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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 16th report later this day.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC) moved that Bill S-224, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (trafficking in persons), be read the first time.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the modern-day slavery of human trafficking is happening today within 10 blocks of our homes. The inspiration for this bill was brought to me by a constituent of mine, Darla, who is a survivor.

In June 2019, I introduced a private member's bill, Bill C-461, which was a product of meaningful consultation in our community. Although that bill did not pass, today I am pleased to sponsor Bill S-224, which would simplify the definition of exploitation for trafficking offences in the Criminal Code by removing the unfair burden placed on exploited individuals to prove there was an element of fear in their abuse.

I want to introduce this to my fellow colleagues as a non-partisan issue. I thank Senator Salma Ataullahjan for her excellent work in the Senate, and my colleague, the member for Peace River—Westlock, for his commitment to ending human trafficking.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

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

[*Translation*]

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

(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if you seek it at this time, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be amended as follows: Mr. Nater (Perth—Wellington) for Mrs. Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek), Mr. Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe) for Mr. Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon), Mr. Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable) for Mr. McCauley (Edmonton West) and Mr. Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton) for Mr. Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle).

● (1005)

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC) moved:

That the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration presented on Monday, April 4, 2022, be concurred in.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a very important issue of international human rights, a subject on which we may even find some rare agreement with my friends in the corner.

In the context of this motion, I want to say that we have the honour of recognizing the presence in Canada, in particular here in Ottawa, of Mrs. Kara-Murza, the wife of Vladimir Kara-Murza. She is here advocating for the release of her husband and, indeed, to promote justice and human rights.

Routine Proceedings

Vladimir Kara-Murza is likely among the most well-known heroes inside of Russia. He joins others who are fearlessly standing for freedom and human rights. Mr. Kara-Murza is currently imprisoned and has survived multiple assassination attempts. I salute Mrs. Kara-Murza, as well as Mr. Kara-Murza for his courage and work in magnifying these issues. I join my voice to others in calling for Mr. Kara-Murza's release.

In the spirit of recognizing the courageous Russian opposition figures who are standing against the invasion of Ukraine and standing against the human rights abuses taking place inside of Russia, I am seeking the concurrence of the House for a motion that I moved at the immigration committee earlier this year. It was a motion to oppose the invasion of Ukraine launched by Russian President Vladimir Putin, to recognize the courageous Russian opposition and, really, the importance of that opposition in the larger context of what we are seeing in the world today and to have immigration measures put in place to provide support and assistance to these brave Russian human rights defenders.

The motion that I put forward at the immigration committee and for which I seek the concurrence of the House is as follows:

We

(a) condemn the continuing attack on Ukraine ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin,

(b) recognize that a growing proportion of the Russian people are bravely resisting and opposing this attack,

(c) call on the Government of Canada to develop measures to support Russian dissidents, human rights defenders, and conscientious objectors within the military who are seeking to urgently flee Russia, while ensuring that necessary security precautions are taken.

That is the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. It was adopted by the citizenship and immigration committee on April 4.

Of course, the context has significantly shifted since then and has arguably made the role of the Russian opposition even more important, as we see increasing human rights violations inside of Russia and as we see, in response to the defeats on the battlefield that Russia is facing, the continuing brutalization of the Russian people and of the Ukrainian people by the Russian regime, which is throwing untrained, unprepared conscripts at the front lines and simply trying, in a sense, to pile up corpses of its own people in a vain hope of stopping the Ukrainian advance.

We are seeing that this brutal regime has no regard for the lives of the Ukrainian people. It also has no regard for the lives of the Russian people. Estimates are now that more people have sought to flee Russia than were actually involved in the invasion. It is quite a number and quite a magnitude. We are seeing the rallies and the acts of resistance by people in Russia who are trying to call out what the regime is doing. They are defending the rights of Ukrainians and are also defending their own rights to choose and shape their own future.

I will have more to say about the Russian opposition, but let me just start by making a few comments in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, in particular about the things that Canada needs to do right away to support Ukraine. Ukraine is winning and succeeding, but they need continuing support from Canada and other

western allies. I would say we primarily need to think in two areas: the area of weapons support and the area of energy security.

• (1010)

In the area of weapons support, various voices from Ukraine, including very forthright comments on the weekend from a Ukrainian member of Parliament, have said that Canada needs to do more in terms of supplying weapons. There seems to be a hesitation in terms of supplying vitally required weapons from Canada, and Canada is falling behind in its support for Ukraine. More is required in terms of supplying weapons. We in the official opposition will continue to push the government to give Ukraine all of the weapons supplies it needs.

There have been other voices connecting to the government that have called on it to do more. Canada's own ambassador to the United Nations, Bob Rae, has called out the government and said that, in his view, the government needs to be doing all that is required to supply Ukraine with the weapons that it needs. We need more engagement from the government in terms of supplying weapons. We were late to the party on that in many respects. We should have been supplying lethal weapons to Ukraine prior to the invasion, and we should be doing more now in the area of weapons.

