way?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his continued work in the House on behalf of all Canadians.

The whole issue of investing in people is an important part. We are investing in Canadians; we are not investing somewhere else. We are reinvesting tax dollars to help people have a better quality of life. When I think of the \$10-a-day child care and why I am a huge supporter of that program, it is the fact that hundreds of single mothers have told me they cannot go anywhere or get an education because they cannot afford child care. Now their children are in child care and they are in school or getting jobs. They will not end up as seniors in poverty, because of having had access to these programs.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

● (1400)
[English]

JIM HIGGINS

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Liberal family lost one of its most loved members, Jim Higgins, to colon cancer on September 13.

Jim was one of the first people I met when I sought the nomination for Oakville North—Burlington. He worked in finance, mostly in the automotive industry, so it made sense that he was the only treasurer that Oakville North—Burlington Liberals have ever had. Even when facing difficult cancer treatments over the last three years, Jim continued to manage the books right up to the end.

Jim was a passionate Liberal, with a strong moral compass and sense of social justice.

His cozy English pub-style basement was the location of many gatherings when Jim and Tamara warmly welcomed people into their home.

He was devoted to his wife Tamara and his family, who are grieving his loss, along with his many friends and colleagues.

Canada is a better place because of my friend Jim Higgins. May he rest in peace.

* * *

ROSS LEBLANC

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the world mourns the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, I know the city of Estevan is also mourning the loss of a man who was a pillar of the community, Ross LeBlanc. He passed away on August 29, at the age of 86, leaving a legacy that will carry on for generations to come.

Ross LeBlanc embodied the very definition of a hard-working farmer and saw the development of farming technology go from horse-drawn equipment to hydraulic automated systems. While his sons took over the farming business, Ross was still on the farm, watching the harvest just a few days before his passing.

Ross was also known for his music, performing as part of the Ross LeBlanc Trio. I recall just a couple of months ago hearing them play at the Red Market Barn, Kenosee Lake.

Statements by Members

As a huge supporter of the Estevan Bruins hockey team from its inception, he purchased the team's first bus and attended every game he could.

I would like to extend my condolences to his wife Mary, their children Gwen, Marlin and Jason, and his many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Ross was an incredible man and he will be deeply missed.

* * *

COSTI IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending the 70th anniversary of Costi, a Davenport-based organization founded by the Italian Canadian community to assist Italian immigrants.

Since then, Costi has grown into a much beloved multicultural agency, welcoming newcomers and refugees of all nationalities to Canada. In recent years, it has been instrumental in settling thousands of Syrian and Afghan refugees, and is now helping to settle Ukrainians who are fleeing the unprovoked and illegal invasion by President Putin.

I want to thank president Pina Alberelli-Arone, incoming CEO Samina Sami and their incredible team of dedicated staff and volunteers for Costi's remarkable work and accomplishments.

I also want to congratulate award winners OCASI's executive director Debbie Douglas, Danby's CEO Jim Estill and Paramount Fine Foods president Mohamad Fakih for their inspiring and exceptional work in settling newcomers.

For seven decades, the vital work of Costi has built the layers of immigrants who are now proud to call Canada their home, and their contributions to Canada have made us a stronger and better country.

* * *

[Translation]

DIEPPE RAID

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in August, I had the honour of participating in a parliamentary mission to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Dieppe raid. This operation, which is also known as the disaster at Dieppe, took place in France on August 19, 1942, in the middle of the Second World War. Out of the 6,000 allied soldiers who participated in the landing, less than half got out alive.

The Fusiliers Mont-Royal regiment was the only francophone unit that participated in the raid. It sent 584 men, but only 117 came home.

Without question, the most thrilling and memorable part of my mission was meeting Gordon Fennell, a Quebecker from Montreal who is one of the few survivors of the operation. Gordon Fennell has lived to the remarkable age of 100. He was with us on the beaches of Dieppe 80 years later.

Statements by Members

In Dieppe, Gordon Fennell was recognized with the Legion of Honour, the highest civilian honour in France.

I thank Mr. Fennell for his service.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

NATIONAL COACHES WEEK

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week communities across Canada are joining together to recognize National Coaches Week. The goal of the week is to celebrate the tremendous responsibility coaches have in creating a positive impact on our athletes and communities.

[Translation]

During this week, thousands of coaches will be tagged with the hashtag #ThanksCoach and invited to participate in many activities, including online clinics and free virtual workshops.

This summer, my front row seat at the Legion Championships in Sherbrooke helped me appreciate how much coaches like Sandrine Charron do for athletes.

I congratulate the coaches who will receive the recognition they deserve for the work they do to help Canadians stay active and healthy.

* * *

[English]

HEIDI SCHLUMPF

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after she was diagnosed with triple-negative metastatic breast cancer, local teacher Heidi Schlumpf used her 34th birthday on September 8, 2021, to spread acts of kindness with #putakindeedinyourfeed. Sadly, Heidi passed away on August 10 of this year, but her legacy of kindness continued on what would have been her 35th birthday.

Across the area and beyond, friends, students, loved ones and complete strangers used the occasion to spread acts of kindness. Tim Hortons gift cards were left on car windshields, homemade cookies were given to seniors, pancake breakfasts were held at local schools, and diners were surprised with free lunches. More than anything, these acts of kindness leave a wonderful legacy for her husband and their four children: Priska, Daisy, Alice and Konrad.

We would all live in a better world with more acts of kindness in our lives.

* * *

TERRY FOX

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today let us once again recognize the legacy of Terry Fox, one of Canada's greatest heroes and certainly Port Coquitlam's hometown hero. At the age of 18, Terry lost his leg to cancer, and after 16 months in and out of cancer wards, he decided he could not ignore the suffering that he saw.

In 1980, Terry began his Marathon of Hope. In 143 days he ran more than 5,300 kilometres and raised millions of dollars for cancer research. In his name, Terry's Marathon of Hope continues today, and Canadians have raised more than \$850 million to find a cure.

[Translation]

His story inspires everyone. His dedication and courage remind us what we can accomplish.

[English]

As Canadians across the country participate in Terry Fox runs, Terry's memory will lead us all forward, and together we will end cancer once and for all.

* * *

AUTISM AWARENESS

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I was visited by an extraordinary eight-year-old who is challenging the stigma of living with autism. His name is Fabrizio Celenza, and he shared with me that he doesn't talk about autism for sympathy or pity. He talks about it to open a door into his life to help others understand, to educate, and to build acceptances for children and adults living with autism.

Fabrizio was a young ambassador for Project Lifesaver, a community-based organization that utilizes technology to help protect and quickly locate individuals with cognitive disorders who are prone to the behaviour of wandering.

Autism awareness starts in our community. Two organizations advancing this in the city of Vaughan are the Shining Through Centre for Children with Autism and Waves of Changes for Autism. This evening I will attend the latter's seventh annual gala with several hundred attendees.

In the wise words of my newest friend, Fabrizio Celenza, let us always remember that it's okay to be different.

* * *

COST OF LIVING

Mr. Dan Muys (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put people first: their retirement, their paycheques, their homes and their country.

Inflation is driving up the cost of everything. Last weekend I heard this over and over from people in Binbrook, the kind of place where young families are moving in droves to escape the high cost of housing in the GTA, only to find out that because of the policies of the government, the cost of living is no better there.

At the fall fair, over 500 constituents stopped by my booth and filled out a survey card, and the results were overwhelming: Grocery prices, gas prices and taxes have them worried. The last thing they can afford are the proposed tax increases from the government, but we have hope. By tackling Liberal inflation, we will put them back in control of their lives and their money.

A Conservative government will put a lid on taxes and truly deliver affordability for suburban families in Binbrook, in southern Ontario and all across Canada.

* * *

• (1410)

MISSISSAUGA—ERIN MILLS

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be back in the House after a productive summer in my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills. In between attending over 160 community meetings and events, visiting local businesses and bringing ministers to Erin Mills to hear directly from residents about local issues, I once again hosted my annual barbecue, where we welcomed over 4,500 residents.

I joined colleagues representing Canada at the 65th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Halifax. I joined a delegation in New York as part of the IPU for the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Last week, I joined the Minister of International Development and MPs to visit flood-impacted regions of Pakistan and hear directly from those in need. I am proud that our Canadian government has stepped up with over \$30 million in support.

It has been a busy summer and I look forward to working with members in this House as we continue to deliver on programs that Canadians are counting on us for.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put people first: their retirement, their paycheques, their homes and their country. Right now, we lose wages by importing 130,000 barrels of overseas oil every single day because our government prefers dirty dictator oil to responsible Canadian energy. We will repeal the current government's anti-energy laws and replace them with a law that protects our environment, consults first nations and gets things built. Within five years, we will set the goal to end dictator oil in Canada altogether.

Instead of helping Putin sell his natural gas to Europe to finance his war against Ukraine, a Poilievre government will support projects like GNL Quebec. Some people prefer that natural gas money finance Putin's weapons of war. I want that money to finance paycheques for our energy workers across the nation.

The Speaker: I know we have been away all summer, but I just want to remind the hon. members that when we are referring to someone else in the chamber, regardless of who it is, we use their title or the riding they represent, and not their own name. We tend to get carried away sometimes, and those things happen in the chamber.

Statements by Members

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put people first. He will put their retirement first, their paycheques first, their homes first and their country first.

We will bring hope to doctors, nurses and engineers, and hope to others who are immigrants to this country but are blocked from working in their profession for no other reason than that they come from another country. We will team up with provinces to guarantee that within 60 days an immigrant applying to work in their profession will get a yes or no based on their tested abilities and not based on where they are from. We will back up 30,000 small study loans for those in need of time off work to study up to the Canadian standards.

There has been enough talk. Let us remove the gatekeepers. Let us get more doctors, more nurses, more engineers and more inflation-proof paycheques for our brilliant immigrants.

* * *

GUINNESS WORLD RECORD

Mrs. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this summer I had a wonderful time connecting with residents, attending community events and marking special celebrations in my riding of Mississauga—Streetsville.

I am excited to share that on Saturday, September 17 our team, my family, the MP for Davenport and community gathered at the Portuguese Cultural Centre of Mississauga and together broke the Guinness world record for the largest Portuguese folk dance. In honour of this achievement, the Portuguese Cultural Centre has pledged to raise money for Canadians with physical and mental disabilities.

This world record would not have been set without the hundreds of individuals who took part in this special feat. I extend my warmest congratulations to the Portuguese Cultural Centre and to all those who helped achieve this incredible new record.

Obrigada e parabéns. Congratulations and well done.

Oral Questions

• (1415)

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader and the Prime Minister may disagree on some things, but when it comes to standing with the billionaire class, they are both just in bed with their corporate buddies.

Like the Liberals, the Conservatives do not stand with working people. They are unwilling to tax the ultrarich; they are unwilling to stop the billion-dollar giveaways to big oil; and they are unwilling to take the steps necessary to end the housing crisis in this country. However, Canadians are increasingly tired of the games of these two parties: both the silver-tongued snake oil of the opposition leader and the entitlement of the Prime Minister.

Canadians struggling to get by need real action. Far too many indigenous communities lack basic housing. More than half of Canadians are \$200 from insolvency. In this Parliament, Liberals and Conservatives are competing on who can fight better for the billionaire class, but it is the NDP that is fighting to deliver true justice to Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]**OSCAR KISTABISH**

Ms. Sylvie Bérubé (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Oscar Kistabish, the president of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, has been awarded the Lieutenant Governor of Quebec's First Peoples Medal.

The First Peoples Medal recognizes outstanding contributions by members of the first nations and the Inuit nation. This recognition highlights the career paths of remarkable individuals whose dedication, commitment and achievements have contributed to the influence of their community, their nation or first peoples throughout Quebec, elsewhere in Canada or internationally.

Mr. Kistabish is a highly respected elder in the Anishinabe community of Pikogan and has dedicated a large part of his life to promoting traditional indigenous culture. He continues to play a big role in passing down ancestral Anishinabe culture on the land.

As a residential school survivor, Mr. Kistabish now shares his experiences and teachings, serving as a spiritual guide to help survivors find the path to healing.

Thank you, Mr. Kistabish.

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[*English*]**FOOD AFFORDABILITY**

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative leader will put people first: their homes, their paycheques, their retirements, their country. By contrast, under the Liberals, Canadians are struggling to put food on the table, fuel in their cars and heat in their homes.

Rising housing prices and interest rates have made the dream of home ownership impossible for young Canadians. Our seniors are

watching their retirement savings disappear as a result of Justinflation. Now the Liberals want to triple the carbon tax, impacting farmers in every corner of the country.

I want to be clear. This is not a western issue. This is not a rural issue. This is a Canadian issue. Food costs are up 10%, the highest inflation in 40 years. Fertilizer policy, tariffs and tripling fuel taxes will drive the cost of food even higher. Whether one lives in Okotoks or Ottawa, this impacts every single Canadian and every single consumer.

The Liberals must abandon their planned tax hikes on food, fuel and paycheques. Our Canadian food sovereignty and affordability depends on it.

* * *

1972 SUMMIT SERIES

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the day was September 28, 1972. The time was 2:30 p.m. It was the third period. There were 34 seconds left to play, and the goal heard around the world won the critical game between Canada and the Soviet Union.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Summit Series. The players were legends then and they are legends now. While Paul Henderson scored seven times in eight games, even scoring the game-winner in game seven, it was his goal two days later that earned him the most famous goal in Canadian history.

I think of those legends often. Some will be here today. Some served in this chamber, like the Hon. Ken Dryden, but one more needs to be in the Hall of Fame. That is Paul Henderson.

Lester B. Pearson said, "This fastest of all games has become almost as much of a national symbol as the maple leaf." He was right, and that day cemented hockey in the minds of all Canadians forever.

ORAL QUESTIONS[*Translation*]**TAXATION**

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see the Prime Minister here on a visit to Canada to refuel his private jet. However, here on the ground, in Canada, things are not going well. According to the Financial Post, rents are so high in Toronto that students are living in homeless shelters. Food banks are facing the highest demand in history. This is the worst time to increase costs for Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister cancel his tax hikes on gas, heating, food and paycheques?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to once again congratulate the member for Carleton who is now the leader of the official opposition.

We are now all back in the House of Commons and I know that we have a lot of work to do together this fall. On this side of the House, we are going to focus on helping Canadians while building an economy that works for everyone. We are going to invest to build more housing, bring down the cost of living, fight climate change, help the middle class, create safer communities and put more money in the pockets of the most vulnerable families.

We hope that all Canadians will work with us.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has effectively admitted that his carbon tax has not worked and, therefore, he needs to triple it. According to the Liberal Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, the forthcoming hike in the carbon tax will mean that the total cost increase for a Newfoundland senior living in the countryside, on their heating bill, will be 80%.

Canadians cannot afford that, but just for clarity, if someone is a Newfoundland senior, how much will their home heating bill rise as a result of the forthcoming hike in the Liberal carbon tax?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like all parliamentarians, we have each heard stories from Canadians who are struggling with the high cost of living and with the inflation that has been caused by the global crisis. That is why we are putting forward concrete measures that are going to help Canadians. We are going to double the GST tax credit, which is going to hit millions of families with extra support. We are delivering on support for low-income families on dental, and we are also moving forward with support for low-income renters.

The Leader of the Opposition has an opportunity to support these measures and get help directly to Canadians. I hope he does exactly that.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party has an opportunity to respect the fact that heating one's home in January and February in Canada is not a luxury, and it does not make those Canadians polluters. They are just trying to survive. This from a Prime Minister who burned more jet fuel in one month than 20 average Canadians burn in an entire year.

Will the Prime Minister ground the jet, park the hypocrisy and axe the tax hikes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are going to continue to stay focused on direct and real help for Canadians, responding to the challenges they are facing with meaningful measures that are going to help millions of Canadians in the middle class and those working hard to join it.

If Canadians had followed the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and invested in volatile cryptocurrencies in an attempt to “opt out of inflation”, they would have lost half of their savings. Re-

Oral Questions

ponsible leadership means stepping up for Canadians and being there to support them. Will the Conservative leader support our measures to support Canadians?

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will not support tax hikes on Canadians. Speaking of tax hikes, they plan to raise taxes on paycheques.

Now, yesterday, the finance minister claimed that all the EI tax hikes they would collect would go to EI benefits. In fact, I looked it up. Over the next three years, they are going to collect \$10 billion more in EI taxes than they pay out in EI benefits, allowing the Prime Minister to grab up the difference and use it to feed his insatiable spending appetite.

Canadians cannot afford a bigger bite off their paycheques. Will the Prime Minister cancel his tax hikes on Canadian paycheques?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this House it is important to look at the facts, and the facts are that, when the Leader of the Opposition was the minister responsible for employment insurance, premiums were 20% higher for workers than they are now. That is right; workers paid 20% more. That is why we are continuing to move forward to support workers.

On the issue of the CPP, we promised to be there for workers as they become seniors to help them with their retirements, and that is exactly what we did. In regard to pricing pollution, we promised it would no longer be free to pollute anywhere in this country, and it no longer is. That is what we are focused on.

• (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is quite wrong. Today, payroll taxes on the average \$60,000-a-year worker are about \$700 higher than when we left office and, by the way, we left with a balanced budget.

Now he wants to raise those taxes even further, a bigger bite off of Canadian paycheques at a time when inflation is at a 40-year high, when students are forced to live in homeless shelters and when home ownership rates are at the lowest level in a generation. Does he not understand that now is the worst time to raise taxes? Will he cancel those tax hikes?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wants to go back in time. Let us look at what he was doing when he was in government. He continued to deliver child benefit cheques to millionaire families, which we ended when we took office. He voted against raising taxes on the wealthiest 1% so we could lower them on the middle class. He voted against a Canada child benefit that delivers hundreds of dollars a month, tax free, to every Canadian family.

We have seen where the Leader of the Opposition stands. On this side of the aisle, we are going to stay focused on helping Canadians for real.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I first want to say how happy I am to see that the Prime Minister is with us once again. I missed him. We will no longer need the NDP to tell us what the Liberals think. We can continue with our work now that the House has sung the praises of the monarchy.

Speaking of singing, I would like to tell the Prime Minister about francophone singers, because as French-language creators they have had their portion of income paid to English-language creators. Since this does not bother his minister, I would like the Prime Minister to tell me if he intends to ensure that—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the past seven years, and especially during the pandemic, our government has always been there for artists across the country. We know just how much artists contribute to our identity and culture, which we share with the world. We will always be there to stand up for them. It is important that everyone be treated equally in our systems, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is the answer we hear to every question, no matter what the topic. Nothing but empty words.

The Copyright Board of Canada has the ability to step in and make sure that the payments are done properly. If the government does not know how to do it, we can tell them. Two things need to be done. First, we need to ensure that artists get their fair share, one way or another, even if means the government needs to pay. Second, we need to ensure that this does not happen again in the future. Otherwise, the Prime Minister will repeat that he is worried about French, yet do nothing at all.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we will always be there for artists. We will always recognize the essential work they are doing. I am proud to acknowledge our extraordinary francophone and Quebec artists, who make an enormous contribution to Canadian culture and to culture around the world. That is why we will always ensure that all artists in Canada are treated fairly. We will continue to be fair to all.

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the high cost of living is hurting people. We have a Prime Minister who could have listened to our plan in the spring to put more of people's own money back in their pockets and people would have received that by July, but he was too busy telling people that things are worse in other countries.

Then we have the leader of the Conservative Party who cannot figure out if he is for or against putting more money in people's pockets.

New Democrats believe that people need respect. Why has the government taken so long to put more of their own money in Canadians' pockets to help them out to afford their groceries in this difficult time?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the very first bills we have put forward in this Parliament are focused on delivering for Canadians, the middle class and those working hard to join it, who are struggling during these challenging times.

We heard from Canadians from coast to coast to coast that they need more help. That is why we are stepping up, by doubling the GST tax credit, by delivering more help for low-income renters and by ensuring that families with kids under 12, who are struggling to make ends meet, can deliver dental care for those kids.

These are initiatives that I think all of us should be able to get behind and I hope all parliamentarians will support them to help Canadians as quickly as possible.

● (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the cost of living is going up, and that is hurting people, but instead of taking action, our Prime Minister says things are worse in other countries. For his part, the Conservative Party leader thinks we can protect ourselves from inflation by buying cryptocurrency. One party is saying nothing and the other is doing nothing, but we are taking action to help people. Why are these two leaders not taking action to help people in this difficult time?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as parliamentarians, we have all heard from our fellow Canadians, our friends and families in our ridings who are struggling.

That is why the first bills we tabled in the House this fall are aimed at providing help directly to Canadians and doubling the GST tax credit. We will help by giving more money to low-income renters and giving families money for their children's dental care.

We are here to help, and I hope all parliamentarians will support us.

TAXATION

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about Canadians who are struggling and how this government claims to want to help. They are doing precisely the opposite.

The bad news for Canadians is that on January 1, the government is raising taxes on workers. Also, on April 1, the Liberal carbon tax will triple. This is going to cost Canadian families a lot more.

Why can the Prime Minister simply not explain to Canadians why he is raising taxes when Canadians want to have more money in their pockets?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Conservative member.

Yesterday, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes said he could support our plan to offer inflation relief payments to 11 million households. That is good news.

I hope the Conservative member will support his colleague and convince all the Conservatives to support our excellent plan.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see the Prime Minister in the House, especially since he was able to see many of his counterparts over the past few days.

Does he know that Canada is the only G7 country not to have lowered taxes? The other countries understand that providing tax relief helps families, but not the Prime Minister of Canada.

Why is the Prime Minister insisting on raising taxes, which will hurt Canadian families even more?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is another example of the Conservatives' hypocrisy.

It was the Conservatives who opposed our measure to support the middle class. It was the Conservatives who opposed our tax cut for the middle class. It was the Conservatives who opposed the \$15 federal minimum wage. It was the Conservatives who opposed waiving interest on federal student loans.

[English]

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal tax hikes, inflation and never-ending spending are crushing Canadians. Even the Bank of Canada admits that the Prime Minister's spending spree should have ended long ago. Failed Liberal policies are making eating, heating and driving a luxury in this country. More Canadians and newcomers are turning to food banks because feeding their family is becoming impossible.

Will the government put an end to the suffering it is causing and cancel its planned tax increases?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government does recognize that times are tough for a lot of Canadians.

Yesterday I was pleased to learn that the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes also recognizes

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that, and that he would support our plan to provide relief of nearly \$500 per family for 11 million Canadian households. That is real support for the Canadians who need it the most. I hope all members opposite will join us in supporting that plan.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals continue punishing Canadians for heating their homes and driving to work. While this “leave it in the ground” left-wing climate-zealot government is happy shutting down essential energy projects and adding more taxes, even the PBO says the government's claim that any sort of carbon tax rebate helps families is misleading. In fact, 60% of households in my province of Alberta, and in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario, are worse off because of the Liberals' climate virtue signalling.

Will the government cancel its carbon tax hikes and end the suffering it is causing Canadians?

● (1435)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are totally focused on addressing the affordability challenge for Canadian families. I know, talking to my residents in the west, in Winnipeg South, they very much appreciate the measures the finance minister introduced the other day.

That is why it is important that the price on pollution, the climate action rebate, would put more money in people's pockets, families' pockets. Very importantly, the rebate cheques would be in people's mailboxes in October. That would help with affordability. That would help families with cash flow.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government can misrepresent the facts on the carbon tax all it likes, but Canadians know it costs them more. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that the carbon tax will cost families more than they get back, and when the Liberals triple the tax on gas, heat and groceries, it will cost an Ontario household \$1,500 more. Given the PBO's credibility and independence, I believe Canadians and Canadians should believe him, rather than the spin from the other side.

Again, for the sake of every family struggling, will the government cancel its planned tax increases?

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Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know there are affordability challenges for Canadian families and that is why our climate plan is designed so the majority of families receive more in climate action incentive payments than they pay at the pump. I beg to differ about the Parliamentary Budget Officer's findings. It still remains that eight out of 10 families will be better off. As the hon. member knows, as the carbon price increases, the climate action incentive payments will increase also.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a week this has been sitting here listening to the Liberals justify their inaction to solve the inflation and cost-of-living crisis, which they created, and things are simply getting worse. Canadian families are on bended knees under the weight of trying to afford the necessities of life. What is the Liberals' solution? It is to pile on the misery with planned tax increases to gas, groceries and home heating through increasing the carbon tax.