As to the area of energy security, right away after the invasion, the Conservatives had a motion in this House that recognized the critical role of energy security in this conflict and that said Canada needed to seize the moment to correct what have been seven years of failed energy policy, to ramp up our energy exports to Europe and to supply Europe with the energy support and security it requires. We recognized the government's failures in developing the energy sector over the last seven years. Now would have been the time to recognize those failures of policy and to correct them, yet the government is continuing to undermine efforts to expand energy development and export in response to these circumstances.

This is critical because most of the world's democracies, as it happens, are geographically small and more populous nations that therefore tend to rely on imports of natural resources, especially energy resources from other countries. Canada is relatively unique in the democratic world, as it is a geographically large, less densely populated country that is rich in natural resources. I believe that gives us a special vocation within the community of democratic nations. We have the responsibility to supply like-minded democratic allies with the kinds of energy resources that they require in order to have security. We should step up and fulfill that role, because if we are not supplying energy and providing that security, our partners in Europe and in the Asia-Pacific, other democratic countries, will find themselves forced to be more reliant on more hostile, undemocratic sources of energy. We have seen how failures in Canadian energy policy to support our allies have left those allies more dependent on hostile powers like Russia and therefore potentially more vulnerable to energy blackmail.

Routine Proceedings

We cannot reverse these seven years of policy failures overnight, but the first step should be to recognize the problem. I note the Deputy Prime Minister has made comments about the need to get serious about this issue, and I would hope she would be even more explicit about acknowledging that her government has failed on these issues and acknowledging the current circumstances underlying the need to correct that failure as quickly as possible.

When it comes to supporting Ukraine in general, Canada needs to step up in the area of weapons and Canada needs to step up in the area of energy. In particular, we can also step up, as it relates to this motion, in our support of the Russian opposition, recognizing the critical role that it is playing and that it is going to play.

In some ways it is difficult to know all of the dynamics that are going on inside of Russia. We can speculate about what may be happening, what may be being contemplated and what the different figures opposed to the regime in Russia are doing. We can speculate about those things, but we can also learn the lessons of history and draw from those lessons in our understanding of what might be going on and of the critical role that other countries can play in offering support.

As I have told the House before, my grandmother was a Holocaust survivor. I have done a lot of reading about the kind of anti-Nazi German resistance that was in place throughout the Nazi era but especially toward the end of the Second World War. It culminated in and continued after the Valkyrie plot.

● (1015)

There are a lot of lessons we can learn for understanding the kind of resistance that can exist to authoritarian or totalitarian regimes and how it manifests itself. I would commend a few books to the consideration of hon. members on that era.

I recently read *Disobeying Hitler: German Resistance After Valkyrie*, by Randall Hansen. What he describes is the multi-faceted nature of resistance that can take place in a totalitarian system. Sometimes people are speaking out or protesting, and we have seen some of that in Russia. We have forms of military resistance seeking political change. Hansen also speaks in particular about how disobedience is a form of resistance.

When we have a totalitarian regime giving orders to the military, we can then sometimes have instances where those orders are ignored or massaged to minimize the destruction and the loss of life. He chronicles many examples of this at the end of the Second World War, when low-level forms of resistance or disobedience by people within the German army, like disobeying orders that had come from high command, preserved infrastructure and lives, and had some degree of positive effect.

We can hope that what we will see more of going forward inside of Russia is this kind of multi-dimensional resistance, where people in the military are maybe ordered to engage in atrocities or to respond in particular ways and they are ignoring or massaging those orders or maybe surrendering without authorization and taking these kinds of simple steps to try to resist the oppression of the Russian regime and its violence toward Ukraine, but also toward its own people.

The other thing I certainly found interesting about reading stories of the anti-Nazi German resisters is that many of them were motivated by a deep sense of nationalism; that is, they loved their country, they were committed to the honour and dignity of their country, and they felt their country was being betrayed by the regime. These figures were key in the German resistance, people like Admiral Canaris. They had this sense of loving their country more than their government did, and they also came from elite circles. Many of them were in positions of privilege and power within the system, which gave them the means to resist. That existed alongside everyday people who were protesting in the streets in select moments and who were maybe distributing materials that were critical of the regime.

In the case of the anti-Nazi German resistance, people did not fulfill their full potential, but they had an impact. They led to lives being saved, but they also provided the moral basis for what came next. They did manage to show the world that there was an other Germany, a different Germany, that was not represented by the fascist regime.

We see a similar thing happening in Russia, where people like Vladimir Kara-Murza, whose heroism, resistance and sacrifice, and that of many others show the fact that there is a different Russia; there is a Russia represented by people who believe in freedom and democracy, but also who deeply love their country, love their culture and who do not buy into this fiction that somehow there is an inevitable antagonism between Russia and the West. They recognize that the values of freedom and democracy and recognition of universal human dignity are universal and they want to see Russia have a government that embraces these ideas and principles.

We can recognize the value of the Russian opposition, the role it is playing and the role that it must continue to play. In particular, what are we seeing right now?

● (1020)

This motion was tabled in the House on April 4. As I said, there are many things we cannot know about what may be going on inside of Russia, but we do see evidence, and we have heard evidence at the foreign affairs committee and elsewhere, that there are emerging cracks. There has been speculation, for instance, if the military would carry out an order in Russia to use a nuclear weapon and the devastating consequences that would no doubt have for Russia. Would such an order be the occasion for resistance? We would certainly hope it would be.

We can also see how, in the face of Russia's further mobilization, it is drafting people who are outside of military age, people who are, in some cases, not physically fit for military service, and forcing them to the front line without anything resembling appropriate training. This is rightly provoking a sense of resistance and frustration within Russia, where people are protesting or are fleeing.

Routine Proceedings

It is really important for us to recognize, in the context of this conflict, that everybody involved is an individual. People are responsible for their own choices and actions. Of course, many people around the regime itself are responsible for the evil actions it is undertaking. There are also Russian people who are opposed to it. We need to reflect on that and do all we can to support the Russian opposition.

In Canada's engagement in response to the invasion of Ukraine, we need to do more with respect to weapons, energy policy and support for the opposition. The motion on April 4 was presented prior to the order for mobilization and we see all the more now, in response to the resistance, the need for Canada and other countries to respond in offering that support.

As well, the motion speaks to immigration measures. This comes to us from the immigration committee. It talks about offering channels of support, with respect to immigration, for Russian dissidents and human rights defenders who are fleeing. For years, the Conservatives have been advocating special supports in terms of immigration for human rights defenders. We have talked about it in the context of a special program for Hong Kong and other situations. Our contention in general is that those who have taken a stand, who have fought for human rights and as a result of it face severe threats and persecution would make great Canadians. They can richly contribute to our country in our understanding and appreciation for the values of freedom and democracy, and we can provide those people with an opportunity to be safe here and a platform to continue to do their work and advocacy. This is one of the concrete measures that we are taking.

I know there is some controversy in other countries about the question of the number of people who are fleeing Russia and who should be able to come here, and so forth. However, it is important to underline that the motion speaks specifically to human rights defence. It speaks specifically to those who wish to flee, those who have been actively engaged in human rights work, who are active dissidents and who are active and clear conscientious objectors.

This is the focus of the motion, and on that basis it should enjoy broad-based support in the House. I hope members will be prepared to add their voice to this important motion and we will be able to get this motion supported, voted on and adopted by all members.

The House, standing together, should express its support for the Russian opposition and express its recognition that the Putin regime does not represent the Russian people. We should recognize those brave Russians, and many who have private objections, who have been vocal and public in opposing the regime in various ways. It would send a powerful signal if the Canadian House of Commons recognized, as part of this, that we support the Ukrainian people in their resistance to Putin's tyranny, the Russian people in their resistance to Putin's tyranny, the Belarusian people in their efforts to resist Putin's tyranny and other people who are affected by the violence of that regime.

The House of Commons, the government, Canada, should do more by supplying weapons, energy security and supporting the Russian opposition. I hope we are able to send that strong message today in support of the people of Ukraine and the people of Russia.

• (1025)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for mentioning the visit to Ottawa of Evgenia Kara-Murza, the wife of Vladimir Kara-Murza, who we had an opportunity to meet with last night.

I had the chance to meet Vladimir Kara-Murza a few years ago through the World Movement for Democracy. I found him to be a man of conviction, a man of courage, a man who is an inspiration to all those in Russia who are fighting for freedom and democracy, as well as fighting against tyranny and authoritarianism.

I have called for the immediate release of Vladimir Kara-Murza. Does my colleague join in that call?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, yes, absolutely. I said that earlier and I will repeat that call. I hope we will hear from more members adding their voice to that.

It is very much appreciated that Mrs. Evgenia Kara-Murza is in Ottawa. It is really powerful for members of Parliament to hear a personal story directly from someone. I salute the courage of Vladimir Kara-Murza and of the many others who are speaking out. There will be many who have been murdered, who were imprisoned, and whose names we will never know, sadly. We honour their courage, as well as that of Vladimir Kara-Murza and call for his release.

I believe Mrs. Kara-Murza is going to be joining us at the foreign affairs committee tomorrow. We will have an opportunity to hear her testimony on the record. I am not sure if that is 100% confirmed. I hope I am not telling tales out of school, but I hope more of the public will be able to hear directly her testimony during those hearings.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for bringing forward this motion.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, and we are in the midst of wrapping up our own study into Canada's security posture vis-a-vis Russia. We have also heard testimony about the need to protect Russian dissidents, how they can be a valuable source of information.

The security threats from Russia are multipronged. They are not only military but are also in the area of cybersecurity. We know that Russian criminal organizations are often working hand in hand with the Russian government to go after Canadian cybersecurity interests.

I wonder if the member could comment on how Russian dissidents, who are in the cybersecurity field, might have that intricate knowledge of Russian attacks against Canadian cybersecurity infrastructure. That could also be a very valuable source of intelligence to help us fully understand the nature of the 21st century threats that are headed our way.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, Canada has a lot of work to do when it comes to strengthening our cybersecurity response and our response to foreign state-backed interference in general, recognizing the complexity of that. Sometimes it is state actors and sometimes it is state-backed actors. We are being told by our security agency that we need to improve our sophistication there. This is one of many examples where human rights defenders from Russia and from other countries can significantly contribute to Canada. We talked about that in the context of the government's program for Hong Kong, where it was said that one had to be a new graduate and meet other criteria.