For the sake of every Canadian family that is struggling, will the government cancel its planned tax increases?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since we have come into government, we have done everything we can to support Canadian families, which is the exact opposite of what the Conservatives have done. In fact, they voted against the tax cut for middle-class families. They voted against the Canada child benefit, which sends thousands of dollars to Canadian families in need every single year and they are against the national child care initiative, which is reducing child care fees by 50% for families with children in child care. We know how difficult it is with the high cost of raising children. We are there for Canadian families, and we will continue to be there.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, representatives of unemployed workers are in Ottawa today. A spokesperson for the Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses and an advisor to the Comité chômage de Montréal even marched here from Montreal.

They came to tell the Prime Minister that he needs to keep his promise to overhaul the EI system. They came to tell him that, in the meantime, ending the temporary measures this Sunday is completely unacceptable. They walked 200 kilometres to send this message.

Will the Prime Minister stand up and announce that he is extending the temporary measures?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I met with Pierre Céré from the Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses, as well as representatives from the Canadian Labour Congress, the Guilde des musiciens et musiciennes du Québec and the Syndicat québécois de la construction.

We talked about a fairer, more responsive EI system, better tailored to the needs of the workforce. I made a promise to extend EI

sickness benefits from 15 to 26 weeks, and they were very happy to hear that.

We are working together to build and modernize the EI system.

• (1440)

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Syndicat québécois de la construction, the Guilde des musiciens et musiciennes du Québec and member groups of the CNC are all on Parliament Hill to say that they do not accept the fact that the Prime Minister is plunging workers into uncertainty, starting on Sunday.

Ending temporary EI measures without reform is a step backwards towards the same old program that leaves 60% of workers behind when they need it most.

Will the Prime Minister fix this situation by Sunday?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning we spoke about how important the temporary measures were during the pandemic. We also talked about the fact that some temporary benefit programs are naturally coming to a close, but that workers will continue to have access to regular benefits.

We look forward to launching our long-term plan to improve the employment insurance system.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, by ending the temporary EI benefits before there is any reform, the government is leaving workers with a 1970s-era program. It is a program that abandons mothers who lose their jobs during parental leave because it does not account for women being in the workplace; a program that abandons the sickest workers; a program that completely ignores self-employed workers; and a program that considers the workers to be seasonal, instead of the industries they work in.

Is that really the social safety net that the Prime Minister has to offer Quebecers?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that EI benefits need to be fairer, more responsive and better tailored to the needs of Canada's ever-evolving workforce.

That is why we have committed to fully modernizing the employment insurance system in partnership with stakeholders, such as the ones I met with this morning.

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people in Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo are struggling to put food on their tables and fuel in their cars. We know the Prime Minister does not think about monetary policy, and the budget has not balanced itself. We also know that ordinary citizens are under extraordinary financial pressures.

Will the Prime Minister cancel planned tax hikes so we can give ordinary Canadians a break?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite bothered to read the “Fiscal Monitor”, he would know that the budget was actually in surplus for five months this spring, but I have a question for him. I would like to know—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I just want to remind the hon. members that the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo asked a question, and he wants to be able to hear the answer.

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister, please begin from the top so the hon. member can hear the full answer.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, since the member seems interested in the economy, I want to give him an opportunity to clarify a point of Conservative policy. I would like to ask him if he agrees with the Conservative leader that crypto is a good way to “opt out of inflation”. Does he agree with the Conservative leader’s reckless advice to Canadians to invest in Bitcoin?

Since the leader gave that advice, Bitcoin has crashed by 56%. Canadians who invested according to his advice would have seen their life savings destroyed. Is that their economic policy?

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister thinks she is in opposition, and she will be soon enough.

Canadians’ paycheques are already not keeping up with the Liberal tax hikes and the Justinflation crisis. Canadians are falling further behind, becoming desperate and losing hope. The government and its ministers are failing Canadians, and their responses today are further proof of their inability to provide viable solutions and restore hope.

Will the government cancel the payroll taxes on Canadians’ paycheques?

• (1445)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government’s approach is both fiscally responsible and compassionate. The Conservatives’ approach is neither. Do the Conservatives really think that a family of four earning just \$35,000 a year could not use \$500 this fall to buy groceries? Do they think a low-income essential worker who is struggling to pay her rent could not use an extra \$500? We know Canadians need this support. We know it is part of a AAA-rated fiscally responsible approach.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Anna Roberts (King—Vaughan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Frank, a father in my riding of Vaughan, is struggling to support his family of four. He currently works two jobs to put food on the table and gas in his car. These are not luxury items, and the struggle to afford the necessities is taking a serious toll on his mental health and well-being.

Will the government cancel its planned tax increase for Frank and all Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that Canadians are going through a difficult time, and we understand they need support. We heard yesterday that there is at least one Conservative MP who understands that our doubling of the GST tax credit makes sense today.

I would like to ask all of the Conservatives that. I really would like to believe Conservatives share our sincere desire to help Canadians. They can join us with this measure. It would help all Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the pandemic exposed the flaws in the employment insurance system. The Liberals responded to the emergency with temporary patch jobs while promising real reform someday. Those temporary measures run out on Saturday. On Sunday, thousands of people will be stuck with the old system that does not work. The unemployed deserve respect. Women, part-time seasonal workers and freelancers deserve respect.

Will the Liberals wake up, or will they condemn workers to getting screwed by the old system the Conservative Party leader is such a fan of?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to completely overhauling Canada’s employment insurance system. Some temporary benefits programs implemented during the pandemic will indeed come to an end, but regular benefits will continue to be available to workers, as they were before the pandemic.

We are looking forward to announcing our long-term plan. We are looking forward to increasing EI sickness benefits to 26 weeks before the end of December.

Oral Questions

[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians are struggling, oil companies are making record profits. Last quarter alone, Imperial Oil made \$2.4 billion. New Democrats have been calling for a tax on these excess profits to help put more money back in people's pockets, but the Liberals have refused.

Now, the UN Secretary-General is calling on countries to implement a windfall tax on big polluters. Will the Prime Minister finally do the right thing and make big oil pay their fair share?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been and continues to be committed to being sure everyone in Canada pays their fair share. That is why we are permanently raising the corporate income tax by 1.5% on the largest, most-profitable banks and insurance companies. That is why we introduced a recovery dividend of 15% on the excess profits of these institutions during COVID. We have implemented, effective September 1, a 10% luxury tax on private jets, luxury cars, boats and yachts.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Ms. Viviane Lapointe (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Canada-wide early learning and child care system is getting up and running from coast to coast to coast. Families in my home town of Sudbury are already seeing the benefits of the transformative investments that Canada and the provinces are making together.

Can the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development update the House on the milestones Sudbury has reached as this national system is built out?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Sudbury for all of her hard work advocating on behalf of early learning and child care.

I am really pleased to announce that the City of Sudbury is moving forward with the Canada-wide early learning and child care agreement and has already begun issuing rebates to families in Sudbury. This is excellent news for families in Sudbury.

I had the opportunity to visit Sudbury a couple of months ago to speak with providers and families about what this agreement means for them, and I am excited to say that today they are delivering.

* * *

● (1450)

TAXATION

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the burden of the inflated cost of living is felt especially by Canadians living in rural communities such as mine. In northern Alberta, one has to heat one's home and fill up one's gas tank to travel for work, school, groceries and medical appointments. As the Liberals increase taxes to pay for their reckless spending, they are leaving so many rural Canadians in the dark as they struggle to make ends meet.

Will the government cancel its planned tax increases on paycheques, gas, home heating and groceries?

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk to my hon. colleague across the way and tell her some things that we are doing.

We know that high-speed Internet is a connectivity issue for rural Canadians. Since 2015, we have connected 1.2 million homes. By 2026, we are going to connect another 1.2 million homes. By 2026, we will have 98% of Canada connected to affordable, reliable, high-speed Internet. That is going to help rural Canadians get on par with urban Canadians. It is truly going to help all Canadians.

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Atlantic Canadians and Canadians across the country are seeing their cost of living soar, including the cost to heat their homes. The premier of Nova Scotia is concerned about the impacts of carbon pricing saying, "Almost 40 per cent of Atlantic Canadians already experience energy poverty — [by far] the highest rate in the country."

These constant increases are hurting Canadians. When will the Prime Minister get off the backs of Atlantic Canadians, put people first, stop these increases and commit to no new taxes?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we realize that there are very unique challenges in Atlantic Canada with the cost of living and, of course, the cost of fuel. We made a commitment to be there for them.

I am very happy to say that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change just last week announced \$120 million from the low-carbon economy fund to help Atlantic Canadians transition away from heating oil to clean energy. Also, as the House knows, there is the home retrofit program, which also will help with energy efficiency and saving money for Atlantic Canadians.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituent, Kerrie Russ, is increasingly frustrated with having a prime minister who has forgotten working Canadians. After paying their mortgage, utility bills, gas, food, child care and school fees, Kerrie and her husband are left with \$200 each month. The family does not qualify for the GST benefit and their child benefit has been reduced.

What Kerrie Russ wants to know: Will the Prime Minister cancel his planned tax increases on paycheques, gas, home heating and groceries?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the MP for Edmonton Manning talk about the child care costs his constituents are facing. I very much believe that one of the important ways our government and governments across the country can support hard-working Canadian families is by making child care not a burden. For too many families, child care is like a second mortgage. Thanks to our early learning and child care plan, that burden is being lifted from Canadian families.

I am pleased the Province of Alberta has joined with us to do that for the member's constituents.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the Liberal carbon tax, input costs to heat a barn or dry grain have exploded. I am hearing daily from farmers about how the Liberals' nonsensical fertilizer policy will devastate their businesses and increase the cost of food for Canadians even further. Many farmers and farm families see Liberal tax hikes as the killing blow. If farmers cannot afford to live, they cannot afford to grow the food we eat. It is simple: no farms, no food.

Will the Liberals end this tax hike on Canadian farmers?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the biggest threat to our food security is definitely the climate crisis and droughts. When we face droughts or floods, as we did last summer, we have a lot of trouble with food production. That is why we are partnering with farmers. We are providing them with financial incentives so they can adopt good practices, reduce emissions and be more resilient in the face of the climate crisis.

We will be there to support farmers.

* * *

● (1455)

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to make one thing clear. Leaving Roxham Road open is not humane. It encourages criminals who profit from the misery of others to engage in human smuggling. It is making the government complicit with a business trading on desperation where criminals use false information to convince families to pay up to \$10,000 per person to cross the border. The only reason this business exists is that the Government of Canada is incompetent in managing its borders and processing refugee claims.

How can the government condone that?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we believe in an asylum system that is fair and equitable and that better protects the rights of refugees.

We are working closely with the Government of Quebec. Every year, we transfer hundreds of millions of dollars to welcome immigrants, including refugees, to Quebec, and we are invest-

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ing \$321 million to strengthen the integrity of our borders. That is good for Quebec. Refugees play a key role in Quebec and they contribute to our economy. We will keep it up.

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is a whole new level of hypocrisy.

Once migrants arrive in Canada, the government is unable to process their refugee claims. It leaves them wondering and worrying for years and then, after all those years, it determines that half the families do not qualify as refugees and deports them.

The federal government is letting criminals lie to families and bankrupt them so that they can get across the border. It leaves them hanging for years only to send them back to their own country. The federal government is not helping migrants. It is helping criminals.

When will it suspend the safe third country agreement and finally put an end to this inhumane racket?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the pandemic, we worked closely with the Quebec government, Mr. Legault's government, to create a path for the guardian angels.

These refugees worked on the front lines of our public health system. That is just one example of how refugees have made very positive contributions.

At the same time, we will continue to strengthen the integrity of our borders by making investments in additional resources for CBSA and for all police services because, on this side of the House, we believe in a fair and equitable system.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just yesterday, the justice minister defended the Liberals' decision to eliminate mandatory jail times for crimes like robbery with a firearm, extortion with a firearm, weapons trafficking and drive-by shootings. This was the very same day that his constituents in Montreal learned of yet another fatal shooting, this time at the Bell Centre, home of the Montreal Canadiens, a place where hockey fans and parents should be able to take their children and know they are safe.

When will the government act to protect Canadians and ensure that repeat violent offenders are put behind bars?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, serious crimes will always carry serious consequences. That is the basic principle.

Oral Questions

What we are trying to do with Bill C-5 is to make sure we can concentrate our resources on those serious crimes, whether in the judicial system or in enforcing our police—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I am having a hard time hearing and I am sure the hon. member for Fundy Royal was having a hard time.

Would the hon. minister mind starting from the top so we can all get the answer?

Hon. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, the fundamental point is that serious crimes will always carry serious consequences. What we are doing with Bill C-5 is ensuring that we have more resources to focus on those serious crimes and ensuring that our police authorities have more tools in their tool kit to deal with them.

A former justice of the Supreme Court, Michael Moldaver, in an article he published this week, told us that we should go precisely in that direction, to focus our resources on those serious crimes and incarcerate less people, and nobody can accuse Justice Moldaver of being soft on crime.

• (1500)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect that criminals convicted of sexual assault, kidnapping and human trafficking serve their sentence from behind bars, but not these soft-on-crime Liberals, with their do no crime Bill C-5, which incredibly allows criminals convicted of these and other serious offences to serve their sentence from home.

Could the Liberals explain how letting loose into the community the likes of sexual predators, kidnappers and human traffickers protects public safety?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, serious crimes, such as those described by my hon. colleague, will always carry serious consequences. What Bill C-5 would do is that in cases where a sentence would be less than two years and, most important, there would no threat to public safety or public security, it would allow for a better alternative to incarceration in those cases. This precisely allows us to focus our resources in the criminal justice system on those serious crimes, which we all agree we need to treat quite seriously.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians still cannot believe that this Prime Minister wants to abolish minimum sentences for crimes such as illegally importing firearms, discharging a firearm with intent and committing robbery with a firearm.

With the upsurge in violent incidents and murders happening in broad daylight, the people of Montreal are living in fear. Meanwhile, members of street gangs and organized crime are delighted. They can hardly wait for Bill C-5 to be passed. It gives criminals more freedom and, in the meantime, people are staying home because they are afraid.

Will the Prime Minister promise to withdraw Bill C-5?

Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is quite the opposite of what the hon. member is saying.

Serious crimes will always have serious consequences in our system. What we are doing with Bill C-5 is abolishing an ineffective strategy that clogged up the criminal justice system, so we can focus on serious crimes that should have serious consequences.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians and Quebecers deserve to feel safe in their communities. The tragedies caused by gun violence over the past few months only highlight how important it is to take measures to combat gun violence.

Can the Minister of Public Safety tell us about the measures our government is taking to create safer communities?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and I share her concerns.

We are working in close co-operation with the Government of Quebec and municipal leaders such as Mayor Valérie Plante to make Quebec's communities safer. We have invested \$46 million in supporting Quebec police forces and \$42 million to prevent young people from turning to crime and to address the root causes of gun violence. We are continuing to invest in strengthening our border to prevent illegal gun trafficking. We will be there for Montreal.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of the Liberal government is driving up the cost of living.

Over the past number of months, I have met with too many constituents who are barely getting by. They are finding it more difficult to pay their bills, feed their families and are worried about losing their homes. In short, there is too much month left at the end of the money. They simply cannot afford higher taxes.

Will the Prime Minister cancel his planned tax increases?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to be clear with Canadians what is actually being discussed. Canadians understand that the CPP and EI contributions that every working Canadian makes are how we all pay for our retirement and how we create a safety net for all Canadians in case they lose their jobs.

Oral Questions

At a time of global economic uncertainty, it is the height of irresponsibility for the Conservatives to suggest that we as a country stop putting money away for our retirement and for a rainy day.

• (1505)

Mr. Jake Stewart (Miramichi—Grand Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's carbon tax would mean a massive price increase to home heating oil compared to a year ago.

To quote the Liberal Premier of Newfoundland:

Users of furnace oil in the Province tend to be older, live in rural areas and have lower incomes, lower than the provincial average. An increase in heating costs of 60 percent in one year already imposes considerable economic hardship and stress on these residents.

Will the government cancel its planned tax increases on gas, home heating and groceries today?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives used to believe in market mechanisms and pricing to reduce pollution. Stephen Harper did before he did not. The member for Durham did before his party abandoned it and, in fact, abandoned him. The Conservatives have flip-flopped all over the place.

However, I want to applaud one Conservative, the member for New Brunswick Southwest, who says his province should go back to using the federal carbon price because at least it comes with rebates. I agree with that hon. member.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are looking for hope.

Every day, Conservatives stand up in the House to tell the stories of real Canadians who are facing the worst financial struggles of their lives, thanks to the mismanagement of the government.

Day after day in the House, the Liberals stand up to tell us how well Canadians are doing. Talk about a government being tone deaf and out of touch with Canadians.

Will the government finally give Canadians hope and cancel the planned tax increases on paycheques?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the MP from Saskatchewan. Our government understands that Canadians need some support in the tough times we are going through right now.

Apparently his colleague, the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, agrees with us. He understands that our doubling of the GST tax credit will provide important relief for Canadian families.

I would like to believe that the member who just spoke really cares for his constituents. I hope he will show that by supporting this useful measure.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently, Canadian seafood and fishers have been targeted by an American organization questioning our efforts to protect the North Atlantic

right whale. Can the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans outline the measures her department has taken working with fishers to protect North Atlantic right whales?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Egmont for his deep commitment to fish harvesters.

Canada has world-class fisheries and that is thanks to our fish harvesters. With measures like dynamic closures, removing ghost gear and whale-safe gear innovations, Canadian harvesters are very committed to protecting right whales, and it is working. It turns out that thanks to their efforts, there has not been a whale mortality in Canadian waters for three years. That is Canada's record and we can all be proud of it.

* * *

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a generation of Canadians is struggling. From the cost of living to the student debt crisis, Canadian students and recent grads are falling behind. Instead of helping them get by, the federal government has collected billions of dollars in student loan payments since 2020. As a result, 65,000 Canadians have defaulted on their student loans.

This out-of-touch Liberal government refuses to give young Canadians a break. When will the Liberal government start tackling the affordability crisis and cancel student debt?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, young Canadian students are the future of Canada. With budget 2022, we are investing \$26 million over four years to increase the maximum amount of forgivable Canada loans by 50% in rural communities for health care workers.

We have had students' backs every step of the way. Through budget 2021, we made federal student loans interest-free until March 2023. We also doubled Canada student grants and extended the skills boost top-up to help young Canadians really get through the pandemic.

We are absolutely committed to permanently eliminating the federal interest on students loans and Canada apprentice loans, and we will continue to help young Canadians.

Business of the House

● (1510)

TAXATION

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, we are in a climate catastrophe while oil and gas companies make record profits on the backs of regular people. As raised earlier, the UN Secretary-General is now calling for a windfall tax on these profits, yet the federal government continues to do the opposite, giving more public funds to the very companies responsible for the crisis.

When will the government listen to the UN and apply to oil and gas the same windfall tax it has to banks and life insurers?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we share the hon. member's concern and his commitment to the climate crisis and to addressing it. That is why we are spending \$9.1 billion on our emissions reduction plan, which is an ambitious sector-by-sector path for Canada to reach its 2030 emissions on our way to net zero by 2050. It has broad support from environmental groups, from industry to farmers. It is going to deliver clean air, a healthy environment and a strong economy.

Mr. Jake Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Today in question period, the official opposition cited a March 22 report by the Parliamentary Budget Officer that shows the carbon tax will be a net cost to Canadian families. I am seeking unanimous consent—

The Speaker: I am afraid that is more debate than a point of order.

I believe the hon. opposition House leader has a question for us. It is Thursday.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yes, I have the one question everyone has been waiting for, the Thursday question.

I am wondering if the hon. House leader of the government could update the House as to what we can expect next week. Specifically, will he bring in legislation cancelling the Liberal tax hikes that are due to come into effect January 1?

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too always look forward to the Thursday question.

Let me first take the opportunity to thank the member for Barrie—Innisfil for his service in the role as opposition House leader. It was a pleasure to work with him.

I will also welcome the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle to his new role as opposition House leader. We have had some fruitful conversations. I look forward to more of them.

First, of course, I reject the characterization that supporting Canadians in their retirement while making sure EI is there for them in case they lose their jobs is a tax increase. We have a fundamental difference with regard to making sure we invest in Canadians, and we will see that play out in legislation.

If I could, because the question was asked of me, I am excited to say that this afternoon we are going to start second reading debate of Bill C-30, the cost of living relief act.

Tomorrow morning, we will resume debate on Bill C-31, which provides for the establishment of dental benefits for children under the age of 12 years old and a one-time rental housing benefit. Then we are going to switch back to Bill C-30 following question period. If further debate is needed, we will continue will Bill C-31 on Monday.

On Wednesday, we will return to second reading of Bill C-29 concerning the establishment of a national council for reconciliation as an independent, non-political, permanent and indigenous-led organization.

Finally, I would like to inform hon. colleagues that next Tuesday and Thursday shall be opposition days.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Wednesday, September 21, the House will shortly resolve itself in a committee of the whole to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Summit Series. We will welcome some of the players of Team Canada 1972 on the floor of the House, and statements will be made as part of the proceedings.

[Translation]

I would remind members that only authorized photographers are allowed to take photos.

● (1515)

SITTING SUSPENDED

The Speaker: The House will suspend for a few moments to prepare for the committee session.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 3:15 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 3:23 p.m.)

• (1520)

[English]

1972 TEAM CANADA PLAYERS AND REPRESENTATIVES

(House in committee of the whole to recognize the 1972 Team Canada players and representatives, Mr. Anthony Rota in the chair)

[And the 1972 Team Canada players and representatives being present in the chamber:]

The Speaker: It is my pleasure today to welcome to the House of Commons players and representatives of Team Canada 1972. I will ask members to hold their applause until I have read the names of our guests. They are Don Awrey; Yvan Cournoyer; the Hon. Ken Dryden; Ron Ellis; for Victor Hadfield, who was not able to attend, his son Jeff Hadfield; Paul Henderson; Dennis Hull; the Hon. Frank Mahovlich; Peter Mahovlich; Serge Savard; Rod Seiling; and the late Bill White, represented by his son Kam White.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I will now invite the right hon. Prime Minister to make a statement to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Summit Series.

• (1525)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone loves a good comeback story, especially one that united our whole country. Quite frankly, the level of unanimity in this House today is a nice thing to see too.

Fifty years ago, before the Summit Series had even started, a lot of sportswriters and hockey fans were predicting an easy win for Team Canada. At the time, a journalist at The Globe and Mail famously promised that if the Soviets won a single game, he would eat his own column shredded in a bowl of borscht. It did not take long for him to eat his words, literally. There is even a picture of it.

[Translation]

The first game took place at the Montreal Forum on September 2, 1972. Canada lost 7-3. In the days and weeks that followed, our team had its ups and downs. After losing game five in Moscow, our backs were up against the wall. If we wanted to win the series, we had to win the last three games in a row. It was quite a challenge. The players kept up their training, the coaches refined their strategies, and Canadians did not lose hope.

[English]

In game six, after a scoreless first period, Canada finally produces a 3-2 victory. In game seven, Phil Esposito scores the first two goals and Canada wins 4-3, and then game eight.

[Translation]

It is the final game of the series. With just one minute left to play, the score is 5-5. That is when Paul Henderson jumps onto the ice.

[English]

Henderson rushes to the net. He falls. He gets back up. Team Canada takes two rebound shots and, with 34 seconds to go, Henderson flips in a shot to the goalie's left. They could hear the cheers from coast to coast to coast.

Business of the House

Everyone remembers where they were. Everyone except me, because I was only nine months old. However, I remember growing up with players like Yvan Cournoyer and Ken Dryden as heroes. I am even wearing my Habs socks today. They were not only heroes because they had won the series. They were all heroes because they taught us a lesson. They showed us how grit and hard work pays off. They showed us that, even when there is only 34 seconds left to play, one never gives up. In a global example, they showed us that having a hard-fought competition on ice can go a long way, even for diplomacy.

Paul Henderson once told the story of a friend calling him when the Berlin Wall fell, saying that after his famous goal in 1972 the Soviets probably never recovered. I will let experts debate on whether there is any truth to that, but what is absolutely true is that the Summit Series was a defining moment in the history of our country.