What we said at the time, and I believe the member's party was in agreement with us, was that the people who had stood up, who had stuck their necks out and fought publicly for human rights against an authoritarian regime, regardless of any other potential qualifications, those who had shown that level of courage and readiness for sacrifice, would make great Canadians and could significantly contribute to our country.

Of course, many of these dissidents will bring particular information that will reflect their own expertise or their own area of work. Regardless, those who have been resistors to authoritarianism, those who have been brave human rights defenders, would make great Canadians. We should be putting in place programs to, in particular, recognize and welcome these brave human rights defenders.

• (1030)

Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is a very important issue. We have just heard that one of the impacts of the Russian war on the world is IT infrastructure. Another one is energy security. Think about Canada having the third-largest reserves of oil and natural gas in the world and about the German chancellor who came to Canada looking for help with potential energy sources and we could not provide that, unfortunately.

With respect to our position as an energy power in the world, I wonder if the member has some comments on what Canada could and should do to help the people of Europe as they deal with this issue.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his excellent work on the immigration committee, which adopted this motion, and always for his hard work on the file.

When it comes to the issue of energy security, the government has it backward. It is granting a waiver to our sanctions to allow Canadian work to be done on a turbine for the export of Russian gas to Germany. We should be focused on building the infrastructure to have Canadian gas supplying Europe. Instead, we are not doing that, but we are supplying technology to facilitate the export of Russian gas to Europe.

The foreign affairs committee heard from a Siemens representative yesterday, who said that not granting this waiver would actually have no impact on workers here in Canada. This completely contradicts what the government has said. The government's latest rationale was that allowing this waiver of sanctions was about jobs in Canada. Siemens, the company involved, directly contradicted that.

It remains a mystery to me why the government is facilitating and granting exceptions to sanctions to facilitate the export of Rus-

sian gas to Germany instead of focusing on building up the Canadian energy sector. It is not going to happen overnight. We have had seven years of failed energy policy under the Liberal government, but now is the time to stop digging, to try to get out of that hole and for Canada to realize its vocation within the democratic world of providing our European and Asia-Pacific allies with the energy security that will make them less dependent on authoritarian powers.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering why the member chose today to discuss this, when we were supposed to be debating Canada's environment this morning. Canadians, as a whole, have many concerns related to the environment. Bill S-5 would go a long way in dealing with those concerns. What the member wants to talk about today could have just as easily been brought up in an opposition day motion.

Why is the Conservative Party choosing to prevent debate on Bill S-5 in favour of this being debated, as opposed to proposing an opposition day motion or requesting a take-note debate or emergency debate in the House? Why is it avoiding the discussion on our environment?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, the House has sat for three weeks thus far this fall, and the government did not call Bill S-5 on any of the days in those three weeks. The government has clearly demonstrated that Bill S-5 is not a priority, and I suppose the member could talk to his House leader about why the government has not chosen to prioritize this bill.

This issue of supporting the Russian opposition is critical. We felt it that was valuable and important to have this debate at a time when Evgenia Kara-Murza is in Ottawa, engaging in this advocacy and supporting the Russian opposition. This is an opportunity for all members to call for Vladimir Kara-Murza's release and to express our support for the Russian opposition.

Later today, the government will have an opportunity to call whatever legislation is its priority. The government has most of the day available to it, but there are some limited opportunities the opposition has to raise its priorities and this is one opportunity. We have chosen to raise this important issue of supporting the Russian opposition in a non-partisan way, and we hope it gathers the support of all members.

• (1035)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to pick up on what the member just said. I, for one, like all members of the Liberal caucus, understand what is taking place in the Conservative Party today, and it is a little discouraging. The Conservative Party has many different ways in which it can address a wide spectrum of issues, yet it has chosen today to do this, a day on which we were supposed to be starting a very important debate on Bill S-5.

Routine Proceedings

Bill S-5 ultimately carries through on many platform issues from more than one political entity in the House that deal with our environment. I know many members opposite are climate deniers and do not recognize that climate is having an impact that needs to be addressed, but this legislation, Bill S-5, deals in good part with an issue that is so important to our country.

The member opposite who introduced this motion had many different options he could have chosen, and I will reference them. If the member was genuine in wanting to be able to talk about issues of human rights and so forth, he could have brought it forward in the form of an emergency debate. Right after the petitions, the member could have stood and asked the Speaker for an emergency debate and made his case. The Conservative opposition chose not to do that.

The Conservative opposition could have approached the House leadership and said it would like to have a take-note debate on the issue. I am part of the House leadership team on the government side, and to the best of my knowledge there was not one word on the issue the member has brought forward today. There was not one word in regard to this being such an important issue and their wanting to be able to debate it today on the floor of the House of Commons.

Conservatives had two other opportunities so far in the last few weeks to bring forward this issue. They are called opposition day motions. They do not need approval from the Speaker for that like for an emergency debate. They do not need the government to say it agrees and will call it as a take-note debate. An opposition day is a day on which the Conservative Party gets to choose what the House is going to debate. Conservatives also chose not to use that opportunity.