[Translation]

In 1972, our flag, the maple leaf, was only seven years old. Not all Canadians had embraced our flag at that point. As Serge Savard often pointed out, after our players won while wearing the maple leaf on their jerseys, Canadians became proud of this symbol, which still represents us today. It is a symbol of peace, democracy and freedom.

[English]

Our world is a different place today than it was during the Cold War, but there are parallels. One thing remains the same: We will never stop fighting for what is right.

Today, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Summit Series and all the members of this historic team, let us remember the best of who we are as Canadians. Let us continue our work to make sure people, young and old, players and fans, can be part of this extraordinary sport in a safe and respectful environment. Let us keep reminding the world that being polite and friendly never precludes our also being tough and determined. Let us remember that, with hope and hard work, there is nothing we cannot overcome.

• (1530)

[Translation]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what an honour it is to have the legendary heroes of the Summit Series among us today.

[English]

It is an honour to welcome to the House today members of Team Canada for the 50-year anniversary of their victory over the Soviet national team in the 1972 Summit Series.

Business of the House

It was the year 1972 that the Cold War spilled into the world of sports. In July, American and world chess champion Bobby Fischer had defeated the Soviet champion and number two world competitor Boris Spassky. In the Munich Olympics, the American basketball team lost a bitter and still-contested gold medal game against the Soviet Union.

However, neither of these events produced the drama or the lasting glory that the Summit Series did. The series pitted, for the first time, the best Canadian professionals, though some of them looked too young to have been there, against the Soviet players who were, at the time, underestimated but preparing quietly for a surprise. It was to be a true test of hockey supremacy, played under the shadow of a much deadlier contest for global supremacy.

The Canadian Department of External Affairs suggested that the encounter could be called a “friendship series”. Thank goodness the players ignored that and had the good sense to compete fiercely. Although most commentators and most Canadians expected the series to be an easy one, after a shocking 7-3 loss in game one in Montreal, it became clear that the series would not be a friendly exhibition of Canada's superiority.

As the losses mounted, the pressure on our players grew, the low point being the series' game four in Vancouver when some of the crowd rained boos down on their defeated heroes. Canadians simply could not understand how these NHL all-stars, these legendary names they knew so well, could be outscored by a team of Russian amateurs.

The Canadian fans had not yet realized what had become clear to the Canadian players: These Russians were actually really good. They were playing a different game than the NHL players were used to. It was a game of speed and finesse, of long-lead breakout passes and pinpoint cross-ice accuracy.

By the end of the series, the names of those faceless Russians would be household names in Canada. We know them now. We knew them then and now many of them play in the leagues on this side of the ocean, or at least their children and grandchildren do. They have names and faces Canadians would come to know and respect in international tournaments and in exhibitions pitting Soviets against NHL competitors.

By the time the Canadian team left to train in Europe ahead of the four games in Moscow, the idea of a “friendship series” was long dead. From this side of the Cold War, knowing how it ends, we can afford to look back objectively, but in the moment, and at that time, the series had become, to borrow the name of the 40th anniversary documentary, the *Cold War on Ice*.

The 1972 series was the first time the term “Team Canada” was applied to a Canadian hockey team. In the minds of Canadians and fans following the series around the world, and on both sides of the Iron Curtain, Team Canada versus Team Russia had become us versus them. There were two styles, two different ways of life and two fundamentally incompatible ideologies and systems of government. It was democracy versus totalitarianism, communism versus free enterprise and freedom versus repression.

Clichés never tell the whole story, but they often tell the most important part. This is true of the stories we are told today of the

1972 series. Before the series, we told ourselves that we were the best hockey country in the world and that our way of playing was the only way to play properly.

During the series, we realized that this was not quite true. For having lost those four games and having seen the competitive grit and the finesse of a team of a different style, we learned that we needed to up our game. In the last game on home ice, the frustration of Canadian fans in Vancouver's Pacific Coliseum erupted as boos rained down from the bleachers. Team Canada lost, falling 4-2.

● (1535)

In a now iconic post-game interview, the legendary Phil Esposito pleaded with Canadians. To quote the elder Esposito brother, he said he was completely disappointed and he could not believe it. He said, “Some of our guys are really down in the dumps...We know we're trying...They've got a good team and let's face facts. But it doesn't mean that we're not giving it our 150 per cent, because we...are. Every one of us guys, 35 guys, came out to play for Team Canada. We did it because we love our country”.

On foreign ice, in front of hostile fans, with their backs against the wall, down two games, Team Canada rallied to win the last three games, each by a single goal. Each of those winning goals was scored by the great Paul Henderson. His name is immortalized in Foster Hewitt's frantic play-by-play call that erupted through hundreds of thousands or probably millions of televisions and radios in classrooms and workplaces across the country: “Henderson has scored”, and the crowd goes wild.

The ladies and gentlemen in the audience would not have been so pleased of course, but those here on the other side of the world would have applauded and cheered with such a vibrating and powerful force that it would have been heard all around the globe. It is a call that still thrills us all half a century later, even those of us who were born after 1972. We have only heard the echo of those cheers but still revel in the legacy they represent. When we hear those calls and we see those names, the names of those who are here today, Yvan Cournoyer, after the winning goal, for example, it takes us back to a different time and a different world.

Business of the House

It was 17 years before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Just a few months before the wall fell in May of 1989, a 20-year-old Alexander Mogilny would become the first Soviet star to defect to the west to play in the NHL. He was charged with deserting the Soviet Red Army, in which he was nominally an officer. Shortly after that, a crumbling and cash-strapped Soviet hockey system and Soviet Union would come crashing down as well. Two years after that, in 1991, the Soviet Union, which in 1972 had appeared almost invincible, officially came to an end. I say almost invincible because this Team Canada showed that they were anything but.

That is something the Canadian spirit brings alive in hockey, but also in all aspects of our lives. I think what is so special about the gentlemen gathered here today is that every single Canadian can see their own triumph in this legendary win. They have made us all proud. They have given us one of the defining moments of Canadian history. In fact, I think if any Canadian were asked to close their eyes and dream up the most Canadian moment, it would be hard to think of anything more Canadian than the '72 Summit series victory.

Therefore, on behalf of all Canadians I wish them a great congratulations and thank them for their contributions to our national story. May we all live up to their incredible example of grit, determination and victory.

• (1540)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I can proudly say that I am the only party leader in the House to have donned skates prior to 1972. That said, I was not particularly good. I clearly took a wrong turn somewhere.

As we know, the Bloc Québécois has always defended Quebec's identity. Quebec and Canada are two different nations, with different values and, often, different ways of doing things. We defend the right to live in French, the common and official language of the Quebec nation and even of certain locker rooms, at times. We do not identify with multiculturalism. We prefer to change the topic when the British monarchy comes up in conversation.

The only dynasties we like are the ones in hockey. We have the Quebec civil code, we value clean energy, and we are committed to secularism. We are different. There are two different nations, but they come together from time to time.

We often share interests and visions. Canada and Quebec are peace-loving. We prefer peace to war, words to weapons. We are democrats. We care about poverty, injustice and violence, and we look for solutions to help improve people's lives. Frankly, I think that Canadians and Quebecers are good people. Most importantly, Quebecers and Canadians share the unwavering belief that hockey is the greatest sport in the world.

From Toe Blake to Maurice Richard, to Sidney Crosby and Marc-André Fleury, not to mention the great Guy Lafleur, Mike Bossy and Doug Gilmour, Canadians and Quebecers are, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the best hockey players in the world. I do not want to come across as pretentious, but we will keep it between us. I would even venture to say that Quebecers are the best players, but we will share that honour today.

In Quebec, we know how to play hockey. I would not include myself in that. Any time I or hundreds of thousands of Quebecers my age scored a goal as a kid, we imagined being Guy Lafleur or, for those in Drummondville, Yvan Cournoyer.

Any time we made a save, we pictured ourselves as Ken Dryden. Those are the names that inspire kids. We say we have the best players in the world, and there is no better proof than the Summit Series.

On one side was our team, represented by the men we have the honour of welcoming today. On the other, the Soviet superpower at the height of the Cold War. Against a backdrop of looming nuclear threat and fears of a third world war, the best of us went head to head against the best of them: Pete and Frank Mahovlich, Guy Lapointe, Yvan Cournoyer, Serge Savard, Ken Dryden, Phil and Tony Esposito, Bobby Clarke and Rod Gilbert, to name just a few of the team's worthy and admirable members.

Our team went up against the USSR, sworn enemy of the Western Bloc, denizens of the other side of the Iron Curtain. They could not lose. They lost. We were destined to win. We won. It was magical.

The Summit Series symbolizes so many things. First of all, it is better to fight on the ice with a puck and sticks than on a battlefield. On that note, perhaps Mr. Putin should leave Ukraine alone. Things could be settled in a best of seven series.

On top of that, the Summit Series reminded us that the Soviets were more than just our enemies. We learned that we can and, more importantly, we should, respect our adversaries. It was an extraordinary example of how sport contributed to the détente and the eventual end of the Cold War. The Berlin Wall likely started coming down as a result of the Summit Series.

Lastly, we have to talk about Paul Henderson's goal. Paul Henderson scored the most beautiful goal ever scored by a grinder. You have Da Vinci's Mona Lisa, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Paul Henderson's goal.

• (1545)

Let us get back to our two nations. My esteemed colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue suggested a 21st century summit series, where Quebec would play Canada, national team against national team, in a friendly game. There will always be things that we want to do together once in a while.

That is why, 50 years later, we have come together to say bravo and thank you. Thank you for the dream and thank you for proving that, with enough determination and courage, miracles do happen.

Business of the House

[English]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to honour the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Summit Series and the team members who captured the hearts, minds, and imagination of an entire nation. It is that rare event in sport that had all Canadians on the edge of their seat and would become a legend across the nation, creating role models, inspiring songs and establishing Canada as the dominant hockey nation on earth.

[Translation]

This series is so iconic that it almost has no rivals in terms of its importance to our country, except for Terry Fox's Marathon of Hope. It eclipses all other historic moments in Canadian sport, such as the Blue Jays' back-to-back championships, Donovan Bailey's gold medal sprint, and Sidney Crosby's golden goal at the Vancouver Olympic Games.

I would like to begin by thanking all the players on Team Canada 1972 for their historic win in the Canada-Russia series, including the many players who have joined us today to celebrate the 50th anniversary.

[English]

In case my colleagues did not know this, a good lot of the players originated from northern Ontario: The Esposito brothers, Phil and Tony, learned to play in Sault Ste. Marie; brothers Frank and Peter Mahovlich were from Schumacher; Mickey Redmond called Kirkland Lake home; and Gary Bergman hailed from Kenora.

I also want to give a special shout-out to the late, great Jean-Paul "J.P." Parisé, the hard-working left-winger from Smooth Rock Falls in my riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, who scored two goals and two assists, and had the single most controversial moment in the series. I will have more on that in a minute.

The series is often spoken of as a parable of the Cold War these days, but I doubt that anyone playing in the series was thinking of that. The players went out there for eight games and, through grit and determination, brought this historic win home for our great nation. They inspired a generation of young people to embrace hockey and did so much to establish it as Canada's national sport, to the extent that this House legally declared it as such in 1994.

It is the historic moments that will be remembered forever across Canada. To quote commentator Foster Hewitt's play-by-play at the end of game eight of the series, "Cournoyer has it on that wing. Here's a shot. Henderson made a wild stab for it and fell. Here's another shot! Right in front. They score! Henderson has scored for Canada!"

Paul Henderson's iconic game eight winning goal, often called "the goal of the century", will always live on as part of the Canadian psyche. Phil Esposito's seven goals and six assists set the pace for the entire series and, of course, J.P. Parisé's frustration at the officiating in game eight that got him ejected for game misconduct is often cited as the turning point that led to less questionable calls on the ice and strengthened the rest of the team's resolve.

● (1550)

[Translation]

I am proud to say that Parisé's name is now permanently commemorated on a recently inaugurated sign in his home town of Smooth Rock Falls, at the suggestion of Johnny Lemieux and with support from the town council. They wanted to be sure to pay tribute to J.P. while also marking the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Summit Series.

Parisé was touched to be selected to represent Canada internationally, but he was so respected in the NHL that he was asked to play for Team Canada as a surprise pick. He went on to enjoy a successful career in hockey, playing 890 games in the NHL, including two all-star games. He never won the Stanley Cup, but his widow, Donna, said that winning gold for Canada meant the world to him.

[English]

I hope I was properly able to convey just how important this event was for the history of our nation.

I will quote the lyrics of another Canadian legend, and I am not going to sing them, because I cannot do them justice. Maybe the member for Timmins—James Bay would have been able to, but not me. This is from the Tragically Hip singer Gord Downie:

If there's a goal that everyone remembers, it was back in ol' 72
We all squeezed the stick and we all pulled the trigger
And all I remember is sitting beside you

I have also been lobbied by my colleague, the MP for Windsor West, to put in a selfless plug to have a member of the team, Paul Henderson, inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame, and I was pleased to do that.

I thank members for their attention and, more importantly, I thank team Canada from 1972 for all it has done for this country.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Mr. Speaker, much has been said already about the Summit Series win. To be honest, I was born more than a decade after we won, so I think I will share more about the legacy that the team left us.

First is this idea of a best-on-best tournament. If it were not for these players at the Summit Series, would we ever have seen Gretzky pass to Lemieux to win the 1987 Canada Cup? Would we ever have seen "Sid the Kid" at the time score the "Golden Goal" in Vancouver 2010? That is part of the legacy that this team left for us.

It is also these players from across the country who bring us such pride. We heard about northern Ontario, and I will offer the same plug for Waterloo region: the late Bill Goldsworthy from Waterloo, Rod Seiling from Elmira, and Don Awrey from Kitchener. They make us all proud.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

Last, of course, is Mr. Paul Henderson, not just with the last goal, but the game-winning goal in games six, seven and eight, and not just as a player but as a minister, a motivational speaker and an author. Many Canadians have had the honour of meeting Mr. Henderson over the years. In my case, I had that chance many years ago, and he was introduced by his niece as “uncle Paul”. What I remember most is how kind, gracious and humble he was. In fact, he might be the only person in this country who does not think he belongs in the Hockey Hall of Fame.

These players brought together this country back in 1972, and they brought together this House in a spirit of unity today with their legacy. I thank them for bringing pride to our country then and now.

• (1555)

The Speaker: Honourable colleagues, distinguished guests, hockey fans and hockey legends, I have kept the last word for myself.

Every Canadian baby boomer remembers that day, long ago. Today's schoolchildren could not even imagine the excitement their grandparents felt about watching television during the school day at school. A few young people today would hardly recognize the then cutting-edge technology, the massive, box-like TVs, which were dragged into the classrooms and into the libraries so that we could all watch the game. Our excitement was all about the game: our game, Canada's game.

[*Translation*]

For many, the result of this game between Canada and the former USSR held a more nuanced and complex geopolitical significance. Everyone across the country knew that they were experiencing a historic moment. It was also an inspiring moment. How many new players, and undoubtedly female players, put on skates and jumped on the ice after the winning goal by Paul Henderson in the last minute of the game?

[*English*]

Sporting events make magic when they bring people together. All of you made magic on the ice all those years ago. For that, we are all very grateful.

It is now my pleasure to invite all honourable members to meet our special guests in the Speaker's dining room located in room 233-S behind the chamber. I look forward to seeing you.

[*Translation*]

I look forward to welcoming you at the reception to be held immediately after the committee of the whole rises.

• (1600)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I wish to inform the House that, because of the suspension of the sitting and the proceedings in committee of the whole, Government Orders will be extended by 49 minutes.

• (1605)

[*English*]

COST OF LIVING RELIEF ACT, NO. 1

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved that Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (temporary enhancement to the Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax credit), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to split my time with my colleague, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the hon. minister have unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, thank you, to you and your colleagues, for that exceptional moment with the legends of the 1972 Summit Series. I was two years old at the time, but that series, its famous goal and all it meant for Canada has followed me, as it has followed Canadians, throughout my lifetime.

It is my pleasure indeed to launch today's debate on Bill C-30, the cost of living relief act, our government's proposal to double the goods and services tax credit for six months and deliver targeted support to Canadians who need it the most. Essentially, it is a bill that would make sure Canadians, especially the most vulnerable among us, get more money back in their pockets.

[*Translation*]

This important bill will provide additional support to the roughly 11 million people and families who already receive the tax credit, including approximately half of Canadian families with children and more than half of Canadian seniors.

[*English*]

It would mean up to an extra \$234 for single Canadians without children and nearly \$500 in the pockets of couples with two children. Seniors would receive an extra \$225 on average. This is additional support for roughly 11 million eligible people and families, including about half of Canadian families with children and more than half of Canadian seniors. This legislation is part of a new package of support, which includes a Canada dental benefit and a one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit.

If the House works together to pass these pieces of legislation, up to half a million children under 12 will be able to see a dentist, some for the first time. Low-income renters, some of the most vulnerable among us, would receive a little extra breathing room. These supports build on our existing affordability plan, which has been putting more money in the pockets of Canadians all year long through the enhanced Canada workers benefit and through cutting child care fees in half by the end of this year, something that is already saving families in my home province of Alberta \$5,600 this year.

Government Orders

We are supporting Canadians by increasing the old age security by 10% for seniors 75 and older and by doubling the Canada student grant until July 2023. Under our plan, a couple in Thunder Bay with an income of \$45,000 and a child in day care could receive about an additional \$7,800 above their existing benefits this year. A single recent graduate in Edmonton with an entry-level job and an income of \$24,000 could receive about an additional \$1,300 in new and enhanced benefits.

[*Translation*]

A senior with a disability in Trois-Rivières could receive over \$2,500 more this year than they did last year.

In short, the support measures that we have put in place for Canadians who most need this support, for the most vulnerable, represent real money for them this year, at exactly the right time.

[*English*]

Canadians are facing rising costs and difficult decisions about how to afford the groceries they need or the rent at the end of the month. We want these Canadians to know that I understand, and our government understands, how challenging these past months, and indeed these last two years, have been. However, we also want them to know that their government has a plan and that we will be there for them. We are supporting Canadians who need it the most: our lowest-paid workers, low-income renters and families who cannot afford to have their kids see a dentist.

We are doing it in a responsible way that will not further increase inflation, something that would make life more expensive for everyone for years to come. The rising costs, driven by a global pandemic and by Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine, were not of Canada's making, but we will ensure the solutions are.

[*Translation*]

As Canadians cut back on their spending, our government will do the same. We will do our part not to throw fuel on the inflationary fire. We are committed to finding \$9 billion in government savings in our spring budget and to move toward a smaller and smaller deficit.

This year, Canada had the lowest deficit and the lowest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, and Moody's, S&P and DBRS reaffirmed Canada's AAA credit rating.

• (1610)

[*English*]

The targeted relief measures we introduced on Tuesday have an additional cost of just 0.1% of Canada's GDP. This legislation is about balancing fiscal responsibility with compassion. The support is the right thing to do at the right time. Canada can afford to be compassionate to the most vulnerable among us, and that is exactly what we will be.

This week we learned that inflation in Canada is at 7%, which is down from 7.6% in July and down from 8.1% in June. While these numbers are still too high, the trend is encouraging.

[*Translation*]

The Bank of Canada has the tools and the mandate it needs to fight inflation in Canada. Global supply chains are getting sorted out. The price of gas in Canada and around the world is dropping. Today, we are dealing with the impacts of a crisis that occurs only once in a generation, but we will find our way through, as we did with everything that has happened over the past two years.

As we help the most vulnerable Canadians deal with the increased cost of living, our priority over the next few months will be to ensure that our economy is growing, that our businesses have the workers they need, and that Canadians can continue to find good, rewarding jobs that pay well.

[*English*]

The global economy needs what Canada produces: the food to feed the world, the natural resources and critical minerals entire countries and industries depend upon, and so much more. We will provide the goods our democratic allies need today, and we will provide the goods they will need tomorrow, all while providing great jobs here in Canada, and together we will build a net-zero future around the world. We will do so in a way that creates long-term sustainable jobs for Canadians from one part of this country to the other.

Our government wants to make sure Canadians and the Canadian economy come through this challenging economic period as quickly as possible and we are ready to thrive when we do. That means building an economy that works for everyone, a Canada where everyone can earn a decent living for an honest day's work and a Canada where nobody gets left behind. That is our focus and our commitment to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

I urge all of my colleagues in all parties to help get this bill passed so that we can make the cost of living more affordable for all Canadians.

[*English*]

I am calling on all parliamentarians from all parties to work with us to get this legislation passed and to get this support to Canadians. Our constituents want to see us working on their behalf, not playing games. They want to see us moving forward, not moving backward with delays and procedural tactics.

To all of us in the House, the winners on the ice in 1972 showed us how to get it done then, let us all work together now and get this done for Canadians today.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister to reflect on a quote and answer a question.

Government Orders

Avery Shenfeld, the chief economist at CIBC, said, “In a period of high inflation and excess demand, cutting taxes or handing out cheques can add fuel to the inflationary fire, and make the job of a central bank that’s raising rates to cool demand all that more troublesome.”

The government spent this whole summer in repose. I imagine its members were polling, but they did not do the hard work. In their budget this spring, they talked about a policy review to reprioritize spending to cut back wasteful spending. Why did they not do that hard work so that when they presented this tax relief to the low-income families who are going to depend on it, the inflation concerns were at least diminished, if not, on a one-for-one basis, removed?

Why does the government continue to spend and make things worse? Why is it not doing the hard work of finding equivalent cuts?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, the hon. member from the Conservative Party is completely wrong with his assertions. We are investing in the lives of 11 million Canadians and families, and we are doing so with \$3.2 billion in new spending against a total size of our economy of \$2.7 trillion. We are talking about just over 1/1,000th of the size of our economy. That will not keep inflation rising.

Going from one economist to another, Trevor Tombe, who is one of the best economists the country has, said, “When you unpack the data to see what the drivers of inflation are, most of it, by a pretty wide margin, is tied to global factors...Canadian federal government spending or transfers or tax changes really wouldn't have a big effect.”

We are doing the responsible thing by targeting measures, supports to those who need it the most, and making sure we are not increasing inflation to make the job of the Bank of Canada that much harder. We are focused on Canadians, with a real plan and real results.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech. Bill C-30 talks about increasing the GST rebate. That is a good measure that could have been brought in sooner.

This measure was announced at the same time as the measures in Bill C-31 concerning a dental plan and rent assistance. However, if we look closely at the bill, the rent assistance is provided through the Canada housing benefit. This benefit does not exist in Quebec because it already had a program in place, and so the right to opt out with full compensation. The bill does not mention that right, however. There is no mention of harmonization. The same goes for the dental plan. The plan proposed in the bill would apply to children 11 and under. Quebec's program applies to children 10 and under. Again, there is no plan for harmonization.

Will the government commit to revising Bill C-31 to account for the programs that already exist in Quebec? Is the government simply ignoring Quebec yet again?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his multiple questions. Looking at Bill C-30, which is before us today, it is clear that we are going to double the GST credit. That is very important. We are hoping to have the Bloc's support so that we can get this bill passed.

I just want to address the dental care issue. My colleague noted the age limits and the programs that exist in Quebec. In Quebec, the dental plan covers children under the age of 9. For the country as a whole, we are talking about children under the age of 12. We are already aware of that. With respect to the housing benefit, we will certainly be working closely with Quebec on this. We know how to collaborate with Quebec. We see Quebec. Quebec is part of Canada, which is moving forward in the world.

We will be there for Quebecers and Canadians during this inflationary cycle.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, the inflationary pressures that too many Canadian families are experiencing right now are not new. They have been with us for most of this year, as far back as early spring. In fact, it was back in May of this year that the NDP used its opposition day motion to call for precisely this measure.

The truth is that families in my riding, across my province and across this country could have used this help a lot earlier. Why did the Liberals wait until this moment in time to finally get this much-needed help to struggling families right across this country?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, I think there are two things at play here.

One is to make sure that when we are in a global inflationary period caused by Putin's war in Ukraine, supply chains that really have not been unsnarled yet from the pandemic and China's zero-COVID policy, we take a careful approach to make sure the measures we have are targeted so they do not increase inflation and make the Bank of Canada's job harder. That is one piece of this.

When it comes to making sure that people, this spring and throughout the summer, had benefits they could call on to make life more affordable, we passed the increase to the Canada workers benefit, we made sure we signed child care deals with everybody across the country, we made sure we had supports and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We have to resume debate.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, if I may, just 15 minutes ago we had a wonderful experience here with the Summit Series hockey legends on the floor of the House of Commons. What a wonderful treat that was. I was in grade 5 at the time, and I can recall the overwhelmingly wonderful and prideful feelings back in 1972. Here we are celebrating it 50 years later. I did get my picture with Paul Henderson, which I thought was quite cool.

Government Orders

Having said that, we are debating Bill C-30. This is a piece of legislation that every member of the House of Commons should be voting in favour of. We often hear about inflation. When we think of inflation and the impact it is having on communities, we should recognize the fact that this bill would put more money in the pockets of millions of Canadians in every region of our country.

This is really positive and helpful at a time when Canadians are looking for strong leadership from Ottawa. I hope that every member of the House will not only vote in favour of the legislation, but recognize the importance of the quick passage of the legislation. We could make a strong, collective statement to Canadians today by supporting this initiative.

We might differ on this. Actually, I should not even say “might”. We differ greatly if we contrast the Conservative Party with the Liberal Party, the party in government. I will spend some time on that contrast.

The most significant thing for me going into this session, the point that I really wanted to emphasize, which is something the Prime Minister and other members of the Liberal caucus have talked a great deal about, is that we want an economy that works for all Canadians. That is something we are committed to as a government.

From the very beginning, we have had a Prime Minister who talked about the importance of Canada's middle class and of forming government policy that helps Canada's middle class and those who are striving to become a part of it. We can look at the initiatives we have taken as a government, not only today with a legislative initiative that will lead to budgetary measures, but from the very beginning. We have brought up issues, and we could ask where the Conservative Party has been.

As an example of that, there is the additional tax on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians. The Conservative Party voted against that particular tax. The Conservatives might ultimately argue that it is tax and they do not like taxes, and that is why they voted against it, but it was a tax on Canada's wealthiest, asking for that fair share.

Shortly after, or virtually at the same time, we brought in percentage tax breaks for Canada's middle class. Despite all of the pomp and ceremony of the Conservative leadership race, today's leader of the Conservative Party voted against that tax break for Canada's middle class.

There are different ways that we can support Canadians. Today we have a very targeted approach and a way to ensure we are putting money in pockets, real money, by giving a tax benefit, the goods and services tax benefit.

● (1620)

We have done it in other ways too. A good example is the Canada child benefit. Again, when bringing forward this program, there was no sliding scale of any form. It was the individuals who are finding it a little more difficult, as maybe their disposable income is not quite high, versus the multi-millionaires. Why not establish a program that would ensure there is a higher sense of equity and fairness? That is what we did.

Take the Canada child benefit, for example, in Winnipeg North. I estimate that close to \$10 million a month is going into Winnipeg North alone, and I am one of 338 constituencies. This gives us a sense of the commitment.

This morning we were debating legislation in regard to dental care for children under the age of 12. Again, it would appear as if the Conservatives are going to vote against that piece of legislation. Imagine the money this would put into the pockets of families. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of families. As a result, they would not have to pay for their child under 12 who needs to get some dental work done. It is legislation that would help Canadians.

We talked about the goods and services tax benefit, which is a positive thing. The doubling of that credit is going to have a very real and tangible impact.

Based on what we saw this morning and based on what we have seen before from the Conservatives, they talk a good line or like to think they talk a good line. If they are genuine with many of the things they say, this is the type of legislation they should be voting in favour of.

It is interesting when they downplay the importance of government programs. I raised this morning during debate the first universal national child care program and the positive impact it is going to have. Imagine the hundreds of millions of dollars that will be going to families to support child care. We have seen first-hand the impact it had in the province of Quebec. We know the benefits of it. Again, that is money that is going to people, much like the legislation here is giving real money to people. The benefits are overwhelming, yet the Conservatives oppose it and talks about getting rid of that particular program.

They talk about the CPP. Remember, in negotiations that had taken place, we got provinces and stakeholders onside to see an increase in CPP. The Conservatives call that a tax. It is not a tax; it is an investment. It is workers today who will be able to retire with more money. That is what this is. The Conservatives try to put a twist on it to try to give the impression that it is an outright tax. I think that does a disservice.

I believe we look, in many ways, to leaders of our communities to provide the information and assurances that we have a government that truly cares and wants to advance good, sound government policy. Over the last number of years, including prepandemic, during the pandemic and now today, we have continued to bring forward legislative and budgetary motions and bills and legislation to advance the interests of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

Government Orders

Today's bill would have an impact on close to 11 million people. Hopefully the Conservatives will not only support it but want to see its quick passage.

• (1625)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have three quick questions for the parliamentary secretary.

First, would he agree that every MP in this House should be able to speak to any bill if it means something to their constituents?

Second, I am wondering about the member's sort of obsession with Conservatives. He mentioned the word "Conservative" at least 10 times today in his speech, 381 times in this session of Parliament and 2,899 times in this House of Commons.

Finally, does the parliamentary secretary support tax cuts to our low-income Canadians, our seniors and our most vulnerable?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, at times it can be a challenge to hold the Conservatives accountable for all the weird things they say, and that often means that I have to bring them into the public discussion. I am pleased to hear that the member is doing word counts of how often I am saying things. I can appreciate that.

In regard to members being able to speak, even when I was in opposition, I always believed that there is a need to look at ways in which the Standing Orders can be modified or changed to modernize the House of Commons. I would suggest to the member that we could find different ways to do that, whether it is through a dual chamber or what I call "debate Fridays". There are opportunities for us to enhance the numbers of hours of debate, which would hopefully encourage more people to engage in the debate.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech.

As I said to his colleague, the minister, we are in favour of increasing the GST credit as set out in Bill C-30. That is actually something we have been calling for, and we think it should have been done long ago to help the less fortunate fight inflation.

The measures in Bill C-30 were proposed at the same time as those in Bill C-31. I have two questions for my hon. colleague.

Members of Parliament were invited to a technical briefing on Bill C-31, but it happened long after the one for journalists. Does he think it is right to put the media ahead of parliamentarians, the people who pass bills?

Bill C-31 includes a \$500 rental subsidy for 1.8 million people. That adds up to \$900 million, yet they are calling it \$1.2 billion. What is up with the extra \$300 million? Is it for management fees? Is it for WE Charity? Can he explain that disconnect?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, If we take a look at Bill C-31, we see the benefits that the member highlights for people who are renting, but the real nugget in that bill, from my perspective, is the dental program, which is going to assist children in be-

ing able to get dental work that might not take place otherwise. At the same time, we can ensure that people who need that dental work are being subsidized as much as possible, although it may not be 100%, as there are some limits to it.

That was just this morning. This afternoon we are bring forward another bill, which looks at doubling the tax credit, and that is going to be helping Canadians. I think what we are seeing as we come back into this session is a government agenda that is dealing with a very serious—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments; the hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for what I think is a very important piece of legislation that will help many Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

However, I do want to mention that the New Democratic Party tabled this very same request of the government last May. All of a sudden it took New Democrats to force the government to finally act and to see results for Canadians. We have been clear, as a party, that we want to see results for Canadians, as they are seeing one of the greatest cost-of-living challenges in a generation. This support is needed. Albertans, where I am from, are just \$200 away from not making their rent.

Why did the government not do this sooner, when we called for it?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance has been very open in listening to all members of Parliament on all sides of the House. Over the last three years we have brought in all sorts of programs, whether it is CERB, direct payments for seniors and people with disabilities or support for students. There has been a smorgasbord of all sorts of programs over the last three years and up to today, not to mention the programs prior to the pandemic itself.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): 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, The Environment; the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Passports; the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, Health.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate today on Bill C-30, an act to amend the Income Tax Act.

Government Orders

Before I go any further, let us all recognize that this bill ultimately proposes, for six months on a temporary basis, to increase the GST credit for those earning up to \$49,200, or to \$58,500 if it happens to be a household with children. That is when the benefit will be fully phased out. The cost of doing this will be around \$2.5 billion. To put it another way, this will be yet another \$2.5 billion being injected into our economy, where it will be spent driving, up further demand. This is the inflationary cycle that we are in.

Let us take a moment to stop and think about that. I am certain that I am not alone in hearing from citizens who are facing monthly mortgage payment increases they cannot afford. The stress and anxiety this is causing to many Canadian families is severe. However, let us also recognize that not everyone is impacted by this. Many of those who are wealthy are not only not impacted; some are actually coming out ahead and earning more interest on their savings and investments.

However, some of the financially most vulnerable, often working families with good jobs and living in established neighbourhoods, are the hardest hit. Let us keep in mind that they did not create this situation, but they are certainly being disproportionately impacted by it.

What have we heard from the government until only recently? Let us harken back to June, just as this place was preparing for the summer break. My office and, I am confident, a large majority of other members' offices, were getting call after call from people struggling with \$2-a-litre gas, runaway grocery costs and rents. Conservative MPs, in question period after question period, were calling for the government to hear these calls and to act.

What did we get? We got a lecture by the finance minister on Bay Street, essentially telling our constituents that they never had it so good. The government tried to repackage its last two budgets as a so-called affordability plan, claiming that benefits were tied to inflation. I should note that the inflation was from last year and does not reflect the record high inflation of this year, so those CPI increases are from last year. It is a big shortfall that many are upset about. The minister claimed at the time that this was what was needed when clearly it was not.

Then what happened? Silence. There was so much silence that I have called it the "summer of silence", as the government appeared to shut down. Sure, more taxpayer-funded projects were being announced. They were announced almost daily, keeping the "Ottawa spends" Twitter account posting at a record pace, but what did the government do while Canadians saw more inflation records and higher interest rates? They saw nothing in response from their federal government. Believe me, I tried to look for statements with any recognition of what Canadians were going through.

What we can assume is that the Liberals spent the summer polling. I can only assume that when they came back, they did not like the numbers they were seeing, and that is why we are here today. Only now, after Conservatives have been banging on pots and pans about gas, groceries and rents, as well as increased mortgage costs, has the government finally conceded that it was wrong on inflation.

Do members remember that it was the Minister of Finance who claimed that deflation was the major concern and that the Conservatives had it all mixed up? Then when inflation was heading through the roof, the Liberals pretended that it was not. Wrong again. Then they said that their housing budget in the spring was actually an affordability plan, but it turned out that it did little for either. They were three strikes out.

While the government posted quarter after quarter of record revenues due to inflated prices, Canadians slipped further and further behind. When the Canadian public needed them, the only action they received was a government that acted as if it were uninterested, disconnected and distant. That is remarkable for a government that likes to say it has Canadians' backs. Here we are, months after the fact, discussing a payment that will not likely help those that it targets—students, persons with disabilities, pensioners and low-income families—until November or December, at best. How much suffering will happen before these payments finally arrive in the mail?

● (1635)

Inflation, it is said, is a silent tax that predominantly hurts the most vulnerable. I am sure any of the people who have spoken with me will tell us that is true, but what is also true is that the pain I speak of goes much further than just those targeted in Bill C-30. There are others who are also finding it harder and harder.

That list with the latest GDP projections downgraded our GDP for this year by a full percentage point. With growing unemployment and with new payroll and carbon taxes set to increase in the new year—and this before we take into account higher interest rates—there will be more "middle class and those seeking to join it" who will not be doing well.

Let me explain by returning back to Bill C-30, the bill that is essentially capped and fully phased out for those families making \$58,500, which includes the vast majority of working families who are being hit the hardest. I do not want to make my comments sound partisan for the sake of being partisan, but our banks are not partisan. Their chief economists are typically offering unbiased advice, and they are all clear that the government cannot continue to pour more fuel on this inflationary fire. The reason I reference government spending is that it is something within our control to deal with.

Let me provide another example of something we can control. We have all watched skyrocketing gas prices dramatically increase inflation. Of course, with so many of our goods being delivered to market through our supply chains, which are burning gasoline to do that, there is a serious compounding of higher gas prices. That makes everything more expensive. This is one lesson we learned clearly over these past months. That is precisely what a carbon tax does: It drives up the cost of fuel and, by extension, inflation.

I know some members will say that there are rebates. Here is the thing. For those like the Minister of Finance who live in a city like Toronto and do not own a car, I have no doubt they would come out ahead with the carbon tax rebates, but if they lived in a place like Hedley, B.C., in my riding, largely because it is the only place where you can find affordable housing, they would not come out ahead. Why? It is because Hedley has no hospital. It has no high school. It has no major grocery store or insurance agent. To access these services, they would need to either drive to Princeton, Keremeos or in some cases Penticton. That is true for so many rural municipalities across Canada. For them, carbon taxes are devastating. They do not treat people equally and they favour those who live in larger urban areas.

Why should Canadians be discriminated against because of their postal code? No one living in a rural community pays less income tax than a person living in Vancouver or Toronto, yet the federal Liberal government does not treat them equally. That is why our official opposition caucus will continue to call on this Liberal government to scrap the carbon tax. None of our major trading partners has it. It is time to recognize that.

We will also see an increase in payroll taxes in the new year. Both CPP and EI premiums will increase. This will result in more money coming to Ottawa and less money staying in the household incomes of Canadians. At a time of higher inflation, with crushing interest payments, this makes things worse, not better. That is why our opposition caucus has called on the current government to stop all tax increases. We know the Liberal government likes to say that it is not its fault, but there are other countries that did precisely as Canada did and have similar problems. In some cases, it is even worse.

None of this changes the fact that we have a serious affordability crisis here in Canada. We would not be here debating this small band-aid of a bill were that not the case. That is ultimately the problem. In this case, providing some of the GST they have paid back to them at such a challenging time is something we, as the official opposition, would support, no differently than we would have supported GST relief on gas and diesel. Unfortunately, that measure failed to win support, as it is ideologically against the NDP and Liberal desire to see higher gas prices here in Canada, regardless of what the benefits would be for the general population.

• (1640)

Earlier this week, Bank of Canada deputy governor Paul Beaudry said, in hindsight, governments and central banks should have withdrawn stimulus measures much earlier, as their economies recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic, which likely would have put a lid on inflation. They, of course, did not do this, but it is a clear admission from the Bank of Canada that the “always be spending” approach favoured by the Liberal government has played a huge role in how we got here. If we listen to most of the major banks, inflation is not something the Liberal government can simply spend its way out of, and I worry about that, because unlike previous Liberal governments, the present Liberal government and the Prime Minister seem to have no understanding that we cannot spend Canadians out of inflation.

Government Orders

We are told that we may be in this situation for potentially the next two years and that interest rates may have to go even higher, if the Liberal government continues to spend. That is a point I made earlier to the Minister of Tourism. Why did they not use the summer to actually do the hard work that was in the budget, where they said they had identified billions of dollars in potential savings through a policy review? Why did they not pare back that spending over the summer and then produce this bill, having done the hard work of trying to reduce inflation while helping Canadians?

However, they did not do that. They do not, like our leader, the member for Carleton, have a pay-as-we-go rule, where we are trying to make sure Canadians are getting maximum value for every dollar that is used and that it is to their benefit. Unfortunately, the government seems to only know one lever, and that is to spend.

There are Canadian households that are barely hanging on, and they cannot afford any higher interest rates, nor can they afford two years of more pain and suffering. I am certain that every member of this House has likely heard from citizens in dire straits right now. Do we listen to them? Do we listen to experts and central bankers who say to stop the spending, or do we continue to have the Prime Minister's Office dictate more never-ending spending to help fuel this inflationary fire?

Let us not forget that just two years ago the Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem said, “If you have got a mortgage or if you are considering making a major purchase...you can be confident as rates will be low for a long time.”

Some of the people who followed that advice in good faith are now in a dire financial situation. I do not say that to point fingers of blame, because that helps no one in this situation, and likely no one in this situation will be helped by the bill we are here debating today. I point this out because we need to recognize that many of the Canadians who worked hard, who followed the rules and did all of the right things are suffering right now, and the government needs to recognize that.

The latest headlines are saying that home ownership is on the decline. Many young Canadians I have spoken to have largely given up on home ownership. Their hope is not to own, but just to keep their heads above water. Paying down student debt, finding a safe rental and trying to raise a family while putting gas in their car and food on their table is difficult enough. They know the hard work, but under the current government they have lost hope. This crisis is real, and it affects some households all across Canada.

Government Orders

Before I close, I would like to share a thought. First of all, Canada's Conservatives, under the member for Carleton's leadership, will be supporting this bill. However, as we all know, while this bill would help some, a great many will be left behind. This is one of the challenges with government bills like this one. Inevitably the government picks the winners and the losers. In voting to support this bill we recognize that we will be helping some. However, I know in my riding for some of those who are most adversely impacted right now, not just by inflation but by crippling interest rates that will be increased by this bill, this bill would do nothing to help them. I think we all need to be critically aware of those who are still suffering and will not be helped by this bill.

• (1645)

Let us also bear in mind that those this bill intends to help will not receive help until November or December at the soonest. However, many people live in fear of higher interest rates for their mortgage or going to the grocery store and walking out with less and less, because they just cannot afford it. Who can blame them for these fears? The affordability crisis is real, and I am hopeful that all members in this place realize that it is more than a talking point.

Also, as people see less and less of themselves reflected in the government, they are looking more and more to my party to step up, to continue to be their voice, to remind the Liberals that more is not always better. A government that cannot do things like issue passports or resolve lineups at airports should stick to its knitting instead of constantly seeking to expand government. It needs to be reminded that government office is a duty where those around the cabinet table are there to serve Canadians and not the other way around, which is why Conservatives will support the bill: to offer tax relief, to serve Canadians who are hurting and to advocate for the ones who were left out by Bill C-30. It is a reality.

• (1650)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will start with a couple of things. First, I heard the member say that no other trading partner has a price on pollution or a "carbon tax" as he referred to it, which is not true. Fourteen out of 31 of the OECD countries do tax pollution, including Japan, the United Kingdom and France.

The member also talked at great length about the price on pollution or a carbon tax in B.C. However, my understanding is that B.C. has its own carbon tax. Indeed, B.C. is not utilizing the carbon tax that is imposed, because it chose to do its own model, which was the premise of this entire exercise of pricing pollution, so the member is slightly perhaps misleading by making that comment.

Finally, at the beginning of the member's speech, he talked about the supports that would be put in place as a result of the bill, but that perhaps spending this money would add further to inflation. I do not reject the economic theory behind that. I recognize that he said he is going to be supporting the bill, but is he suggesting that we just abandon people because if we spend any new money on them we are just adding to inflation? Is his suggestion that, because it will contribute to inflation, we should just not spend money on people?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I will start with the last question the member opposite had and see if I have time for the other ones.

First of all, in a question earlier to the Minister of Tourism during his speech, I asked specifically why the government did not do the hard work within the budget that was announced this year. The Liberals said that they would have billions of dollars from a policy review to look at curbing back spending. They could have easily, dollar for dollar, gone through these other programs to find things that are either wasteful or no longer necessary and actually put forward a plan to say, "Look, we are going to be reducing the cost of government here while we put forward this GST tax relief for Canadians to help them." That would have actually lessened or even alleviated the inflationary concerns regarding this bill, but they do not do the hard work.

This government is built to spend with this "always be spending" Prime Minister and this "always be spending" finance minister. This is the challenge we have here: The environment in which they make policy decisions is no longer 2015. They need to do better when it comes to doing these things. This is not a balanced way to be helping people. A proper way would be to find balance and savings.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague on his speech. I am fortunate to serve with him on the Standing Committee on Finance.

The government has announced three measures to fight inflation: the payment of GST refunds under Bill C-30, and dental benefits and rental assistance under Bill C-31.

My colleague was with me for the briefing on Bill C-30, and it went well. However, members of the House were not briefed on Bill C-31 until well after journalists were.

I would like to my colleague to share his thoughts on that. Does he think that the government lacks respect for the members of the House?

Again with regard to Bill C-31, does my colleague agree that we should ask the government to split the bill into two separate ones, since dental benefits and rental assistance are two very different types of measures?

• (1655)

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, this government definitely lacks respect for Parliament and parliamentarians. That is true.

The problem is that the government believes that the other parties are not important. It uses the media for its own purposes. It is important for all parliamentarians that the government treat all members with a modicum of respect. I would encourage the government to think about that.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, when I was listening to the member's speech, I heard him lament that this GST credit is going to be coming too late, not for the next couple of months. On that point I agree. I think this should have come much sooner. We know the inflationary pressure affecting families across the country started much earlier in the year and families have been suffering for too long.

I am puzzled, because if the member feels that these interventions should have come sooner, why did he and his party join with the Liberals in May to vote against the NDP? Why did he not support New Democrats in redirecting that into benefits to help families, such as a doubling of the GST credit? We called for this back in May and he voted against it back then.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I think my fellow British Columbian answered his own question. The New Democrats tend to want too many things connected to too many other things. They are ideologically against the oil and gas sector, despite its being one of the chief sources of green technologies and despite its helping pay for hospitals and other important social services. They are ideologically opposed to that.

Conservatives look at every single request, whether it comes from the government or through a motion, and we look to see what is in the best interests of Canadians. Today we have seen that this is important to help a small targeted group of the population that we know is hurting. Inflation, as I said, is a silent tax that particularly harms the most vulnerable, but this is not supporting broad-based things like reducing GST at the pumps.

I will also remind the member that he had the opportunity to support that and did not. When his constituents ask him what kinds of things he has done for people that are outside of this bill, I would ask him to look in the mirror and say that he voted against giving people a break at the pumps because he is ideologically against oil and gas and the utilization of fossil fuels. This cuts both—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would ask the shadow minister of finance if he believes these tax credits will be vaporized by the ever-increasing inflation and cost of living that Canadians are facing now and into the future.

Has he done some research and has he heard anyone say that these cheques coming at the end of the year are going to offset what people would be paying for in the long term and what they have been paying for years now in inflation and the carbon tax? Especially on January 1 with the increases in payroll taxes and on April 1 with the increase in the carbon tax, are these cheques going to help or is it just going to be too little too late?

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• (1700)

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, that is a great question. I thank my colleague for his work, standing up for his constituents.

First, I hope that the Prime Minister can avoid wanting to act as Santa Claus and handing out these kinds of cheques himself during that time. That is just a bit of a joke.

Getting to the issue, this one-time help, which Conservatives support, is welcome tax relief for families, which would be around \$467. The average family of four is now spending over \$1,200 more each year to put food on the table, not to mention the rising costs of heat, gasoline and rent. In British Columbia, where we have tons of natural gas, we are seeing natural gas prices go up. We are seeing, right now, that people cannot get by. If it is a cold winter, it will be really difficult, especially for those areas that do not have access to things like natural gas.

This is only a small piece. It is already going to be up against so much inflation in groceries, gas prices and home heating.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would ask for the consent of the House to share my time with my esteemed colleague, the member for Trois-Rivières.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, to address inflation, Bill C-30 proposes an additional GST rebate for the less fortunate. It is a good measure. We have been asking for this for quite some time, and we will be voting for it. It is good, but it is long overdue.

This measure was announced at the same time as the measures introduced in Bill C-31, namely rent relief and dental insurance. We support those measures in principle as well, but I feel the need to scold the government here. Bill C-31 is really poorly constructed. It is sloppy. It is embarrassing that Parliament is considering something so poorly drafted, and I am choosing my words carefully.

With respect to rent relief, we are concerned that Quebeckers will not get their fair share because it is a supplement to the Canada housing benefit, which no one in Quebec receives. Quebec has had its own program since 1997, so we have the right to opt out with compensation. Our program is more generous, but the eligibility requirements are completely different. However, Bill C-31 makes no mention of it. Once again, the government has forgotten that Quebec exists. There is no talk of aligning the two. It is embarrassing. It is as though the bill was written on the back of a napkin.

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The same is true of the so-called dental insurance. If the parents pay any fees for a child who is 11 or under, then Ottawa will send them a big cheque. The programs are not properly aligned. What is worse, in Quebec, dental care is covered for children under the age of 10. People in Quebec are already paying for insurance. Once again, the government did not harmonize the programs, except to say that, if the services are covered by Quebec, then Ottawa will not pay and will not compensate Quebec for the cost of its insurance. However, if the parents pay for a service that is not covered, then they are entitled to a big cheque, even if Quebec is already covering most of the costs.