Is it really a priority of the Conservative Party under its current leadership? I would argue it is not. Why do we have this motion before us today? It is because the Conservative Party does not want to see Bill S-5 advance through the House of Commons. It is sending a message even before we can introduce the legislation. The ministers are here in order to bring forward the legislation and begin the debate, and we have the Conservatives trying to prevent that debate from taking place.

When I posed the question to the member opposite, part of his response was that it is the government that sets the legislative agenda, and that if it was such a huge priority, why had it not introduced the legislation. He said that it had many days to do so and guessed it was not a priority. That is what the Conservative Party says after it failed in the other three areas in which it could have brought in the motion it wants to debate this morning.

The member is partially correct on that, if I want to be fair. The government does set the agenda. However, without any sense of co-operation coming from opposition parties, in particular the official opposition, the number of things the government can actually bring in is limited.

• (1040)

We ask, “Well, how many government days have there been?” There have not been that many days since we have been back, and what is it that we have been doing? We are still dealing with pan-

demic relief. We are supporting Canadians who are trying to get through some very difficult times. We are establishing new national programs that are having an impact on millions of Canadians coast to coast to coast, while the Conservative Party wants to go back to its old ways of filibustering and preventing the House from being able to pass the measures that are so critically important to Canadians. Instead, it wants to start the filibuster all over again.

I get it. The Conservatives do not want us to advance on the environment. It is disappointing. We have seen the Conservative Party flip once again on the environmental issues, and the best example of that, in fact, is the price on pollution. With the price on pollution, we will recall that every member of the Conservative Party in the last federal election told voters that they would support a price on pollution. They all campaigned for it in the last federal election. They have taken a complete flip.

Is it any wonder that now, today, when we are supposed to be debating Bill S-5, a member brings forward a motion to prevent us from debating Bill S-5, on the environment, and we get the Conservative Party of Canada, the loyal opposition party, saying, “No”?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the hon. member has babbled on for the last five minutes and has not mentioned Russian dissidents or the topic at hand yet. It should be relevant to the topic and the motion that is at hand.

If you would please advise him of that and—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): As the members well know, there is a lot of latitude in what is considered relevant, and the hon. parliamentary secretary will certainly get there.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, members will find that everything I have spoken about thus far has been referenced by the member who brought forward the motion today. The member interrupted my speech to say that I am not being relevant, but everything I have said thus far is a reflection on what the previous member was talking about and why he felt it was important. He was critical of me when I asked him a question. He said the government had no other priorities and that was why he was bringing it forward. I am addressing exactly what the member brought forward. For another member to say that I am not being relevant, I think they need to refresh themselves.

When it comes to the issue of Ukraine and what is taking place in Russia today, I do not need to be lectured in any fashion by the Conservative Party. We have been a government of action on that front on a multitude of levels. However, I will get to that after I finish addressing the points the member who introduced this motion raised in his response. When he said to me that the government has no priorities or did not make Bill S-5 a priority, I tried to explain to the member why that is the case. It is almost as if the Conservative Party, by making that particular point of order, is conceding the fact that I may be right in my assertions. I would argue that I am. Many of them are feeling uncomfortable.

The member brings forward a motion. There is not too much to the motion itself. If one reads the motion, it states that the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration report the following to the House:

We

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

I believe it is important that the House recognize where the priorities of the opposition are. Take a look at the contrast between the Government of Canada and the opposition party today. When we have the opportunity to deal with the environment, they choose to filibuster. That is really what this is about. It is not about the motion that is before us. There is a motion on the floor, but it has nothing to do with the content of the motion. That is the point I am making.

The opposition members do not want to see the advancement of the government's agenda on the environment, and they have demonstrated that by the policy decisions they have made. The policy decisions virtually ignore the concerns that Canadians have from coast to coast to coast with respect to our environment. Instead, they are saying they want to talk about what is taking place in Russia and the impacts of the war in Ukraine.

Hon. Ed Fast: Do you not want to talk about it?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member says that we do not want to talk about it. We have had emergency debates on it. Questions and answers have taken place. There have been all sorts of opportunities. I even highlighted those opportunities to remind members of them.

In fairness to members across the way who are a little frustrated with some of the comments I made, I suspect they really did not have anything to do with what is happening this morning. I suspect this is from the Conservative House leadership team, the people who are in the back. This includes, I suggest, their new, shiny leader's office. He has made the decision that we do not need a price on pollution and has made other decisions that have ultimately displaced some people inside the chamber in terms of where they sit.

● (1045)

There are things that are really important, and that is not to say what is taking place in Russia or Ukraine today is not important. We all know that is important. That is why we have agreed in the past. If we were to check on it, we would find that there were emergency debates on what is taking place in Ukraine. Now is not the time for us to be talking about it this morning. This afternoon we are going to be talking about other important legislation. This morning provided us the opportunity, from now until two o'clock, to hear members on all sides of the House talk about the importance of the environment and what it means to our constituents, and to take a look at substantial legislation.

I know the member for Winnipeg South came in this morning to virtually take note of all the different comments that were going to be made, because I know how aggressive and supportive he is in ensuring the issues that might have been raised would, in fact, be addressed in one way or another. We had ministers who were inside the chamber to ensure that the legislation began. Now is not the

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time that we should be talking about concurrence in an immigration committee report.