How much is Quebec being penalized? The government is not saying. This is sloppy work. The bill is badly written. It seems as though the department did not even calculate the cost of all this. All it did was reuse, dollar for dollar, the numbers that the Parliamentary Budget Officer came up with and the work that he did when he costed the NDP's proposal.

Once again, this shameful government forgot that Quebec exists. Once again, there is no alignment. This bill could be called "how to turn good principles into bad legislation" or "Quebec does not exist". I say to the government, way to go. To add insult to injury, this government chose to brief journalists on this bill long before it briefed parliamentarians. This government is showing a serious lack of respect for the House.

I now want to talk a little about inflation. There are some well-known factors driving the surge in prices, such as changes in demand during and after the pandemic; supply chain problems and bottlenecks in response to fluctuating demand and health measures; China's COVID-zero policy, which is drastically disrupting supply lines and is a good example of the health measures I mentioned; the terrible war in Ukraine, which we all hope will come to an end soon; the radical transformation of the labour market and what is being referred to in the U.S. as the great resignation; the ongoing housing shortage; and natural disasters associated with climate change that are also having an impact on the global economy.

All of these factors have significantly affected the economy both here and abroad, and prices have skyrocketed. In a number of sectors, economic abundance has given way to Soviet-style scarcity.

We hope to be able to return to some semblance of normalcy, especially if we get serious about tackling climate change. In the meantime, however, families, people, businesses and farmers are bearing the brunt of this overall imbalance. The world is struggling, and there is no easy solution.

What can be done?

In the short term, we must support the most vulnerable with measures such as those set out in Bill C-30. We should also support the hardest-hit sectors to ensure that they get through this imbalance. I am thinking of our farmers, for example. In the longer term, we must help make our economies more resilient. With oil and gas prices rising, we must support the development of the green economy.

Unfortunately, there is no quick fix for the type of imbalance we are currently experiencing. Keynes proposed effective tools to deal with crises in demand, but not crises in supply.

In light of this imbalance caused by multiple factors, how long will inflation last? It is difficult to say. The central bank has chosen to get out the heavy artillery to fight inflation. It wants to clamp down on inflation expectations. Here is its reasoning. Once expectations of higher inflation become entrenched in the economy, everyone tries to raise their prices to compensate. That creates a snowball effect. In other words, inflation expectations cause inflation.

• (1705)

It is easy to fall into this vicious cycle. The Bank of Canada, like the U.S. Federal Reserve, the Fed, wants to minimize that risk, even if it means seriously slowing the economy or even helping trigger a recession. Central banks believe that it will then be easier to stimulate the economy to support growth as needed. They are still traumatized by the inflationary episodes of the 1970s and 1980s.

Inflation is still high, but there are signs it is stabilizing. We appear to be emerging from this period of overall imbalance, at least in some sectors, but not because of monetary policy, which is slow to bring about change.

Is the central bank's policy too aggressive? Possibly.

Some economists suggest waiting a little longer to see how the economy will respond to this interest rate hike. Nobody can say for sure where lies the sweet spot between fighting inflation and avoiding recession. The Bank of Canada, again inspired by the Fed, apparently prefers to fight inflation. Over the next few months, we will see if it made the right choice. Meanwhile, economic conditions remain uncertain.

This is a difficult situation for many people, as I said. It is important to adopt policies aimed at those who are struggling the most and to implement them in the context of the Bank of Canada's monetary policy. We also need to promote structural measures, including supports for social housing and measures to address the labour shortage. On that point, I do not understand why the government still has not introduced any tax breaks to lure retirees back to work.

I want to talk briefly about the situation in developing countries. It is downright catastrophic, and Canada and other rich countries must do a better job of supporting them. On top of food shortages, developing countries face high levels of public debt, as international institutions encouraged them to take on debt during the pandemic. Most of their imports and loans are in U.S. dollars. However, in the context of global uncertainty, the value of the greenback has soared, serving as a hedge and reducing the purchasing power of these countries. The energy crisis is also taking a toll. Lastly, China is drawing back from doing business with developing countries due to its own economic difficulties.

That is why wealthy countries need to come together quickly to support these countries in order to avoid a cascading series of crises in these emerging economies. Everyone will be affected. We have to prevent that from happening.

Let us also invest in the green transition. We are facing a serious crisis, and we need to act urgently.

[English]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it was refreshing to hear a detailed economic presentation from the hon. colleague across the way, and one that is not putting forth simple answers.

The hon. member mentioned the targeted programs trying to do one-time transfers to people who are getting hurt the worst in a way that will not stimulate inflation, and that balance is very difficult for us to make and for the Bank of Canada to make in conjunction with us. The constrained supply cycle that we are in right now is one that is unusual for us to deal with.

Could the hon. member comment on how we need to be nimble in the months ahead, knowing that we could be facing higher unemployment and we could also be facing other challenges on the road ahead?

• (1710)

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Guelph for his comments and his question. I quite agree with the issues he raised.

The global economic outlook is uncertain, especially considering the central banks' fight against inflation and the entire context that I referred to. Most economists expect there will be a recession in Europe, especially with the war in Ukraine, which is having serious consequences there. It will be very difficult to get out of. China is also experiencing a major economic slowdown. The unemployment rate among young people is especially high in the major cities. It is very concerning because China is still the workshop of the world, or at least a major production centre. Then there is Canada and the United States. What will happen? We expect a slowdown. The latest figures are less encouraging.

In the meantime, I believe that the labour market is going through a transformation, and comparing current job market statistics with the ones from a few years ago is tough. We have to be very alert and careful for the next steps.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague, whom I greatly respect, spoke at length about Bill C-31. However, we are supposed to be debating Bill C-30, which was introduced thanks to the hard work of the NDP. This bill will put an average of \$500 into the pockets of Canadians who are struggling to cope with inflation. This measure will help around 12 million Canadians.

Bill C-31 will provide dental care for all families with children under 12 and will help people who are renters. We are talking about nearly two million Canadians. The NDP had a hand in getting both of these bills introduced.

My colleague spoke about Bill C-31 and we are currently debating Bill C-30. I have a simple question: Which of the two NDP bills does he like best?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I want to remind my hon. colleague that bills are introduced by the government. That is why I chided the government and not the NDP. Bill C-30 is well written. It is a few pages long and everything is clear. We support

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that bill. The Bloc Québécois was already asking the government last fall to increase the GST/HST credit to fight inflation, so we are very happy to see that.

Bill C-31 provides for rental assistance. As it now stands, people in Quebec will not be entitled to that assistance because Quebec has its own program, and the government did not think to harmonize with the Quebec program. The bill is therefore poorly drafted when it comes to rental assistance.

The same is true for dental care because Quebec has insurance for children aged nine and under. Bill C-31 proposes measures for children aged 11 and under, and again there was no harmonization with the Quebec program. The government cut corners and that is what we are criticizing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I must interrupt the member to let a member ask another question.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Joliette for his speech.

I completely agree with the member for Guelph. It is good to reflect with him on ideas that are slightly more complex and on a nuanced approach. These are not very simple issues and it is difficult because of the different challenges, which are complex. For example, we have the war in Ukraine, Canada's current situation, and issues related to the pandemic, as well as the impact of climate change and the climate emergency on our economy and economies around the world.

I want to ask my colleague from Joliette and the Bloc Québécois what they think of the idea of providing a universal guaranteed livable income to everyone to protect all Canadians from these complex problems.

• (1715)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, who has been a very active member of the Standing Committee on Finance since the beginning of the parliamentary session.

We find the idea of a universal guaranteed livable income interesting, because everyone would have the right to it. That said, we have to determine how it can be applied, particularly in the context of federalism, under which Ottawa manages some programs and Quebec manages others. They are never able to get along. At least, that is what we see with health and infrastructure, for example.

There are a number of challenges, and we often say that it would be easier for Quebec to have its own income by becoming independent than to negotiate it within this federation.

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, as this is my first speech of the new parliamentary session, I would like to salute the people of Trois-Rivières.

Bill C-30 offers up a temporary measure, a brief respite. Respite is relief from suffering or a delay in the carrying out of something unpleasant.

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I do appreciate the initiative, but I have to say it is tepid and clearly inadequate under the circumstances. I also want to point out, as was mentioned before, that this measure appeared in the Bloc Québécois's budget expectations last spring. We knew then that people would be suffering because of the economic situation.

I want to come back to the word “respite”. Unfortunately, this relief will not come right away. Despite what the bill suggests, we know that the machinery of government will not be able to get it done until November or December. It is going to take some time. I think the government has to treat people fairly in this.

Why bring in such a measure? The Liberals like to talk about treating everyone fairly. When we talk about fair treatment, we mean treatment that is appropriate to the situation. We tend to call this equity. Equity is about recognizing what each individual needs. It means giving more to one person and less to another, depending on the circumstances. It is very different from equality, where everyone is treated the same regardless of economic status, for example.

It is a fair assessment of what each individual is entitled to, but who is “each individual”? It is of course the most vulnerable, those who are struggling the most. I immediately think of seniors who are on a fixed income, while their expenses keep increasing. What does it mean to live on a fixed income? It means no longer having a choice. If having a choice denotes wealth, having no choice is a sign of poverty.

Even though our seniors live in a rich country, it means being forced to choose between getting enough to eat or heating their homes. In short, they are being forced to live in or near poverty. We must ensure that seniors can live in dignity.

Quebec seniors are suffering indescribable discrimination at the hands of the Liberal government, which is denying them fair and equitable treatment. Doubling the GST temporarily is good, but the government should also stop reducing the guaranteed income supplement for seniors between 65 and 75. That is what I hear when I walk around Trois-Rivières and talk to Mireille or Roger, who say, “Where is the justice? I am 68 and I cannot get enough to eat”.

Hearing things like that breaks my heart. In a supposedly wealthy country, it is shameful. Equity means being able to adapt to each person's situation. It means adjusting. When we draw a line between two points, we often draw a straight line and say that it is the shortest path, but in society, not everything is the product of a straight line. Some things are near the line or outside the line. Equity will adapt. I believe that government measures should also adapt to different situations to achieve a greater degree of fairness.

Equity means fairly determining what everyone deserves. Who is “everyone”? Let us not forget low-income families. They cannot accept the response that the Minister of Finance keeps repeating every day, like a mantra, namely that things are better here than elsewhere.

Low-income families do not live in Australia or Japan. They live in Trois-Rivières, Saint-Liguori or Gaspé. Low-income families are vulnerable. I am certain no one will be surprised to hear that the word “vulnerable” comes from the Latin word *vulnerabilis*, which means “one who can be hurt”. Vulnerability is the potential to be

hurt. Doubling the GST benefits these families for a little while, but we do not know for how long. Plus, it is not enough. The price of housing, for example, keeps going up, and inflation rose to 7.6% in July.

I think everyone will agree that we need to help the most vulnerable, the hardest hit. To paraphrase Gandhi, the greatness of a nation can be judged by how it treats its weakest members.

It is time to act like a great nation if we want to claim that title. More social and community housing must be built. The housing shortage in Trois-Rivières is unacceptable. The vacancy rate is less than 1%. The population is increasing but the housing stock is not keeping up. That is a recipe for poverty.

● (1720)

For that reason, in addition to temporarily doubling the GST, the federal government should permanently earmark 1% of its revenue to be transferred to Quebec, which could add the funds to its own housing programs.

That is not all. When we claim to be a great nation, we must do more. I believe that we must preserve the independence of the central bank, seriously address the labour shortage, improve productivity, make fragile supply chains stronger, strengthen the competition regime, and so on and so forth. These measures are in fact a statement that it is imperative that we reclaim our sovereign authority to provide protection. In short, it is about being decent.

We seldom hear the word “decency”. We hear the word “indecent” more often. What is decency? In addition to ending suffering, which means bringing respite, we must not forget that decency means doing good, acting in a proportionate manner and adapting to a situation to improve life. It is the opposite of indecency.

The government is not a program manager. I often say that the government needs to act as a government, or in other words, it needs to take the helm and steer, not act as a manager that is only responsible for dealing with problems. That is diligent governance.

I simply want to say that the government needs to start walking the talk. The Bloc will support the bill, but it has some concerns.

[English]

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know the Prime Minister does not like to think about monetary policy. I know the members of the Bloc do care about money policy because I have discussed monetary policy with some of them.

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The reality is that it is generally accepted that, when the money supply is increased, it causes inflation. I am not an economist, so do not take it from me, but the reality is that just two days ago, in a speech, Mr. Beaudry, the deputy governor of the Bank of Canada, said that in hindsight, governments and central banks should have actually withdrawn stimulus measures earlier to keep a lid on inflation.

I am asking, after \$400 billion in stimulus spending over the last two years, why would the Bloc agree to throw fuel on the fire of inflation? The people of Quebec, just like all of the people of Canada, are suffering from inflation. These benefits will be eaten up by additional inflation before they have had any effect.

I would appreciate an answer to that question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley for his question.

He started by saying that he is not an economist. I am not an economist either. I am a philosopher. I can talk to the House about decency and indecency, and the duty to protect, but I will leave it up to my colleague from Joliette, who does great work, to talk about monetary policy.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I look at today's legislation as relief for millions of Canadians. It is going to have a very positive impact on the issue of inflation. I would note, even though we recognize that inflation affects us all, it affects some more than others.

One of the things that I think is missing in the debate is the fact that, when we compare Canada to the rest of the world, our inflation rate is doing quite well. That does not mean we should ignore it. It is the reason it is important that we take measures, such as this legislation, to provide direct relief and money to support Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Would the member not agree that is a good reason for this bill, and that members should all be supporting it?

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I think that the member for Winnipeg North basically just answered the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley's question.

Our citizens do not live outside the country. They live here. We need to have the decency to put caring for people and their health ahead of any considerations pertaining strictly to inflation. It does not do any good to control inflation if people are starving to death.

Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ): Madam Speaker, I just want to take a moment to share the concerns of my constituents in Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix about the current labour shortage. I very much appreciated the speech from my colleague from Trois-Rivières, who stressed the importance of taking care of seniors and the unemployed.

In my colleague's opinion, how can Bill C-30 help retain workers in regional markets, for instance in the tourism sector, and help improve the living conditions of seniors who could return to work, perhaps even part time, in order to participate in the economy?

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, the reality is complex. I believe that incentives could and should be introduced. Doubling the GST credit is a good start. However, I think tax benefits are needed for people returning to the labour market. Certain monetary incentives, particularly on the tax front, could help address this problem.

I am not an economist, but I know that something needs to be done.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in the debate today on Bill C-30.

I am in Winnipeg now. I was in Ottawa as recently as this morning. Earlier this week, for the first time in the 10 years I have lived here, a couple of seniors set up camp in Park Circle here in Transcona, which is where we have our cenotaph. The Main Street Project has since visited, and the seniors have moved on from the park. I can certainly appreciate the concerns residents had and why they may not want somebody living in the park across the street from their houses, but I could not find it in my heart to be angry, because they are a couple of seniors who no longer have a place to live.

We have heard stories like this, and we are hearing more of them. People are seeing the effects of higher prices, and particularly higher housing prices, on people in their communities. There are folks who are camping out in bus shelters because they have nowhere else to turn. We are in this really challenging moment, challenging to be sure for the Canadians who are experiencing this directly and do not have a place to sleep, as well as for those who are now seeing people living in their communities in ways they never imagined they would and wondering what that means, not only for those folks, but also for themselves and their safety, because we know when people are desperate it sometimes results in some unfortunate behaviour that has an affect on the wider community.

People are experiencing this in all sorts of ways. At the grocery store, there are folks putting things back on the shelves or changing what they buy in order to change some of their family's habits to conform better to the realities of budgeting in the inflationary period we are experiencing. Even though, from a public health point of view, we are moving further away from the peak pandemic point, the fact of the matter is that our economy is still very much affected by the pandemic. We have not come back yet. That is one of the reasons people need help.

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Members, and Canadians who have been listening to the news, will know there has been a lot of debate in this place about this moment of inflation and what the causes are. There was a good article published by some economists recently that essentially said that the main forces of inflation are energy prices, housing prices and grocery prices. When we think about the role that energy, housing and food play in our lives, if those are the things going up in price, we can imagine people really feel that in their budget.

There is no real alternative. We cannot choose not to have a roof over our head. We can end up in a situation where we do not have a roof over our head, but nobody is choosing to live on the street as a first option. We cannot choose not to eat. We cannot choose not to heat our home in the winter months in Canada, if we are lucky enough to have one. That is why people are feeling the squeeze. It is because the costs of the things we cannot do without continue to rise.

There are those in this place, particularly the new leader of the Conservative Party, who would have everyone believe that somehow this is simply the fault of big-spending governments, and if government would just get out of the way the free market would step in to provide housing for the homeless, provide affordable food for those who need it and cannot pay for it, or provide energy at a fairer price. I would call on Canadians to think hard about that line and the bill of goods trying to be sold to them by this new leader of the Conservative Party.

We all know that the oil and gas companies have not had the best interests of consumers at heart for a long time. That is not a news flash. Anyone who has filled up their car to go out to the lake on a long weekend knows that oil and gas companies have been there to gouge Canadians with every possible excuse. There are also some really challenging reasons out there in the world right now. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine is just one that has caused some real supply issues in the oil and gas sector. We can bet they used that as an excuse to raise their prices, not because the gas currently in the tanks at gas stations got any more expensive or they had to retroactively pay a premium for it, but because of speculation about future oil and gas markets.

• (1730)

Really, it is just an opportunity to make more money now, and we are seeing that in the bottom line of oil and gas companies that are logging record profits. This is not just record revenue, but record profit, which means what they are taking home and giving to their rich CEOs, investors and board members is much more than it has ever been.

They are making that money. That money is not falling from the sky. That money is not coming from nowhere either. That money is coming directly out of the pockets of Canadians who need to pay for gas at the pumps to get to work, do the things they need to do in their lives and heat their homes.

In other jurisdictions, we are seeing governments that are willing to act. We have seen it in the United Kingdom, where there is a windfall profit tax levied on oil and gas companies to take back some of the additional profit those companies are making in these difficult circumstances and to invest that back in people.

That is just one example of a jurisdiction that recognizes what is going on is not simply government largesse driving inflation. It recognizes that corporate greed is playing a real role in driving that as well. Those profits being logged are coming out of the pockets of citizens, and they can be taken back to be reinvested in citizens, as we must do if we are going to keep our communities safe, our neighbours housed and make sure kids have a proper breakfast and lunch when they go to school so they can learn what they need to learn to become productive members of society and to enrich their own lives in all the ways a good education will do.

We do not hear outrage from the Conservative leader about that extra profit on the part of oil and gas companies. We do not hear him admonishing those companies for taking this moment as an opportunity to pad their pockets.

When we think about housing, which is another major driver of inflation right now, the new leader of the Conservative Party would have us believe that somehow this problem was created in the last two years. He would have us believe that somehow the liquidity the government made available to banks created it.

People talk about pandemic benefits and how they should have been wrapped up and how they drove inflation. People who normally might have made \$4,000 or \$5,000 a month were living on \$2,000, and we are supposed to believe that was inflationary. That is ridiculous. I have said that many times in this place, and I will continue to say it.

If there is anything that actually caused inflationary pressure from the government's spending package, it would be these two things. One, and this one drives me nuts, is the wage subsidy program, which we know many companies benefited from and made extraordinary profits from at the same time. This is something that never ought to have happened. They should not have been allowed to take from the wage subsidy pot while they were logging huge profits, and there should have been a mechanism for paying some of that back if they were making extraordinary profits.

When we talk about an excess profit tax, this is part of what we are talking about. It is one of the reasons we think it is just and good to tax excess profits, because in some cases those excess profits were a function of public spending and went to rich CEOs, their buddies and investors, and it should not have. It never should have come out of the public purse for that purpose. That money was for companies to pass directly on to their employees to run their businesses as usual, and not to make extraordinary profits.

In some cases, that did happen. In many cases it happened, and that is good. It is something we called for and supported. What we did not support was it being abused, and from the beginning we said the government needed to have a mechanism to make sure it was not abused. There was no concern from the government to get that piece of the puzzle right, and there were really no proactive solutions proposed at the time by the Conservatives either to make that happen. There is certainly some frustration there.

Another place where there was a lot of public spending, and CERB and the wage subsidy public spending paled in comparison to what was spent on this, was the liquidity that was made available to major banks on day one.

• (1735)

That approach was also taken in the 2008 recession by the Conservative government. The Conservative government, on which, incidentally, the new leader of the Conservative Party sat at the cabinet table, also granted a huge amount of liquidity to banks. If that made investors feel more bold or made banks willing to lend more, there is a case to be made that it contributed to the acceleration of housing price increases, which was already off the chain long before the pandemic.

How did that happen? I know people do not always like a history lesson, but to really understand what happened, the fact is that it goes back to the mid-nineties when the Liberal government of the day cut the national housing strategy. It did not reduce it but got rid of it. That strategy was producing somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20,000 to 30,000 units of affordable or social housing every year, where rent was actually geared to income. That went on, and it meant that we did not get any more meaningful injections of affordable or social housing supply. It was left to the market. That is what happened in the nineties.

We hear the leader of the Conservative Party say to let the free market reign and people will have housing, as if there are a bunch of developers just waiting to give housing to people who cannot afford it. He says they are not going to do it now, but when the government gets out of the way, developers will discover their generosity. It is such a ridiculous story. I do not even know how people can listen to it, let alone how much it gets repeated, not just in this place but in the media, as if it is something that could possibly happen.

The only time we have made progress as a society in successfully housing people who do not have the money to pay market rates to own their own home has been when there have been ambitious, targeted, non-market strategies led by government. We have all benefited from those strategies. We have benefited by not having people live in our bus shelters. We have benefited by not having the effects of homelessness spill over into our emergency rooms and our prisons. We have benefited by not having to pay the cost of having people so destitute that they have nowhere else to turn. That is why it is so important that government gets back in the business of building housing.

This is not just about cities issuing permits to developers. There is such a need across an entire spectrum of types of housing that we absolutely need a plan and need non-market housing solutions. Whether those are co-ops, government owned and operated or rent-geared-to-income suites, we need to build far more housing.

Government Orders

Of course, it was not just in the nineties that this happened. The new leader of the Conservative Party was also part of the government that gave out operating grants. This was money the federal government gave to organizations that were running social housing so that people could pay rent that was a percentage of their income, usually between 25% and 30% of their income, whatever their income was. The federal government gave money to organizations that for 40 years successfully ran those operations and housed people who never could have afforded to live in rental housing at market rates. When this came up, the current leader of the Conservative Party was at the table when that government decided not to renew those operating grants.

In the last seven or more years now, unfortunately, the current Liberal government, despite running on a promise to do something about this, never really did. We have seen these affordable units come up, and the people who have been managing buildings for 40 years say they cannot manage on the model that they used to because they do not have the operating grants anymore. That is how they could offer rent at below market rates. Market rates are meant to cover costs and have some profit margin. If we want to have deeply affordable units that are actually geared to people's income, that money has to come from somewhere and it came from those operating grants.

The Conservative government of the day, with the member for Carleton sitting at the table, decided that it would not renew those operating grants, so these buildings are not sustainable now. They are going out on the market, and big developers are snatching them up, renovating the suites and evicting the tenants who were there before because they are jacking up the rent. That is how we end up with people camping out in bus shelters and setting up camp in parks. I beseech Canadians who are outraged to see that to carry their outrage past being mad about the problem.

• (1740)

That is what the new leader of the Conservative Party is selling. He is selling a lot of rage, and some of it is justified. I am mad about a lot of things, but we are not going to fix those things unless we focus on the solutions, and not try to pretend that every problem somehow comes from government when there are clearly a whole lot of actors in the economy with real power and real self-interested motives. They are not those we can trust to fix the problem, because they are deliberately blind to part of the problem.

Government Orders

Inflation is a great example, because as studies out there show, about 25% of the current inflation is actually attributable to increased profits. Price gouging is going on. It is a real thing. We would not know it listening to the member for Carleton. We would not know it listening to the government, which also, incidentally, is not acting the way it should. That is why we have been pushing it to take the tax on excess profits it has announced for banks and insurance companies and apply that to oil and gas companies, big box stores and others that profited hugely during the pandemic and continue to make record profits despite the hardship that so many Canadians are facing.

Doubling the GST tax credit is a way to try to get help to some of the people who really need it the most. We are talking about 12 million Canadians. That is a lot of people who receive the GST tax credit. They are going to see some kind of relief to help with these increases in costs. However, it is not going to be enough on its own, and it should have come a lot sooner.

This is something the New Democrats have been calling for, and for well over six months as inflation began to really take hold and we saw that it was not going to go away. We wanted a way to get help to people and also wanted a way to get help to people that would not drive more inflation. The problem, again, with the new Conservative leader is that any time we talk about having a plan to help people, he says it is just going to drive up inflation, and that is not true. There are certain ways the government could try to help and end up driving up inflation, but when we are serious about it and look at what is actually going on in the economy and at what the potential solutions are, there are ways. Doubling the GST tax credit is one of those ways.

This is why the New Democrats believed that was an important immediate step the government could take. Over six months later, here we are and the Liberals have finally seen reason and accepted that there is a need for action. However, as usual, it is a little slow, just as it was too slow for many seniors who were seeing their GIS clawed back. They had the audacity to accept the government at its word and apply to the CERB program they qualified for when they lost their jobs during the pandemic and needed the supplementary income. They then saw their incomes clawed back the following year.

We could see it from July 2020. It was coming like a slow train wreck. The government knew about it and did not act on it, and I think it knew as early as May 2021. Members will forgive me if I am wrong, as it was a little while ago and a lot of water has passed under the bridge, but I believe that to be the case. It was not until this year that they finally implemented a solution for that. Of course, we know that unfortunately some seniors took their lives in the meantime because they could not see a future for themselves and could not contemplate pitching a tent in a park and living there in the winter in Winnipeg in January.

This is a government that I think has been far too slow to act when it comes to helping people. However, there are solutions if we are intentional and if we do not rule out the very real and positive role that the public sector can play not just in times of need, but in structuring our economy so that we do not find ourselves in these kinds of crises, whether it is the housing crisis or other ones.

Employment insurance is something I love to talk about. Perhaps I will get a chance to do so during questions and answers. The government is reverting to the old EI system, even though that was always a disaster. The new system has been working better, although it is not great, but that is another place where the planning has not been put in place. Instead, we have actually gotten a lot of what the member for Carleton calls for, which is a hands-off attitude from the government and pretty well letting the market reign when it comes to these things. That is part of how we got here and that is why we need a different approach. This is a small down payment. Let us get it done quickly.

• (1745)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to what the member was saying, particularly when he was talking about housing. A lot has been coming from the other side of the House on this, particularly from the Leader of the Opposition, who talked about gatekeepers. He seems to focus a lot on these gatekeepers at the municipal level that are preventing development from happening, as if that is the golden ticket to the housing crisis we have now. I do not believe it is, and I am curious if the member can comment on that.

I would also like to hear the member's thoughts on co-operative housing. He mentioned it in his speech and offered it as one solution. It is a solution that, at least as I have seen in my riding, can be very effective at getting tenants and those who are in co-operatives to genuinely participate in the organization. It becomes a sense of pride and ownership to participate in that.

I wonder if he could comment on whether or not that is his preferred model of affordable housing when it is being built or if he envisions something different.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, one of the points I was trying to make and I hope came across is that the member for Carleton has been a gatekeeper himself. When an important decision came up about maintaining affordable and social housing and continuing to make it available for people who needed it and who otherwise would be on the street, he chose to cut government funding to those very housing projects and allow big economic players to swoop in, buy those units, renovate and evict, or renovict, those tenants, jack up the rent and make a killing. That is part of the culture that has only accelerated in the pandemic years.

We know what this guy is like. We saw what he did when he had his hand on the lever. He decided to let those big players in to essentially dine out on the housing that had been built in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and make huge profits instead of preserving that housing for the people it was built for who actually needed it.

I would be happy to talk a little about co-operative housing another time. I see the Speaker is anxious to get to the next question.

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• (1750)

The Deputy Speaker: It is just me being the keeper of the gate.

The hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am so grateful for that very insightful speech from the NDP member, and here is why. NDP members are more excited to talk about our new Conservative leader than they are about anything else, including their relationship with the Liberal government. I think I know why. We are back from a summer around the riding, and I think folks in Elmwood—Transcona, people in Timmins and people on Vancouver Island sent NDP members a little message this summer to say they do not like the relationship they have with the Liberal government. Their policies are driving inflation, and what we are continuing to see is the same thing. If the member wants to talk about the new Conservative leader, I am happy to do so as well.

The question for the member, then, to put it on the record, is about our clear message this week. Payroll taxes are going to be going up, taking more off people's paycheques January 1. The carbon tax is going up April 1, and it is scheduled to triple. If the member wants to control inflation and wants to help people with their financial budgets, does he agree with us and with no new tax increases?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am excited to talk about the new Conservative leader because I think that as people get to know him, they will come to feel about him as I do.

A clue was in the member's question, actually, when he talked about payroll taxes. What Canadians should know is that when the member says "payroll tax" what he means is their pension. When we are talking about increases to the Canada pension plan so that Canadians can have a decent retirement, the Conservatives call it a "payroll tax".

People should know that somebody who thinks their pension is a payroll tax instead of what people actually work for and expect to bank on in their retirement is someone who is not in their corner and cannot be trusted to manage the affairs of the country. That is what people should know, and that is why I will keep talking about the new leader of the Conservative Party until everybody in Canada knows it.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would also like to hear his thoughts on the government's bad habit of implementing a policy and then systematically forgetting to coordinate with Quebec. In particular, I would like to hear his thoughts on how a government can claim to govern for all Canadians while forgetting 23% of the population.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question.

One other great example of this is the whole issue of the increase to old age security.

Seniors really need an increase to their fixed pension benefits, especially these days. The government thinks that the rising costs putting serious pressure on the budgets of Canadians and seniors in Canada affect only seniors 75 and over. The members of the Bloc

Québécois and the NDP know that this is not true. All seniors across the country are under a lot of pressure, both in Quebec and in the rest of Canada, so the government needs to increase old age security for all seniors.

• (1755)

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a very good moment for New Democrats when we can finally talk about the issues that most Canadians are already experiencing at the pumps or in the grocery stores, and that is corporate greed.

I heard the member speak a bit about that, which I would like him to elaborate on, but I will give some facts. Pasta has increased 30%, coffee 20%, oranges 16% and bread 16%, and there has been \$3.5 billion in profits by big grocery stores. The NDP is the only party talking about the real cost of inflation, which is corporate greed.

Would the member please elaborate on how this cost of corporate greed is affecting Canadians in his riding?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the \$3.5 billion is money that comes out of the pockets of Canadians, just as any tax paid to the government comes out of the pockets of Canadians. When we see that kind of extraordinary increase in profit that goes hand in hand with price increases, then we have to know that a significant amount of that price increase is not just to make up for increased supply costs, but in fact is companies taking advantage of a difficult situation in order to charge more for their products, and they are able to walk away with more of that profit because since the year 2000, the corporate income tax in Canada has dropped from 28% to 15%.

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Another way that the Harper government, among others, has contributed to the real estate culture that is driving housing prices through the roof was by not doing anything about the capital gains exemption. It stands at 50% and it allows people to sell not just their stocks but also real estate beyond their primary residences and get a steep tax discount for doing their business through stocks and real estate instead of income, which is what most Canadians receive when they go to work. They get a salary or an hourly wage. However, if people are fortunate enough to be dealing in real estate or stocks, they actually get to pay 50% less tax, period, just by virtue of the way they do their own business. All of that has reduced government revenue, not just absolutely but as a share of GDP, between 2000 and now, and that is why we do not have the money we need in order to fund proper public services.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the member's focus on the excess profits of the oil and gas sector.

I do not like using the term “excess profit” and I do not like using “windfall profit”. Let us be clear about what we are talking about: We are talking about immoral war profiteering. That is what we are seeing right now. If hon. members across the way want to laugh, let me refer to the business columnist in *The Globe and Mail*, Eric Reguly, who called this out in his August 8 column. He pointed out that the profits of oil and gas right now have nothing to do with business acumen and everything to do with war.

I would ask my hon. colleague if he agrees with the Parliamentary Budget Officer that by doubling from 15% to 30%, the additional \$8 billion coming into the Canadian economy and the government coffers could help us take care of the poorest of the poor.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, yes, I absolutely believe that the additional profit those companies are making, as the member said, not because of their business acumen but by taking advantage of global circumstances in order to have a fig leaf as an excuse for why they are raising prices, should be taken back and invested in the things that we need in order to succeed as a society. We need housing. We need better health care. We need to tackle the climate crisis. We can create good jobs for people by doing that. We need money to pay for this. The money is out there. The government collects a lot less, in relative terms, than it used to, even 20 years ago, and it is time we start going back after that.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this very important piece of legislation, which, from what I am hearing, all members in the House will be supporting, or at least that seems pretty clear from the NDP and the Conservatives. I think people realize that this is something important. It is something that is critical and it is something that people need right now.

What are we talking about? We are talking about a six-month increase of the GST rebates that are given to individuals. This would have a real, meaningful impact for people, in particular those who are struggling the most and those who really need it. For single individuals who have no children, the total GST rebate would be \$467. Married or common-law partnerships would see \$612, and then there would be \$161 for each child under the age of 19.

This is about trying to help individuals, particularly right now, when we know we are experiencing this inflationary problem that has developed over time as a result of a number of different things that have been going on in the world, a number of things outside of the control of any individual country, and we have landed where we are.

We know that we need to take care of each other, and that is what this really comes down to. It comes down to taking care of each other and supporting each other through programs. That is what government is all about. The government is here to establish programs and policies that can have an impact throughout society.

If we took the approach of “every person for themselves”, which, unfortunately, it appears in retrospect that the Conservatives wish we had taken when it came to the beginning of the pandemic, we really would not need much in terms of government. We would not need government to be there to support Canadians and to support each other.

We have heard a lot, and I want to reflect on a comment that the member for Elmwood—Transcona made a few moments ago in answering a question from our friend from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, and he phrased it perfectly. We hear the Conservatives talking about EI and CPP as payroll taxes. They are not payroll taxes.

CPP is a pension plan. It is a plan that is paid into by the employee and the employer. It is a pension plan that many people rely on when they get to the age of retirement. When politicians, in my opinion, start toying with the idea of playing around with that fund or not properly ensuring that it has the resources or funds within it, it means that we are going to have problems, from a societal perspective, later on when we find out that it is underfunded.

Likewise, EI is employment insurance. This is an insurance policy. It is funding a policy that allows people to be able to withdraw when they need it the most, if they become unemployed or other circumstances put them in the position of needing it. I do not agree with the assessment of calling it a payroll tax. It is not a payroll tax. Neither of those programs is, yet we hear that.

I heard the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, the neighbouring riding to mine, pine back to the days of the UCCB, the universal child care benefit that Stephen Harper introduced. They pine about that program as though it is the gold standard for social programs of helping Canadians. The universal child care benefit was a program that literally gave every child, through their parents or guardians, a specific amount of money. It did not matter how much one made. It was not tested based on someone's need whatsoever. How can that be regarded as a social program?

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• (1800)

Instead, this government has been focused squarely on putting money into the hands of those who genuinely need it the most. When we look at it, it is not just about supporting individuals. It is smart economic policy. What happens if we give a \$100 or \$150 payment to a millionaire, somebody who does not need it, quite frankly, through the UCCB? What happens? They will likely put it in a TFSA or they will put it in their bank account and collect interest off of it and it just sits there, because they do not need it.

What happens if we give it to somebody who genuinely needs it? They are going to go out and they are going to spend it. What does that do? That helps, creates and stimulates the economy.

When we pine back to the days of the universal child care benefit, as the member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes did, that is not smart policy. It is not smart policy from the societal perspective of supporting each other, and it is not smart policy from an economic perspective. When we invest in people and we take care of each other, we will all be better off. We will see our economy grow in a way that is sustainable and that supports one another.

To that end, one of the arguments that I have heard come up a few times, and I heard it from the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola and the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, are the concerns over the inflationary impacts of a program like this. I think it is a valid question to be asked, because we know that, when we inject more money into the economy, we run the risk of inflation being attached to that. I think it is a valid question.

However, I would encourage them to go out and talk to some of the individuals, economists, who understand and know this. I will read two quotes from two economists. The first is from Armine Yalnizyan, an economist and Atkinson fellow, and this is what this economist said:

In truth the measures are so modest...that they amount to just over 0.1 per cent of nominal GDP and less than one per cent of current growth, hardly a tail that could wag a dog.

She also said:

Along with the childcare fee rebate, financed by the feds and promised by the Ontario government to start in April (money that has yet to arrive in mailboxes), there's a lot of talk but not a lot of cash flowing to households. There's no chance current federal measures will spur inflationary over-spending anytime soon.

Here is another one from David Macdonald, the senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives:

These transfers are unlikely to have much impact on inflation as inflation is being driven by external factors like the price of gasoline, supply chain issues and the like. These measures are quite targeted and to get the full value of all three, you'd have to be a family making under C\$35,000.

In the best case scenario, you could receive about C\$2,300 for that family which only amounts to 6.5 percent of income when inflation is running at 7.0 percent....

These measures aren't boosting incomes well above inflation, they are just helping lower income families afford the price increases that have already happened.

These are two economists who are putting to rest, at least in their professional opinions, the notions about inflation and what this could do to inflation, although I think it is a very valid and genuine question to ask, especially in the current climate. However, I hope

that those two members, in particular, take comfort in knowing that these two economists do not agree that it would necessarily have a impact.

I do not want to take up much more time than I absolutely have to. I do not want to speak long enough that I have to come back and speak the next time that this comes up for debate. I want people and I want members to have the genuine opportunity to speak to this. I really hope that this is one of those bills that we can see pass quickly, because it really will have an impact on the lives of those who genuinely need it the most.

We need to assist those who need it the most, and I really hope that the House will not play politics with this issue. I hope we will let people have the opportunity to speak to it, but then, within a reasonable amount of time, get to a point where we can send it to committee, have it studied there and then come back, because, at the end of the day, this is about supporting the individuals who need it the most.

• (1805)

I really hope we can work together, because it appears as though we already all support it anyway.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his comments, but I do want to point out one thing about his comment on sending cheques to millionaires. The Auditor General herself pointed out that the Liberal government actually changed the tax code when it was giving away the child benefit bump of \$500. It actually changed the tax code so that families making up to \$308,000 per year were able to receive that benefit. When the member talked about sending money to people, to those in need, he overlooked that. I think it was \$88 million of taxpayers' money that was sent to those über-wealthy.

However, my question actually goes back to the member's comment about helping those truly in need. I want to give an example. The member talked about the GST credit. My two children, whom I love, receive the GST credit. One works relatively part-time and one works relatively part-time and is in school. Their income is low enough, so they will receive a bump.

As much as I love my children, I do not believe that children of someone in our income bracket who are living at home should be receiving that bump. Did the government perhaps consider looking at an income means test based on family income so that we could give more to a single mom or those of low income living by themselves, or would the member consider that in the future, so that we are getting that money to those really in need, as opposed those living at home? We saw \$5 billion in CERB going to children living in the homes of wealthy parents. Could we enact something to move that away and truly focus on those in need?

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• (1810)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely thrilled to hear Conservative members talking about programs that are tested based on need. That is a great step in the right direction, and certainly a move away from the model of the universal child care benefit.

Perhaps I did not quite understand the member clearly when he referred to families that are making \$308,000. My wife and I combined are making that, and we do not get the money back that he is talking about. I do not know where he is getting that number. Maybe he could help me with that.

Quite frankly, I do not believe that people who are in my position need to get that money. I am not looking for it. I also believe that most people who are in my position would agree that when we get to a certain level of financial stability, there is not the need to rely on these payments. Instead, we could better direct them to those who genuinely need them and provide more to those who genuinely need them, and that is exactly what the Canada child benefit did. It looked at how much individuals made and gave money to individuals to help with their children, based on how much they made. Once they hit a certain threshold, they no longer got it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech.

The government has introduced three measures to combat inflation. The Bloc Québécois is in favour of increasing the GST/HST credit as set out in Bill C-30. Bill C-31 contains two more measures: dental insurance for children 11 and under and housing assistance.

With respect to housing, the Bloc Québécois is concerned that the people of Quebec will not get their fair share, because this is a Canada housing benefit top-up. Quebec has had its own program for the past 25 years, and it has the right to opt out with compensation, but Bill C-31 is silent on coordinating benefits. The same goes for dental insurance, which covers children 11 and under. Quebec's dental insurance covers children nine and under. The bill is silent on coordinating benefits.

On behalf of the government, will the parliamentary secretary promise to amend the bill to make sure it harmonizes with Quebec's programs so that my constituents will not be adversely affected?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, I cannot commit to amending the bill. I am not on the committee. I certainly do not have a veto power over the committee or how it works.

If the member is bringing up a very important point about the circumstances in Quebec and how the measures might apply differently, and it sounds like he is, I would suggest that there would be an opportunity at committee for the Bloc Québécois and those who are representing Quebec to bring this issue forward and to talk about it so that individuals could be properly taken care of. If what the member is suggesting is valid, then I do not see why the committee would not properly study it in order to bring forward solutions to address it.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Kingston and the Islands is right to give credit to the NDP for having pushed, prodded and pulled the government to put into place a series of measures that help Canadians. The GST credit, that rebate, is on average about \$500 that will go to about 12 million Canadians. As well, there is dental care, which is reflected in the other NDP bill and would be put in place to help thousands of Canadian families. Of course, the rental supplement will help nearly two million Canadians.

These are all measures the NDP and the member for Burnaby South fought for, and it is to the credit of the government that it allowed itself to be pushed, prodded and pulled in the right direction to do things that will actually benefit Canadians.

My question is about other measures the NDP has talked about. For example, “greedflation”, which is the intense profiteering we have seen as inflation has risen, means we are of course seeing the cost of food go up, but profits for companies like Loblaws and Sobeys have increased far beyond the increase in the cost of food. Will the government take measures to cut back on this profiteering, which is hurting so many Canadians at this dire time?

• (1815)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I do not care whose idea it was. I do not care if it was the NDP's idea to increase the GST, or if it was done through negotiations or whatever. We are helping Canadians. It does not really matter at the end of the day. I doubt the individual who is receiving the cheque in time to help buy more groceries really cares that it was the NDP that pushed for this, nor do they care that the Leader of the Opposition fought for various different parts of this. All they care about is what supports their government is giving them in their time of need. If the NDP members want to take credit for it, they can fill their boots, because I am perfectly fine with that. My position on this is that we help Canadians to the best of our ability.

To his question about corporate greed, which the NDP continually brings up, I am not shying away from the topic. I hear the NDP bring it up a lot. I would love to hear more about it. If the member for Burnaby South wants to sit down with me and explain his positions on it more and talk about what he thinks some of the solutions should be, I am more than willing to listen.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the House will be interested to know that I am literally in the market for a deck. If one asks for quotes for a deck, one will get price *x* and then price *y* for cash. What it speaks to is the number of people who do not file income tax returns and therefore will not benefit from the CPP, EI, the HST increase, the rent supplement, and all that sort of stuff.

I am interested in the hon. member's thoughts with respect to the need for Canadians, particularly low-income Canadians, to file their income taxes so they may benefit from all of these things.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, if the member for Scarborough—Guildwood is looking for help building a deck, I am sure the member for St. Catharines and I can go over and help him. Maybe the Speaker can come too. I do not know about the quality of the deck or how it will turn out, but I am more than willing to do my part.

The member raises an excellent point, and that is why it is our job to encourage and ensure that people are aware of why it is so important to file taxes. Filing taxes is not just about paying money and making sure one has paid their fair share, or trying to avoid taxes here or there. It is also being able to tap into these very important programs that are designed and dedicated for individuals who need them in a time of need. By filing their taxes, people will be able to demonstrate that when it is time.

[Translation]

The Speaker: It being 6:19 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

HINDU HERITAGE MONTH

The House resumed from May 2 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be able to resume the remarks I was making previously on this bill to create Hindu heritage month, a bill recognizing the immense contributions of the Hindu community to Canada's national life in so many different areas.

The last time this motion came up, I was also speaking about the way we have moved from using heritage months to recognize ethnocultural communities to now increasingly recognizing religious communities as well. I think these acts of recognition for faith communities are of some particular importance. For many people faith is more fundamental than ethnocultural identity. It also has a different kind of substance and depth.

It is relatively easy for us to go through the process of experiencing the food, dress and language of another ethnocultural group, but it is much harder to try to really understand the internal logic and view of the good life advanced by another religion on its own terms, but in a pluralistic society that understanding is very important. Of course, understanding does not mean agreeing. Understanding and respect can be very consistent with also firmly asserting the truth of one's own convictions, but living out a healthy pluralism is about still seeking to draw from the insights of particular religious traditions other than one's own, recognizing that our understanding of the human condition and of the world around us is well served by a willingness to draw ideas and insights from different religious traditions.

I believe that pluralism is not just a feature of a political system, but it is a virtue to be developed by individuals. To develop the virtue of pluralism is to seek to understand other ideas on their own

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terms and to be able to think about the internal logic of the other without losing one's own grounding in one's own tradition. It is to cultivate the ability to step into the intellectual space offered by another religious tradition, while still being fully able to see its potential flaws and step out of it. In this sense, I am defining pluralism as an intellectual virtue, a quality of the mind that citizens and leaders should seek to develop.

Virtues are defined by Alasdair MacIntyre as qualities of character that allow an individual to achieve good internal practices and sustain us in the relevant quest for the good. The good practice of pluralism requires intellectual curiosity and substantive open-mindedness on the part of individuals to the insights of religion and of different religions. This goes beyond mere acts of recognition and seeks to understand and learn from the ideas of others.

One can and should develop this virtue while still retaining a sense of one's own grounding. Pluralism is different from relativism. Relativism denies that things can be true and false. However, pluralism is to emphasize that I can retain the sense that there are objective points of true and false, while still being able to mentally put on the thinking of another tradition long enough to really understand it and to take it seriously, and that I can learn from insights of that tradition or way of thinking.

I have tried to develop this kind of understanding of Hinduism. For those of us from Abrahamic religious traditions, Hinduism as a religion can be particularly difficult to understand. This is because the typically Abrahamic way of thinking about religion is very different from the Hindu tradition. The different communities really mean something substantively different even when they use the term "religion".

The Abrahamic faiths, particularly Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are rooted in the concept of a single all-powerful God who provides direct and decisive revelation, who outlines the moral framework for us to live by through that revelation and who expects to alone be the object of worship. These faith systems do build on past revelations, with Christianity seeing itself as building on Judaism and Islam seeing itself as building on both, but they are also senses in which these are revolutionary ideas, in that they call for a decisive separation from other religious practices. All the Abrahamic traditions emphasize some concept of one God, one truth, leading to one right path.

For the practitioners of the Abrahamic faiths, religious doctrines that are absolute in nature can coexist with political doctrines that are pluralistic; that is, we do believe in the existence of one right path and we also believe in the freedom of individuals to find it on their own. Religious freedom in the Christian tradition emphasizes that human free choice and freedom to pursue God without state interference is a consequence of the absolute belief in created human dignity.

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Hinduism is different from the Abrahamic faiths in that it has the concept of plurality directly within it theologically. An expansive open-ended pluralism is not just defended as a valuable feature for political communities. It actually exists right within the religious community of Hindu believers. We can find monotheists and polytheists and people with very different ideas about moral questions and aspects of religious practice who all identify as Hindus.

Hinduism is not defined by a belief in a particular god or gods and it is not defined by a creed. Hinduism is a kind of family of spiritual practices and religious ways of life. As it has developed into its modern form, it has continued to grow and adapt as an organic thing, preserving the past while adding to it. This is most notable in how the early Vedic traditions of Hinduism evolved with the development of the Upanishads, introducing monotheism into Hinduism as a kind of superstructure over top of but also including the older polytheism.

Hinduism finds ways of preserving aspects of the old while developing the new. Hinduism has also developed a unique kind of pluralism within itself that willingly incorporates ideas from other religions. The best summary of a religious dialogue between Hindus and members of Abrahamic faiths is this apparent exchange between the founders of India and Pakistan. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "I am a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian, a Parsi, a Jew." To this, Jinnah replied, "Only a Hindu could say that."