The member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan started off by talking about human rights. I am a great admirer of Irwin Cotler, a former colleague. I sat, when I was in the third party, over in the corner with Mr. Cotler. He is an incredible individual and someone who genuinely understands world politics and human rights violations. I have a deep respect for the individual, and there was a special invite that was given out. I think it was yesterday, and it is really pleasing.

Vladimir Kara-Murza is a hero in the minds of many around the world because of the actions he has taken. He is living, every day, the consequence of his actions, because he is in prison unfairly because of the words he said to people around the world. His spouse is actually here in Ottawa. Like others, I received an email. Unfortunately, I could not attend, but I know, without any hesitation, its credibility, because I received the email from my friend Mr. Irwin Cotler.

That is why, when the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan starts off on the issue of human rights, I like to think that all members of the House understand and appreciate the importance of human rights. In fact, in my own home city of Winnipeg, we have the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, and I have had the opportunity to visit it on a couple of occasions, once it was completed and once during the construction phase. The level of interest in human rights continues to grow among the public.

The war that is taking place in Europe today and the amount of attention it has received has enhanced the general public's knowledge of human rights issues. We know what is taking place with the violations in Ukraine today, whether it is torture, rape or what they are doing with children. There will be consequences.

● (1050)

The Government of Canada has made it very clear that we will continue to monitor this and ensure there is a follow-through and a sense of a accountability for what is taking place there. That is something we are indeed committed to.

Even prior to when Putin began his illegal invasion, Canada was there in a very real and tangible way. Members of the Canadian Forces participated, and we put financial supports for its economy into place. There was a great deal of dialogue between Canadian members of Parliament and the members of Parliament and civil society in Ukraine. We are very much aware and the government has been supportive. I remember standing and talking about other aspects and other ways in which we can support Ukraine.

After talking with the Prime Minister and people like the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and the chair of the Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group, not to mention the community itself, where we had thousands of people show up, we understand what is taking place. However, I am going to argue that today is not the day we should be talking about this. If there is a need to talk about it, then let us work together in a take-note debate. If the Conservatives do not want that, they can use an emergency debate. If they do not want that, they can use an opposition day debate. There are other opportunities.

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Today, we are supposed to be talking about our environment and Bill S-5. I think there are a lot of people who are very disappointed in the Conservative Party once again because of its determination to prevent the House from dealing with Canada's environment. I believe there will be a cost to be paid, and the Conservatives will see that and realize that in the time ahead.

I am thankful to be allowed to share a few thoughts.

• (1055)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member made a lot of bizarre and unrelated procedural comments. I will just observe for his benefit that immediately after I spoke, the parliamentary secretary for international development got up and made what I thought was a very thoughtful intervention with respect to the issue at hand and thanked me for moving the important motion. Maybe this parliamentary secretary could consult the team within his own caucus who is responsible for foreign affairs issues before he gets up and speaks on these things, but I am much more interested in talking about the issue, rather than chasing the rabbit tracks he has put down for us.

What was the member's reaction on the weekend to comments made on CBC Radio's *The House* by a Ukrainian member of Parliament who really was sounding the alarm, saying that Canada has fallen behind with respect to supplying vital weapons and that it seems to be strangely reluctant to supply some of the key equipment Ukraine requires? Does he agree with what Ukrainian members of Parliament from various parties are saying, that Canada, which is thought of as an important friend of Ukraine certainly, and the Canadian people want to see their government do more, but it is really falling behind with respect to supporting Ukraine, whether with respect to weapons, energy or other issues?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, one thing about the members of the Liberal caucus is that we are very caring and sensitive individuals who appreciate the importance of human rights. Unlike the Conservative Party, we also understand the importance of the environment. As part of the House leadership on the government side, I know full well that the member had many opportunities to raise this issue and he chose not to because the Conservative Party of Canada is trying to do whatever it can to prevent debate on the environment.

With respect to the question the member put forward, I can assure him that this is a government that is committed to working hand in hand with allied forces to continue to support our good friends in Ukraine.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague basically just spent 20, 30 or 40 minutes—I am not even sure, but it seemed endless to me—telling us that this does not make sense and that we should be talking about something really important with Bill S-5, namely, the environment. He said that it does not make any sense that the Conservatives are holding up the work and that they do not want us to debate an important subject.

Just yesterday, the Liberals on the other side of the House imposed a gag order on Bill C-31, a very important bill on housing and health.

Is my colleague not a little embarrassed?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the member helps me make my case.

Bill C-31 would provide dental care for children under the age of 12. If we did not bring the motion forward, between the Bloc and the Conservatives, the bill would never pass. The Conservatives were prepared to filibuster it.

What do members think Bill S-5 is all about? It is on the environment, and the Conservatives are sending a very strong message. The message is that they do not want to talk about the environment and they do not want legislation on the environment. That is why they have brought in the concurrence motion.

The two of them are tied together. They are both methods the government needs to get legislation through the House. The Bloc needs to understand why we got the support from the NDP to get Bill C-31 through. Maybe they should give us the support for Bill S-5. I do not think the Conservatives are going to help us. I would like to think the Bloc could be sensitive and caring about our environment.