• (1820)

In conclusion, we are all blessed to live in a country where we can practise our faith, share our traditions and learn from each other. Our Canadian pluralism ought not be taken for granted, as we are seeing threats to religious freedom on multiple fronts. From violent extremists who vandalize temples, mosques, churches and synagogues to make people feel unsafe in their religious practice, to governments that deny people's ability to practise their faith openly in the name of so-called secularism and governments that fail to respect conscience and the charitable status of faith-based organizations, we see that threats to religious freedom are growing in Canada. I am committed to fighting in this place to defend pluralism and religious freedom for as long as I am here.

Once again, I thank the Hindu community for its significant contributions to this great nation.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are here this evening to talk about this motion to recognize, create, rename and symbolically designate a Hindu heritage month. I have to say that it is the word "heritage" that makes me receptive to this motion because, of course, all of us here support secularism. I personally am a great supporter of secularism and freedom of conscience. Unfortunately, the concept of secularism is sometimes a bit foreign to this Parliament and this country. There is no direct equivalent for the French word "laïcité" in the language of Canada, which is English. The word does not exist.

"Laïcité"—or, loosely, secularism—relegates the matter of religion to the private sphere. Basically, it means that the matter of

God or gods, or the absence of a god, cannot be settled through public debate. It cannot be settled through argumentation or reason. The previous debate on inflation and budget proposals can be settled using fact-based arguments, but the matter of belief or non-belief cannot.

As a federal elected official, I will never answer questions about my faith. As an individual, of course, I am free to believe or not believe, like everyone else. I am free to be passionate about a particular religious culture, but it does not interfere with my job. I represent people of all faiths or people who simply have no faith. Everyone is free to make their own choice.

Secularism puts beliefs and lack of beliefs on a level playing field. Of course, it also comes with the right to dislike, or even hate, a religion, some religions, several religions or all religions. It also comes with the right to ridicule them, if we so wish, or to ridicule just one. Those who have wanted to thwart this fundamental right have unfortunately sometimes taken it to the extreme, as was the case in the tragic Charlie Hebdo massacre.

I also personally refuse to label people based on their religious community. For me, a nation is not a group of communities that belong to one religion or another. It is a group of citizens who are each equal in rights and duties, and whose beliefs, or lack thereof, are no one's business but their own. That is what makes up a nation.

The state is aware of every religion, of course, but should not recognize any of them. That is the foundation of this secularism. It is certainly not for me, an elected federal member, to comment on dogmas, rites, religions or the tenets of one religion or another, whether we are talking about Hinduism, Catholicism, Islam or any other.

What is more, let us also clarify that where these citizens come from, when we talk about cultural diversity, is not synonymous with religion. Someone who follows a religion is not someone who, according to the religion itself, necessarily comes from one country or another. There may be people with deep roots who convert to one religion or another.

However, it is clear, and I have no problem saying this, that there is no religious heritage either, but rather religious heritages. That is why we tend to support this proposal. Just because we are ardent supporters of secularism does not mean we do not recognize the importance of Catholic congregations in Quebec's history, for example. Just because we are ardent supporters of secularism does not mean it is impossible to say that churches and places of worship are tremendous architectural gems. I have no problem saying that. Personally, I think religious buildings are the most beautiful buildings on earth.

The same goes for Hinduism and Hindu heritage, which is significant in Quebec. Quebec certainly does have a Hindu heritage, and a well-established one at that. The Hindu religious community, despite any reservations I may have expressed previously, has its own unique history. Adapting traditional rituals to Quebec winters was pretty difficult. It has not always been easy, unlike in places like India, Sri Lanka or the Caribbean, where it is much easier. Most celebrations take place outside. Some festivals have even been rescheduled. Generally speaking, the community has adapted to Quebec's weather and climate constraints.

• (1830)

I was talking about architecture. Let us talk about the majestic Hindu temple in Dollard-des-Ormeaux, an architectural jewel that contributes to the richness of Quebec's heritage and the beauty of its architectural landscape. We fully support this motion.

I should note that the arrival of the first Hindus in Canada dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. That is quite some time ago. Immigration fell off around 2015, when a law was passed prohibiting Asians from immigrating to Canada. The law was repealed in 1965. Since then, the influx of Hindu immigrants has continued, mainly from India, but also from elsewhere, such as Sri Lanka and even the Caribbean.

According to Statistics Canada, there were nearly 7,000 members of the Hindu faith in Quebec in 1981. There were 14,000 in 1991 and 25,000 in 2001. Hindu heritage has arguably been prominent in Montreal since the 1980s, following the construction of Canada's first Hindu temple, the Hindu Mission Temple, located on Belchasse Street in La Petite-Patrie. The community is made up of two main groups. The first is people from north India, and the second is people from south India and Tamils.

There are, of course, two main spaces used for liturgical celebrations: home and temple. I want to emphasize that I am not here to comment on the validity of any of this.

Home is an important place of religious heritage, but in Quebec, Hindu heritage is mainly celebrated in temples, the second space. The unique architecture of some temples, such as the Thiru Murugan Temple built by Montreal's Tamil community, reflects this heritage.

There is also the Hindu Mission Temple, which was designed in the traditional Hindu architectural style but also has some more practical features. The Thiru Murugan Temple emulates traditional Indian architecture that dates back to around 5,000 B.C. Twelve workers came over from India to help build the Thiru Murugan Temple. The Tamil community saved \$3.5 million over 20 years to build it. I tip my hat to them.

Some of the rituals practised at the temple in Dollard-des-Ormeaux are thousands of years old. The Thiru Murugan Temple is one of the largest Hindu temples in Canada and is the main place of worship for Quebec's Tamil community.

They are magnificent buildings. The Hindu temple in Dollard-des-Ormeaux is a vast 6,000-square-foot space. Whoever goes there, whether tourist or faithful, passes under a tower in the shape of a pyramid that is about thirty metres high. I have never gone, but

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I have to admit that my research on this subject has piqued my interest into going to have a look. I am going to make a point of going there very soon. The second tower sits imposingly above the main altar of the temple and is dedicated to the god Murugan, who is considered by Hindu Tamils to be their national divinity.

The exterior of the sanctuary transports the visitor to other spaces inspired by India. It is a very impressive place both inside and out. The temple is open to everyone every day of the year. This project was carried out mainly by Sri Lankan immigrants who began arriving in Montreal in the 1980s.

Interest in building this temple, a temple for this particular faith, dates back to 1983. I was saying that it was a long wait and that they had to organize fundraisers. We are pleased because this truly honours the community and its contributions. It is part of the city and is in the industrial sector. For many years, the organization collected private donations.

In closing, it will be a pleasure to support this motion for the reasons stated earlier.

• (1835)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise to support Motion No. 42 and follow in the footsteps of my colleague, the member for Edmonton Griesbach, who spoke in the first hour of debate very eloquently.

I want to remind members that Motion No. 42 reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize the contributions that Hindu Canadians have made to the socio-economic development of Canada, and their services to the Canadian society, the richness of Hindu Heritage and its vast contribution to the world of arts and science, astronomy to medicine, and its culture and traditions and the importance of educating and reflecting upon it for our future generations in Canada by declaring November, every year, Hindu Heritage Month.

I want to start off by addressing my constituents in New Westminster—Burnaby and the important Hindu temples that are found in Burnaby, which has one of the largest Hindu temples in all of Canada.

The Hindu Cultural Society and Community Centre of B.C. is a remarkable temple that is found on Marine Drive. It has many celebrations and invites the entire community. It is very much a foundation stone in our community.

The Arul Migu Thurkadevi Hindu Society is a Tamil-speaking Hindu temple on Edmonds Street in Burnaby. I can tell members that for those who participate in its annual chariot festival, which goes along Edmonds Street and through the Edmonds area of Burnaby, it is a truly extraordinary manifestation of the strength of the Hindu faith in Canada.

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Finally, I want to give a shout-out to the ISKCON in Burnaby, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. I attended its Krishna Janmashtami just a few weeks ago, and it was quite extraordinary. There were over 30,000 people there, many of them my constituents and many of them constituents of the NDP leader, the member for Burnaby South. It was a warm summer evening, and the celebration for the commemoration of Janmashtami went late into the night and even into the early morning hours. Every one of the 30,000 present had the opportunity to eat a vegetarian meal. There was entertainment and, of course, worship in the ISKCON temple. It was quite an extraordinary event, and I think among both the Hindus and non-Hindus who attended there was a sense of solidarity and peace that was truly exceptional. It is an incredible addition to our community.

I mention this because in those of the Hindu faith across the country, half a million Canadians, we see that type of contribution to communities, provinces and indeed to the entire country, which is why this motion to put in place a Hindu heritage month is so important. I congratulate the member for Nepean for bringing it forward.

When we have half a million Canadians make that type of contribution each and every day right across the country, it is important for this Parliament to acknowledge it and underscore it. I am delighted, along with my NDP colleagues, to support this very important motion, and we hope that it will pass with the backing of all members of Parliament.

I thank the member for Nepean for bringing this motion forward, and I also want to thank him for the discussions we have had, which do touch on the Hindu faith, regarding my bill, Bill C-229, on the banning of Nazi symbols in this country. I want to briefly touch on this, because just as it is important that we highlight the important contributions of Canadians of the Hindu faith right across the length and breadth of this country, we cannot ignore the fact that there is an increase in hate, racism and things that we thought we had gotten beyond in Canada. A lot of this is provoked from outside of the country, as we have seen far-right organizations in the United States and Europe that are trying to ignite hatred, and it is important to curtail that. We also saw it in the recent convoy with the expressions of hate that we need to push back against.

● (1840)

My bill to ban Nazi emblems and Nazi symbols was put forward in the House, as we know, a few months ago. The member for Nepean and many members of the Hindu community stepped forward to say that it is important that we not talk about the swastika as anything more than an important symbol of Hindu faith. This is an important point to make, that the swastika is a profoundly reverent symbol of the Hindu faith and should be treated as such.

I have undertaken to amend my bill to eliminate that reference so that we speak only about Nazi symbols when we talk about the banning of these symbols of hate. That is perhaps why it is more important than ever that we underscore the important contribution of Canadians of the Hindu faith in putting forward and adopting this motion to adopt a Hindu heritage month.

Because we are seeing this increased manifestation of hate, we need to counter it. This is one very effective way that we can do

that. We, as members of Parliament, hopefully, all joining our voices together, can move to adopt this motion to put in place a Hindu heritage month for the month of November. This is an important way of pushing back against the signs we have all seen, which are profoundly disturbing, of a rise in hate often triggered from outside our country.

I mentioned earlier Janmashtami and the 30,000 people coming out at ISKCON to celebrate this important Hindu festival. I mentioned the chariot festival at the Arul Migu Thirkadevi Hindu Society on Edmonds Street.

I think it is important to note that, in New Westminster—Burnaby, we have a profound contributions from those of the Hindu faith right across the length and breadth of our riding, and that, in all of those circumstances, these incredible festivities of peace, serenity and celebration of the Hindu faith, there have never been any incidents. There is a profound support in the community for these very significant festivals.

This is something that I appreciate enormously about New Westminster—Burnaby. I know that I have talked before about New Westminster—Burnaby. It is the most diverse riding in the entire country. Over 150 languages are spoken there. People come from all of the four corners of this planet to join on the traditional territory of the Qayqayt first nation and the Halkomelem- and Squamish-speaking Coast Salish peoples.

There they have found a home in which everyone gets along together. One hundred and fifty different languages support components of every major faith around the world and all of these people get together in harmony. It is something that we treasure in our community.

When we talk about the Hindu community, there, as well, we know of many dozens of languages that come from those of the Hindu faith themselves. I had, in my younger years, the chance to travel from New Delhi down to Kanyakumari in a third-class train across India. I spent a couple of months travelling throughout India and saw, first-hand, the importance and relevance of the Hindu faith there in its birth place, and its remarkable contribution right across the length and breadth of India, the incredible diversity of so many different languages.

Well, that is replicated in New Westminster—Burnaby. That is why it is so important to underscore the important contributions of half a million Canadians of the Hindu faith, and to do that, hopefully, as soon as possible.

I sincerely hope, as well, that this initiative from the member for Nepean will be adopted unanimously in the House. I hope that will happen soon.

● (1845)

Mr. Ryan Turnbull (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today and speak to Motion No. 42 to designate Hindu heritage month every November moving forward. I could not be more supportive of this motion. I am glad to hear that it seems we have quite a bit of consensus in the House today.

We all get a source of pride from multiculturalism across Canada. We know that other months have been designated to celebrate other Canadian heritages or backgrounds, and I think the proposal to have every November designated Hindu heritage month is another contribution for us to not only acknowledge the many contributions that Hindu Canadians make, but also to really celebrate and learn about the richness of the culture that Hindu Canadians bring to Canada.

The Hindu community in my riding of Whitby is growing and becoming stronger. Our community is growing rapidly and diversifying, which I am very happy to see because I can relate to and truly appreciate Hindu culture. I love the vibrant colours, clothing, music, food, dances, festivals and the many events I get to attend. The Hindu culture is highly pluralistic. It is not just one religion or god; there are a number of traditions within the Hindu culture. I think that is beautiful. It also has an aesthetic foundation that I really think brings out the arts and unique cultural expression within the culture.

We know diversity has always been recognized as a strength for Canada, but I am glad to see we are continually embracing that and recognizing it as a true strength that we have. As we continue to foster diversity, more strength will come with it. We need to facilitate cross-cultural dialogues and really work to learn and appreciate the cultures we get the chance to be exposed to here in Canada. That means being committed to learning, engaging and truly coming to appreciate the various cultures, and the Hindu culture is no exception.

I went to an event on September 9 for the unveiling of a statue of Ganesh for Ganesh Chaturthi, organized by the Cultural Association of the GTA and the Durham Telugu Association. It was fantastic. The food was amazing. The statue came all the way from India. It was a big cultural event in our community. There were hundreds of individuals of Hindu faith there, and we really just enjoyed the many aspects of their culture.

I am also looking forward to the Diwali, which is coming up in October. It is the festival of lights, which I know many of us celebrate as well, the victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance, which is great. The Diwali tradition brings people together, and we have a lot to be grateful for with respect to that tradition.

We have also been encouraging cricket, and it is being played by hundreds of people in my community. It is really growing in popularity. We have been advocating for a cricket pitch for some time, and the many Hindu Canadians who love their cricket are now getting to play in a more permanent pitch in my community.

I would also say that there are so many contributions that Hindu Canadians have made to the fabric of our country, and there are over 500,000 Hindu Canadians who continue to make valuable contributions every single day. One in my riding whom I particularly appreciate is the Charminar Indian Cuisine restaurant in Whitby, which during the pandemic was wonderful in feeding frontline workers. It was so generous. It supports all kinds of charity events in our riding. It really does great things, not to mention the fact that the food is fantastic.

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• (1850)

We also know that here in Ottawa the neurosciences clinic was supported by a very generous donation from the Bhargava family. It is things like this that we really need to recognize.

Obviously, many of us have probably appreciated yoga. I know, being six-foot-six, it is something I find a bit difficult, but certainly lots of Canadians can appreciate that as another contribution that Hindus have made to Canada.

I have one other really strong tie with Hindu culture. When I studied philosophy at Carleton University many years ago, I read and studied and got many insights from the Bhagavad-Gita.

All in all, Hindu Canadians are making great contributions to the country. The fabric of our communities is greatly enhanced by the contributions they make. Their cultural expressions and many traditions and even their religious beliefs and backgrounds are making contributions to how we work together and understand the importance of diversity in our communities.

I could not be more supportive of making every November, moving forward, Hindu heritage month. I hope everyone in the House will support this.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in strong support of M-42. The motion before us simply seeks to declare that every November will be Hindu heritage month. I want to at the outset take this opportunity to acknowledge the member for Nepean. He is someone I have gotten to know over the past seven years that we have served together in this place, and he is someone I consider a friend. I want to acknowledge his leadership in bringing this motion forward, the member himself being of Hindu heritage.

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest religions. Indeed, it has been said to be the world's oldest religion, with an ancient history dating back more than 5,000 years. It is also one of the world's largest religions, with more than 900 million people from all corners of the world practising Hinduism. Hinduism is, beyond that, a set of religious beliefs. The member for Nepean in his eloquent speech, when he spoke to the motion, spoke of the rich, diverse and ancient heritage that underpins Hinduism, including wisdom, traditions, literature, festivals and, as the member noted, most importantly samskaras, or sacraments, in their homes.

Hinduism is a religious tradition. It is a way of life, or dharma, with a message centred on tolerance, on religious freedom and in universality. Indeed, a Sanskrit phrase found in Hindu texts, when translated into English, means, "the world is one family". Consistent with this, pluralism is very much inherent in the beliefs of Hindus. These principles, including the pluralism, tolerance and universality that I spoke of, are rooted in the sacred Hindu text, the Rig Veda, which provides that truth is one and sages call it by many names.

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Hindus in Canada have a long history, dating back more than 100 years, when a small number of Hindu families came from Punjab. It was not until the 1960s that a larger number of Hindus came to Canada, mostly from northern India. In the 1970s many more Hindus from other parts of the world, including countries in east Africa, Trinidad, Fiji and Guyana came to Canada. Many of those Hindus were fleeing religious discrimination and persecution in their home countries, and I have to say that one of the great things about Canada is that we are a country of religious freedom. Canadians have a right, and indeed it is a fundamental right guaranteed to all Canadians, to peacefully assemble and practise their religion freely. Consistent with that and in that spirit, this motion reflects the cultural and religious pluralism that is Canada.

Today the Hindu community is a vibrant one. It is more than 600,000 people strong and growing. It is a community that is recognized to be peaceful, community-oriented, productive and highly educated.

• (1855)

Hindu Canadians have contributed to virtually all aspects of Canadian society, including technology, science, the arts, law, medicine and politics. Speaking of Hindu Canadians who have contributed politically, I want to acknowledge the member for Nepean. That hon. member came to Canada not many years ago. In 2003 or 2004, he came here, like many Hindu Canadians, as someone who was highly educated, and he brought professional expertise as an executive in high technology. He came to build a better life for himself and his family, to work hard, to give back and to contribute to Canada as a dedicated volunteer in his south Ottawa community. Quite remarkably, in little more than a decade after arriving in Canada, the hon. member was elected to serve the people of Nepean, where he has served over the past seven years, during which time he has made substantive contributions.

I also would be remiss if I did not acknowledge our late former colleague, Deepak Obhrai. Deepak is someone I was fortunate to get to know when I was first elected in 2015, and I served with Deepak until his untimely passing in 2019. Deepak's political career is a storied one. He did many things, including running for the leadership of the Conservative Party. Although he was very much an underdog and, frankly, did not come close to winning, he did contribute in a substantive way to the leadership race and made many contributions to our party, but more than that, he made many contributions in this place, where for 22 years he tirelessly and effectively represented the people of Calgary East and Calgary Forest Lawn. For many years, he served as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He represented Canada on the international stage in that capacity.

In closing, let me say that passing this motion and declaring November as Hindu heritage month would rightfully acknowledge the significant contributions of Hindu Canadians. More than that, it would provide a unique platform, an opportunity for Canadians of Hindu heritage to promote their culture and traditions and to tell their stories, the stories of their ancestors that are interwoven into the fabric of Canada.

This House has a long tradition of passing bills and motions that celebrate communities that make up Canada. In that spirit, I hope

that this worthy motion receives the unanimous support of the House and that every November we can celebrate Hindu heritage month.

• (1900)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in support of the motion on Hindu heritage month. Like my colleague from St. Albert—Edmonton, I want to also congratulate and thank our hon. colleague from Nepean. He has worked tirelessly in pursuit of cultural recognition and I want to publicly thank him. Understanding, tolerance and acceptance are what this motion is all about.

Before I get into the crux of my address, I want to begin by mentioning my Ukrainian intern Yuliia Hrabenko. Yuliia, who started with us last May and stayed until the end of the session, was responsible for researching this motion. I know Yuliia is watching from home tonight, and if you will indulge me for a moment, Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words to her.

I cannot tell members how impactful Yuliia was. It is one thing to see the horror of what is going on in Ukraine on TV, but to speak with someone living it each and every day, there are no words to express that. She is an incredibly strong woman. I want her to know we are thinking of her. We are thinking of her family. We are praying they are all safe, and we are praying for an immediate end to this Russian aggression.

Yuliia was a valued member of our team. Aside from her daily duties around our office, she offered us a real-time perspective on the war and what was going on back at home. She opened our eyes daily to the atrocities her family, her friends and her country are facing at the bloodstained hands of Vladimir Putin.

I asked Yuliia to help research this motion and I am extremely proud of her efforts and the work she performed. I am extremely proud of the work that she did with us and her work on this motion. I am extremely proud of her. Yuliia is a remarkable young woman.

Acceptance and tolerance in a world torn by conflict is something that we should all strive for. The motion before us, in my mind, embodies what it is to be tolerant. We do not lose ourselves or our traditions when we recognize and celebrate the values and traditions of others.

In a world that has seemed to have lost its way, we need more understanding, we need more education and we need more acceptance. We fear what we do not know. There is so much intolerance. We cannot turn on the news without seeing acts of violence in Ukraine, acts of violence in Iran, acts of violence against the Yazidis and the list goes on.

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This violence, while seemingly more prevalent today, is not unique or exclusive to this time. Recent discoveries of mass graves at residential schools across Canada have shown us this. Atrocities committed against the young and defenceless have filled newsfeeds for the last two years. This is unacceptable. There are many Canadians who are just waking up to the fact that residential schools were there to drive the Indian out of those children. Tens of thousands of them went to those schools and many never came home.

How do we ensure that this generation and generations to come understand and know their heritage? My own children are indigenous, but they know very little about their culture. They know very little about their language. They know very little about their history. That is a shame, because the greatest connection to one's heritage should be through one's family.

I have always said, "You'll never know where you're going if you don't understand where you are from." One of the main reasons we see these daily atrocities is the lack of knowledge, the unwillingness to accept each other's perspectives. This leads to unfathomable forms of intolerance between people. This prejudice lets us believe that our actions have no consequences.

History is rife with examples of intolerance, instances where we have looked the other way because we believe those who are not like us do not matter. The beauty of Canada is our multicultural background. I value the ethnic patchwork that makes our country whole, but we have room to grow. The motion before us today is a perfect example of this.

The addition of Hindu heritage month would only strengthen our union. It would only strengthen our tolerance. It would only strengthen our knowledge. It is an opportunity to celebrate, remember and educate future generations about Hindu Canadian contributions, about the important roles they have played in building our country and about the important roles they continue to play in building our future.

● (1905)

When I think of Hindu Canadians, the first name that comes to mind is my friend, and our former colleague, Deepak Obhrai. Deepak was an MP from Calgary East and then Calgary Forest Lawn, and when the Conservatives formed government, he became parliamentary secretary to the minister of international co-operation and to the minister of foreign affairs. He was the only Hindu Canadian MP running for election at that time. He was an incredible person loved by all in Parliament.

He showed me how one can respect and promote their original heritage while maintaining an incredible love for Canada. Deepak Obhrai was a proud Hindu Canadian who brought Hindu cultural celebrations to Parliament Hill.

When I was first elected in 2015, one of the very first events I visited on the Hill was the Diwali festival organized by Deepak. Diwali is a festival of lights and one of the major holidays celebrated by Hindus every fall. I fell in love with the vibrancy of the event. I was sitting in the front row and felt very proud to celebrate our diverse community and be a part of it. I felt so Canadian at that moment.

Deepak passed away, unfortunately, in 2019. He was a very good friend of mine. Every time I speak to his family, and even now, I tear up because of how kind and dedicated he was. Deepak had so little time to share his culture with us and celebrate his Hindu heritage. Yes, it was a life well lived and a legacy never to be forgotten, but alas, it was a life too brief.

After his death, I decided to take over organizing the national Diwali celebration on Parliament Hill. Since 2019, we have been holding the event on the Hill. Canadians of all ethnicities come to the national Diwali celebration on Parliament Hill because of Deepak. I am so proud to announce we will be hosting the 22nd national Diwali celebration on Parliament Hill on October 26 in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building hall. I hope I will see all my colleagues there.