• (1100)

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am always in awe at how the member for Winnipeg North manages to make a master class out of indignation in his remarks.

I will say that I share his dismay that we are not talking about Bill S-5. It is a bill that is of interest to folks in northwest B.C., especially an organization called Douglas Channel Watch. It is very interested in this idea of the right to a healthy environment.

The member did spend much of his remarks talking about Bill S-5 and the environment, so I thought I would ask, which amendments to the Environmental Protection Act does he find the most compelling?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, there is quite a list I could go through, whether it would be recognizing that every individual in Canada has the right to a healthy environment as provided under the act, or that the Government of Canada must protect the rights as provided under the act and, in so doing, may balance the right with relevant factors.

If I could be granted another 20 minutes, and I could ask for leave, I would be happy to speak about our environment and go into details on this. However, I suspect the Conservative Party would not allow us to go into debate on Bill S-5. I would ask if it would be okay for me to continue to speak on Bill S-5, as I would be happy to do so.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it has been implied that somehow the government was not giving priority to Bill S-5. However, we introduced it in the Senate to make it go faster because—

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[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I must interrupt the hon. member because there seems to be a problem with the interpretation.

I am told that it is working now.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

[*English*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, the government introduced the bill in the Senate because there was room in the Senate, whereas the agenda here was a bit more gridlocked. That shows that we were very much interested in expediting the bill.

My second question to the member is whether it is possible that the Conservatives do not want to get to CEPA because CEPA is used to regulate greenhouse gases and vehicle emissions.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, my friend and colleague raises very good points on both accounts. There is a fear factor within the Conservative Party. They tend to want to shy away from anything related to the environment.

In regards to the legislative agenda, when we stop and think about it, the member is right on. With respect to Bill S-5, the Senate has put in a great deal of effort and working with the government, we now have a substantial piece of legislation that we could and should be debating. One of the reasons why the government was not in a position is because we had to deal with legislation, such as Bill C-31, Bill C-30, Bill C-22, all of which are there to put more disposable income in the pockets of Canadians.

Over 11 million Canadians benefit from those three pieces of legislation, and some of it has been very difficult to get through the House because the Conservative Party does not want them to pass. They take up the time of the House to prevent the government from getting some of this important legislation done. That is why I spent as much time out of my 20 minutes refreshing the back benches of the Conservative Party on why they should not be doing this concurrence motion. They should have allowed the debate on Bill S-5. That is what would have been good for Canadians today.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, given we are on the topic now, it is important to mention that the word “climate” is not in Bill S-5 even once. The term “greenhouse gas” is also not in Bill S-5.

If the member for Winnipeg North is serious about moving forward with Bill S-5's improvements to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, can he reflect on other options that might also be available to the governing party to do so?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the biggest option that the government has to deal with Bill S-5 is to bring forward the legislation at its earliest opportune time. For example, we are still trying to get the disability legislation through the House. We are also still trying to get through the rental subsidy legislation.

This type of legislation is absolutely critical and will likely continue to require support from other opposition parties for the government to get it through. I suspect that, given the resistance from

the Conservative Party today on Bill S-5, we will likely be requiring some opposition parties' support to do so.

● (1105)

Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North wants to talk about the environment, so I have a question about the environment. Environmentally friendly natural gas is something Canada has lots of, and Europe needs it so it can stand up against Russian bullying.

Does the member for Winnipeg North support expanding Canada's natural gas industry, including that on the west coast, where my riding is?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, we need to look at all commodities in whatever ways we can. There are going to be all sorts of markets that will come out of this and though working with our allied countries, as well as ways in which we might be able to support our allies in the future.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Based on the comments of the parliamentary secretary, I suspect there would be unanimous consent of the House to agree that Bill S-5 be called for debate immediately after question period today.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We do not have unanimous consent.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, I would think, given we have another motion coming up to pass other legislation, if the member is quite prepared to support that motion, then we could maybe consider doing Bill S-5. Better yet, why does the member not—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): We are getting into debate, and I would like to give the hon. member for Trois-Rivières the opportunity to make his speech.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to send my regards to the people of Trois-Rivières, whom I talk to every day about Ukraine. I thank the member for Winnipeg North for his display of contempt. It is something we learn to live with over time.

The people across the way often talk the talk but do not walk the walk, yet curiously enough, on this and other topics, they do not even want to talk at all.

I was at yesterday's meeting of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics about Roxham Road, and members there were anxious to avoid the issue. I think avoiding the issue is the new way of doing things.

What is this morning's motion about? It condemns the continuing attack on Ukraine. It recognizes that a growing proportion of the Russian people are bravely resisting and opposing this attack. It calls on the Government of Canada to develop measures to support Russian dissidents and so on. What is it about? It is about war.

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From the Umma–Lagash war in the 16th century BC to Alexander the Great, from the Punic Wars to the war in Kosovo, war is as old as humanity itself. War is a show of the leaders' contempt for the people, pure and simple.

No war could ever be justified when human life comes a distant second to commercial interests or the interests of a particular leader. That said, we may have talked a lot about Ukraine so far, but it is clear that nothing has changed despite all our talk. The situation remains the same in that sanctions have been put in place. Steps have been taken. There has been plenty of talk, but has there actually been any action? We are told that there has, but did that action have any result? I do not think so.