Deepak showed me a great example of how a leader must invest in his community and work with different communities across the nation. He must be understanding and involved in events that are culturally significant to his constituency and Canadians, regardless of background and religion. Like Deepak, my philosophy is that it does not matter where we come from; we must care for one another. We have a responsibility to support our neighbours, regardless of their background.

Canada is home to more than half a million Hindus. Their contribution to Canada's social and economic fabric is so immense. It was about 110 years ago when the first Hindus migrated to Canada from India and settled in my own province of British Columbia. Today, there are over 2,000 Indo-Canadians who live in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George alone. Many of them represent the vibrant Hindu community of our region. I am always delighted to visit my Hindu friends and be a part of their glorious traditional celebrations.

Canada is also home to some of the largest Hindu temples located outside of India. One of the biggest is the venerable BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Toronto. The mandir is the largest of its kind in Canada and was constructed according to guidelines outlined in ancient Hindu scriptures. The grounds are spread over 18 acres and, in addition to the mandir, include a heritage museum.

The mandir was inaugurated in 2007 in the presence of then prime minister Stephen Harper. In his address that day, Prime Minister Harper said, "The [BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir] will inspire visitors to appreciate how the spiritually diverse, multi-ethnic heritage of Indo-Canadians has contributed to the fields of arts, science, education and pluralism."

Fifteen years later, I cannot agree more with the vision laid out by our then prime minister. We as Conservatives have contributed much toward the evolution of Hinduism in Canada. We are very proud of the contributions and achievements of our Hindu Canadians. It is why I will unequivocally support this motion to make the month of November Hindu heritage month.

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There are so many divisions in the world. We should all stand together shoulder to shoulder to celebrate our diversity and learn from each other, because that is how we unite.

I hope all my colleagues will vote in favour of this motion put forward by the hon. member for Nepean.

● (1910)

The Speaker: I recognize the hon. member for Nepean for his right of reply.

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, namaste.

I would like to begin by thanking my colleagues from all political parties for strongly backing the motion to designate November as Hindu heritage month. I am humbled by the support of dozens of organizations across Canada and from thousands of Canadians.

Hindu Canadians are a peaceful, hard-working community. They have made and continue to make significant contributions to Canada's socio-economic development and cultural heritage. On Hindu heritage, Hindus have an ancient, magnificent and robust inheritance, which they have received from numerous sources: our wisdom traditions, our religious rites and rituals, our literature, the many arts and crafts, our elders, our fairs and festivals and, above all, from the many samskaras or sacraments in our home. That heritage not only gives us a drishti or world view; it also defines our purusharthas or aims of life and equally defines our sanskriti or culture. In short, the Hindu heritage defines our dharma.

What is striking about such an ancient civilization is not only the unbroken tradition of 5,000 years of recorded history but also the plurality or diversity of our tradition. Even in the absence of a monolithic religious dispensation, we Hindus, whether in Canada or anywhere in the world, are connected by an invisible thread that binds us together: the strength of our Hindu heritage.

Our wisdom traditions, which start from the Vedas and then flow into the Upanishads or forest discourses, followed by our puranas or our songs and stories, are philosophically rich and form the foundation of our temple traditions. It is the same vast heritage that informs our costume and cuisine, our habits and behaviour, our arts and crafts. The Hindu heritage does not restrict itself to religious matters: We have a strong aesthetic foundation, which leads to the celebration of saundarya, or what is beautiful.

We celebrate the beautiful in our lived lives through stories and paintings, song and dance, colour and cuisine, festivals and family events. Though ancient, our heritage is alive and growing. It is open to influences from other civilizations and freely adapts and gives to whomever we come in contact with.

Thus it is that for us Hindus, Canada is a comforting and embracing home away from home. For many people in the world, the term "cultural heritage" is still primarily tangible or material cultural heritage. There is a need to recognize, preserve, celebrate and promote the Hindu heritage as defined by UNESCO's intangible or living cultural heritage. This intangible or living cultural heritage includes oral traditions such as songs and dramatic performances; performing arts, such as vocal and instrumental music and dance; social practices, such as rituals and festivals; traditional knowledge,

such as cuisine and medicine; and traditional craftsmanship, such as pottery, metalwork and jewellery.

Proclaiming Hindu heritage month provides an opportunity to remember and celebrate Hindu heritage and the contributions of Hindu-Canadians to our great nation, as well as to educate both current and future generations.

I would like to again thank my colleagues in this House, dozens of organizations across Canada and the thousands of Canadians who have reached out to me in support of this motion. This support is so Canadian, in that people with different political ideologies and people agnostic of any political ideology are all coming together in recognizing and promoting Hindu heritage in Canada.

● (1915)

The Speaker: The question is on the motion.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the motion be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and so indicate to the Chair.

The hon. member for St. Catharines.

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 28, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in Adjournment Proceedings this evening to pursue a question I asked on World Oceans Day. World Oceans Day, June 8, is observed every single year within what is the United Nations' and Canada's Environment Week.

I asked about the impact of the climate crisis on our oceans and whether the government was prepared to take it seriously. Every single second, and I need to repeat that because when we ask questions in 30 seconds in question period it goes rather quickly, every single second of every single minute of every single hour of every single day, every second, the equivalent of seven Hiroshima nuclear bombs' worth of heating is absorbed by our oceans due to our burning of fossil fuels and the destruction of forests, the problem that gets referred to as the climate crisis.

I put forward that we are seeing changes in our ocean currents that are massively dangerous. We are seeing ocean levels rising; the acidity levels are rising in our ocean water, and the oxygen levels in many of our oceans are dropping.

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One particular example is the Gulf of St. Lawrence. There are members in this place who have connections to Atlantic Canada. I am a member from British Columbia, but my family is still on Cape Breton Island. The Gulf of St. Lawrence is Canada's most productive marine ecosystem. It provides billions of dollars of wealth to the Atlantic region.

We still have a fishery, despite the collapse of the North Atlantic cod. There is a fishery in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but the Gulf of St. Lawrence is experiencing rapid deoxygenation and acidification. Why? It is because the Gulf Stream is stalling and the Labrador Current is stalling. What happens is that whereas the Gulf of St. Lawrence used to be refreshed with the colder water from the Labrador Current, which was full of oxygen, the Gulf of St. Lawrence is now being recharged by a stalling, warmer, deoxygenated Gulf Stream.

All of this, of course, points to the fact that the climate crisis is not a manageable issue, like putting some kind of a filter at the end of a tailpipe and keeping on polluting. That is the approach the government has taken. Its so-called solution of net zero by 2050 is nothing but propaganda. As I pointed out to the parliamentary secretary in that debate, net zero by 2050 is not a goal; it is an epitaph.

It is true that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the most eminent scientific and most rigorous process ever invented for any issue, has made it clear that, yes, by 2050 we must be at net zero and we must meet the commitments to hold to as far below 2°C as possible and, if possible, hold to 1.5°C. However, net zero by 2050 is a lie and propaganda, if that is all that is mentioned and it is not mentioned that in order to have it make any difference, the curve of that line starts with a rapid drop. In other words, we must ensure that before 2025, global emissions stop rising and start decreasing. We also must ensure that by 2030, that curve is dropped so fast that it is about half of what it was in 2010, and then it levels out.

I am afraid the human brain rather translates net zero by 2050 as if we have lots of time, but the line does not go gradually. The line must go down sharply, which means that when the government approves Bay du Nord and insists on completing Trans Mountain, it is foreclosing on any hope of holding to a livable world.

• (1920)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate that the member opposite is talking about oceans. They are extremely important, and that is why we have put so much work into the oceans protection plan. I was happy to hear the news, for example, that in the past three years, not one right whale has died, and this is because of the efforts we are putting into protecting our oceans environment. It is tremendously important.

Also, as someone who has a riding on the Great Lakes, I was really happy to see investments and supports for Great Lakes protections. Some of the things we see are smaller, but they have a big impact. In my own community, we are naturalizing the mouth of the Don River, which is something that is actually going to provide protection to our lake. It will reintroduce wetlands to industrial lands where there have not been for a long time. That is the largest

infrastructure project in all of North America, and it is happening here in Canada. It is going to have some wonderful effects on our fresh water.

However, the member opposite was talking about climate change. I agree with her that climate change is the essential issue that we must tackle, and there is no time to waste. I absolutely agree with her on that. Now, it is also important to talk about what we are doing.

We did table a 2030 emissions reduction plan, which covers every economic sector across our country. It is a plan for how we can create healthier communities and what we can seize as opportunities for good-paying, sustainable jobs. It is about having clean air and a strong economy, and it is about fighting climate change, which is so important.

When we look at what we have done, the scientific and economic imperative to reduce emissions is clear. We are going to work on that. We are doing that right now, and I want the member opposite to see that. We talk about transportation, and we are putting a sales mandate on zero-emission vehicles. It is about combustion, and we are working on that. We are also seeing investments in the manufacturing of zero-emission vehicles and battery manufacturers here. It is a combination of working on reducing combustion while creating jobs and investment here in our country.

The 2030 ERP takes into account the reality that we need to set guideposts for each sector, and it highlights the measures and strategies towards the lower band of Canada's 2030 target of 40% to 45% below 2005 levels. Deepened collaboration and partnerships with all levels of government, indigenous people, industry, the financial sector and civil society, will enable further reductions and position Canada to achieve the upper band of the target. It includes investments and a suite of new measures to help mobilize Canada to a truly sustainable economy and to be a leading competitor in a global transition to cleaner industries and technologies. Those are technologies that we can export to help the world as well as it is going into its green transition.

We are also developing Canada's first national adaptation strategy, which will establish a shared vision for climate resilience in Canada, identify key priorities for increased collaboration and establishing a framework for measured progress at the national level. This is another important piece that we can focus on.

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I agree with the member opposite that climate change is real, and it is important that we tackle it right now, which is exactly why we are doing that hard work. We are working across all sectors to get there, and we will do it.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, this is the tragedy we see before us. I know the parliamentary secretary cares about climate. I am sure the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment care about climate. However, the totality of their efforts puts us on track to an unlivable world for our kids, as assessed by the science.

Global atmosphere is not interested in negotiating with the Liberal government. Liberals are not going to get any brownie points for good intentions. They have to meet what the science requires, and the science requires far more than they are committing to.

At the same time that they were making these incremental, feel-good measures towards climate action, they approved Baie du Nord for one billion more barrels of oil to be burned for more greenhouse gases, and they persist in the insanity, the obscenity of taking public money to build a Trans Mountain pipeline for diluted bitumen to further fuel the climate crisis. I say, shame.

• (1925)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, our focus is on reducing combustion of fuels, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are doing it across all of our sectors. We are putting a cap on oil and gas emissions, and that also goes to the emissions that are happening right here in our country. We are working across all sectors. It is important that we do it quickly, but that we do it correctly so that it actually sticks and is done properly.

That is what we are doing right now.

PASSPORTS

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be back here in the House of Commons with my colleagues as we get back to the routine here in Ottawa, and to our job on this side of the House of holding the government to account on the many issues and problems our country is facing.

On that, I want to follow up on my question from question period in June, before we rose, on the chaos we were seeing at the time at Passport Canada. In my question, the scene at that time was absolute chaos in every part of this country for Canadians simply wanting to apply for or renew their passports. We had Canadians each day by the hundreds, if not by the thousands, lined up in lawn chairs at Service Canadas and Passport Canadas, and coming to our MP offices begging for help as they began to travel once again. It was bad.

The government said it was going to address it, and shortly after the House recessed for the summer, the cabinet announced that it had created a special committee focusing on delivering results on customer service. Ten cabinet ministers came together, and I will note here that in the Toronto Star, days after that announcement, the headline read, “Passport delay task force wants something ‘tangible’ within weeks”. That was said by the minister who was co-chairing it. “This is about listening first”, she said, “That’s how I operate: I get the facts, I listen, and then I act... I want Canadians to know that we are there for them, we are there with them, and we

will get to the bottom of this.” June 28 was the date of that Toronto Star article.

I had hoped I could come back today and do a late show this evening to thank the government for solving the problem. In fact, unfortunately it is the opposite. I can say to members, based on the experience in my constituency office and the experiences I hear about from many people in my riding, and I know it is a growing and continued frustration across this country, that it is just as bad today when it comes to service standards at Passport Canada.

I am grateful to my constituency staff in Cornwall and in our Winchester satellite office, and I can confirm that, despite the government’s pledge months ago to improve the situation, we are still getting dozens of transfer requests, because people are travelling in the coming days and weeks and still have not gotten their passports. Dozens of people are inquiring at our office, saying they applied in March, April or May, and still have not heard back.

The irony that so many say to me, and it is so true, is that they submit their passport application through the mail or through an MP office, Service Canada or Passport Canada, and very quickly they charge the credit card within a matter of days, but then it is a matter of months and months of waiting for a document, when our standard used to be, at some point, about two, three or maybe four weeks in tough times.

Months in, the government is saying it is spending, hiring and doing all these things, but it is resulting in nearly zero change for the average Canadian who is trying to get their passport. We are seeing and living that in Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, and as a matter of fact, I just read, within the last few weeks on CTV Toronto, a headline that says there are massive lines for SIN cards and passports in the greater Toronto area. Lines outside Service Canadas like Brampton’s are not dissipating. As the fall semester looms, many international students are arriving in Canada, and they expect this problem to continue.

When is the date that Canadians can get back to normal standard customer service levels at Passport Canada? There are apparently 10 cabinet ministers, millions of dollars and people being hired yet, months later, we are back this fall and we are still in the same situation we left in June.

• (1930)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is wonderful to be back in the House with colleagues and to see you in the chair.

I want to thank my colleague across the way, the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, for his follow-up question. As a matter of fact, I have news on the progress that has been made over the summer to share with the House and colleagues who are here.

I would like to point out and we need to acknowledge that Service Canada employees have been working flat out to deal with this unprecedented situation. They have taken countless days and hours and weeks, working overtime and on weekends, because we knew we needed to take this seriously and because we know members like my colleague across the way agreed with us that this was important to Canadians.

Our Service Canada employees are deeply aware, as is the minister, that the timely processing and delivery of passports is a vital service that has been severely disrupted in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic. The minister has made it clear in numerous public events and media interviews that fixing the problem is her priority, and that is exactly what she is doing. The figures change every day, but these examples help tell the story of the enormous efforts that are going into giving Canadians the service they deserve.

Therefore, let us start with dates. Since April 1, Service Canada has issued over a million passports. For the week of September 12 to September 18, Service Canada issued 68,550 passports. Starting in the week of June 20, triage measures were implemented in 17 passport offices across the country. On July 25, Service Canada expanded the passport pickup service to five additional passport offices: Brampton, Whitby, Pointe-Claire, Calgary Sundance and Richmond.

Here are a few more dates. On July 29, Service Canada announced that Canadians who mailed a completed application more than 20 business days ago and are travelling within the next 20 business days can visit any of our over 300 Service Canada centres to make a transfer request themselves. This guarantees that their application is processed in time for their travel. Service Canada continues to introduce new measures to improve passport service delivery and decrease wait times for Canadians as it works through the unprecedented demands and volume.

For example, the triage system introduced this summer in 17 of our 35 passport offices has made a significant impact in reducing the line-ups. In addition to the existing passport offices offering pickup service to Canadians, Canadians can apply for and pick up their passport at the following Service Canada centres. I will list them, just so we all know: Trois-Rivières, Quebec; Sherbrooke, Quebec; Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario; Kingston, Ontario; Sudbury, Ontario; Charlottetown, P.E.I.; Red Deer, Alberta; and, Lethbridge, Alberta. Unlike the regular Service Canada centres, these eight locations offer 10-day service.

Canadians who need their passport in fewer than 10 business days will need to visit a passport office that offers express or urgent pickup service. The expansion of pickup sites will allow many Canadians who need to pick up their passports to do so closer to their homes, because, like the member across the way, we heard that distance was an issue. In fact, Service Canada is working toward in-person passport services within 50 kilometres of the homes of nearly all Canadians. Also, more scheduled outreach sites that

pertain to certain passport services will be added in the coming weeks across the country, and I look forward to updating the member again.

These challenges have been achieved by increased staffing, which has given Service Canada tools to vastly improve and expedite in-person service. Service Canada employees are working hard, putting in overtime on evenings and weekends to service Canadians in applying for their passports, and it is important we acknowledge that. I want to thank the member opposite for his question and for his advocacy.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's response, but I want to highlight a couple of things in the one minute that I have left. Again, there are 10 cabinet ministers apparently focused on this. Promises have been made of more spending, more staff and more hiring, but at the end of the day the one thing that is absent is that it is taking months upon months, and there are hundreds of people in lines in communities like Brampton. Brampton apparently got improved service, and here we are still seeing lines, confusion and frustration.

Members are going to hear me speak about this several times over the course of this fall's parliamentary session, because it is not just Passport Canada. When it comes to Service Canada, CRA, Veterans Affairs and everything that the federal government touches these days, I will say the words of the Auditor General of Canada: The Liberal government is spending more money and it is getting fewer results.

I will ask one last time, what date? With all this spending, this plan and 10 cabinet ministers, when is the service standard going to get back to the way it should be?

• (1935)

Ms. Ya'ara Saks: Mr. Speaker, as the member and most Canadians know, after two years of travel restrictions in this pandemic there was a massive surge of applications for passports both in Canada and around the world. This has led to delays in the processing and issuing of passports. Most of those applications were not just simple renewals. The majority were in fact much more complex applications for new passports and in particular passports for children.

The minister has been adamant that Service Canada must improve services because the situation is not acceptable. Canadians need their passports. We will keep Canadians informed as the situation evolves.

As always, we encourage people to plan ahead to make sure they have valid passports before booking their travel.

HEALTH

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week marks one year since the 2021 election and it has been another difficult year for many, with more uncertainty on the horizon. The impacts of the pandemic continue to be felt in our communities. Our health care system is under intense strain and the rising cost of living is adding stress to the daily lives of Canadians.

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In the last election the Liberals made a promise to Canadians that they would take steps to improve access to mental health care here in Canada. That is certainly needed as polls have shown that about half of Canadians suffered from worsened mental health since the onset of the pandemic. Unfortunately, too many Canadians are unable to access mental health care when they need it because of long wait-lists or financial barriers. We need a national mental health wait-time strategy to ensure people can access support in a timely way. We need to break down the financial barriers that keep people from getting the care they need.

A cornerstone of the Liberals' promises on mental health was to establish a new permanent transfer to the provinces and territories to expand publicly funded mental health care and address backlogs. Canadians were told that an initial investment of \$4.5 billion over five years would be made in this country through the Canada mental health transfer by the Liberals. Here we are a year later with no idea of when this money will get out the door. When the government announced its intention to establish a \$10-a-day child care program, there were deals with all the provinces and territories in place within a year. Meanwhile, the Canada mental health transfer was nowhere to be found in the 2022 budget, and there has been no transparency on when this much-needed investment will be made.

That is why I tabled Motion No. 67, to encourage the government to act without delay in creating this transfer and to take the steps needed to ensure mental health is put on an equal footing in our universal public health care system.

I am going to read the text of Motion No. 67, as it reflects what mental health stakeholders have been telling us and calling for. It states:

That

- (a) the House recognize that,
 - (i) Canada is experiencing a mental health and substance use crisis that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic,
 - (ii) too many Canadians are unable to access mental health or substance use supports in a timely manner,
 - (iii) lack of access to community-based mental health and substance use services increases demands on hospital emergency rooms and primary care providers,
 - (iv) untreated or inadequately treated mental illness carries significant social and economic costs; and
- (b) in the opinion of the House, the government should:
 - (i) without delay develop legislation that will enshrine in law parity between physical and mental health in Canada's universal public healthcare system, ensure timely access to evidence-based, culturally appropriate, publicly funded mental health and substance use services beyond hospital and physician settings, recognize the importance of investing in the social determinants of health, mental health promotion, and mental illness prevention, and include national performance standards and accountabilities for mental health and substance use services,
 - (ii) without delay establish the Canada mental health transfer to sustainably fund the provision of mental health and substance use services and disburse an initial investment of \$4.5 billion to the provinces and territories,
 - (iii) report to Parliament annually on progress towards achieving national performance standards for mental health and substance use services.

As we try to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and navigate uncertain economic times, mental health cannot wait. Therefore, I ask the government when it will follow through on its promises on mental health and deliver help to Canadians who are struggling.

• (1940)

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni for his advocacy and for the opportunity to address the House on what we are doing to support the mental health needs of Canadians.

We know that this pandemic has had a toll on the mental health of Canadians, due in part to the increased isolation, stress, anxiety, depression and loneliness that so many faced during the pandemic. Additionally, COVID-19 has pushed an already stressed health care system to its limits, and it can be a challenge for Canadians to know where to look for help, to find help, to find the right help and to access that help right away.

Right from the start of the pandemic, we have been there for Canadians during these difficult times. We acted right away during the very early days of the pandemic by introducing Wellness Together Canada. The Wellness Together Canada portal has served as an invaluable connection for many Canadians, allowing them to get the help they need even when they could not leave their homes, or to use it as a stepping stone to receive advice on where to find more specialized care.

[*Translation*]

The Wellness Together Canada portal is convenient and accessible, and it is working. With more than 2.7 million users, we know that this portal is helping to meet Canadians' needs.

[*English*]

Another need that we are addressing is the establishment of a three-digit suicide prevention hotline. As of next fall, on November 30, 2023, Canadians will have access to an easy-to-remember 988 number to call when they are in need.

We also recognize that even more needs to be done.

[*Translation*]

The Canada mental health transfer is a new permanent federal transfer to the provinces and territories to help governments expand the delivery of high-quality, accessible and free mental health services. Our government pledges to ensure this new permanent transfer is well-crafted. That is why budget 2022 includes a renewed commitment to work with the provinces and territories to develop a mental health transfer.

The Government of Canada also remains committed to funding the transfer with an initial investment of \$4.5 billion over five years.

[English]

The Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has also undertaken extensive stakeholder outreach to gather views to inform the development of a comprehensive and evidence-based mental health plan. This engagement is ongoing and will also inform the development of the mental health transfer. The mental health transfer will be established with the benefit of input from the ongoing provincial, territorial and stakeholder engagement.

[Translation]

Our government has made historic investments in mental health, including \$5 billion to the provinces and territories through ongoing bilateral agreements, which will provide \$600 million annually to support the 2017 common statement of principles on shared health priorities. This is currently helping to increase the availability of mental health and addiction supports for Canadians. This existing transfer provides \$600 million annually until 2027.

As we have also announced, we plan to work with the Standards Council of Canada to develop national standards for mental health and addiction services to meet the mental health and addiction needs of Canadians. We invested \$45 million in this initiative in budget 2021.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the government announced its intention to establish the \$10-a-day child care program, and there were deals with provinces and territories in place within a year. Here we are a year later, and when it comes to mental health transfers, the Liberals still have not delivered their 2021 election promise.

Too many Canadians cannot access appropriate mental health or substance use services in a timely manner, either because they would be required to pay out of pocket or because they face long wait-lists for publicly funded care. The average wait time for adult residential treatment for substance use is 100 days.

In Ontario, there are more than 28,000 children on wait-lists for community-based mental health services that can range from 67

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days to more than two and a half years depending on the service, exceeding clinically appropriate wait times. This is unacceptable. These are children.

I am calling on the government to be more transparent and to move rapidly on its \$4.5-billion transfer. It is needed now. Mental health care is needed now.

• (1945)

[Translation]

Mrs. Élisabeth Brière: Mr. Speaker, I understand my colleague's question. I agree with him that the crisis has cost lives and that we have to take action to adequately meet the mental health needs of Canadians.

As we have often said, mental health is an integral part of health. Our government is making it a priority. Since 2015, we have invested several historic amounts, including \$5 billion for access to mental health care, nearly \$600 million for the mental health strategy for indigenous peoples, \$140 million for veterans, \$45 million for national mental health standards, and \$270 million for the Wellness Together Canada portal. We remain committed to this new mental health transfer of \$4.5 billion over five years.

[English]

The establishment of a new, permanent Canada mental health transfer is one of our top commitments. The government is fully committed to designing and implementing a new, permanent Canada mental health transfer.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[Translation]

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:47 p.m.)

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