There are Russian and Ukrainians dissidents who want this situation to end. If we break down the etymology of the word, a dissident is someone who wants to separate. Needless to say, we have a great affinity with those people. The dissidents in this case must be treated as heroes, because they are risking their lives to try to convince a leader that human life cannot come second to private or commercial interests. A dissident who wants to separate and do things differently will have certain values they want to promote. When we talk about values, we are talking about ethics.

As a quick aside, as I was saying, certain values are promoted. They might say that human life, for instance, trumps commercial interests. They might talk about respecting human life. In the past, I often heard people say that they respect the environment, that they respect their colleagues and the trees. Such statements can be meaningless. They can just be empty words.

Let us break down the word “respect” into two parts, the “re” and the “spect”. In language, “re” means “twice”, like “return”, “redo”, “restate” and “repeat”. It is the same thing. “Spect” refers to looking, as in “spectrum” and “spectral”. Respect means taking a second look to avoid needlessly hurting others. It is the very opposite of war. War is the pinnacle of disrespect.

We currently have one party, the Russian party, that refuses to listen. It has turned a deaf ear to international appeals. It has turned a deaf ear to the appeals of its people as well. Clearly, this must be condemned. We must keep going because we are dealing with a Russian leader who is absolutely convinced that Ukraine must be taken. What does it mean to be convinced? It is to believe something absolutely, to hell with the consequences. “Let them all die” seems to be the motto here.

As a country that claims to be a friend of human rights, we cannot sit on our hands and do nothing. Doing nothing is not an option. What can be done now? The support provided to date was necessary, but it is not enough. The dissidents must be supported. We might even have to come to their aid, perhaps by offering them asylum. We are good at offering asylum, by the way. They will be told to take Roxham Road. Things are moving well there.

• (1110)

Just in case, diplomatic efforts must continue to allow for ongoing dialogue. I get the impression that there is no dialogue right now between the parties, whether by text message, tweets or any other means. The President of France tried to open a dialogue. That did not go over well. Because that dialogue was unsuccessful, does

that mean that all dialogue will be unsuccessful? I do not believe that.

Let us remember that, during the Second World War, Churchill came to Quebec so he could speak with the allies about his plans. Does Canada have a role to play in the type of dialogue that, beyond condemning the attack, would provide assistance and allow us to take steps to support the dissidents? Could that be a solution?

We must certainly stop taking without action. The time for action is now and I would not want to debate it for 20 minutes because the situation is quite clear: We cannot not take action.

What is the government's response to that question?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the question I have for members of the Bloc is about the agenda for this morning. I believe that most members were anticipating that we would, in fact, be talking about the environment. The Bloc in the past has talked quite extensively about the environment.

Is there any disappointment, from the member's perspective, given that there were other opportunities for the Conservative Party to bring forward what we are debating right now?

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his very important question.

We were supposed to discuss the environment this morning. It really is a very important topic, and we must deal with it as soon as possible. However, a motion on support for dissidents was moved this morning, and I do believe that human life should take priority for now.

It is a matter of context. The environmental challenges themselves cannot and must not be ignored. To be frank, I think we are just putting them on the back burner this morning, which is something I would rather not be doing. That said, I still want to make it clear that we cannot remain idle with respect to the Ukrainian dissidents.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, indeed, when this issue came before the immigration committee, the member's colleague was very supportive of it, and we had all-party support in moving it forward. It was a pleasure working with his colleague and with other members on the immigration committee on that.

I wonder if the member could share more about specific things that he thinks Canada can do to support the Russian opposition. Obviously, this motion speaks to immigration measures, but what other steps can we take to empower, strengthen and support those voices inside Russia?

To me, the only long-term solution is to have Russia join the community of free, democratic nations that respect the international rule of law and to have a government in Russia that is prepared to join that community of nations and enjoy the benefits of prosperity and community that come from that. What are the member's further suggestion for moving this agenda forward?

• (1115)

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant question.

He mentioned immigration. I will not say any more about that, because the committee discussed it at length and made some very useful recommendations.

However, I would like to talk about the fact that it was said that the Canadian embassy in Ukraine was being opened. It was opened, and the diplomatic staff were taken out. I think the first thing we must do is open an embassy.

What we need is genuine, meaningful diplomatic dialogue, not superficial diplomatic dialogue or diplomacy conducted via images and tweets. I think seasoned diplomats are needed to establish dialogue between the parties. We are not mediators, but we must have a presence in Ukraine and Russia. There has been quite a bit of talk about closing the embassies in Russia, but that is not a good idea. The dialogue must continue.

A long-term diplomatic solution must be seriously considered. Superficial diplomacy is simply not an option. It must be seriously considered.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is a very important discussion, but I find it disturbing that we are talking about supporting legitimate opposition in Russia when we have the Premier of Alberta spreading pro-Putin falsehoods and propaganda. She has claimed that Russia had a right to be upset with Ukraine, when we see mass murder, rape and killing, and the forcible annexation of Ukrainian territories.

We have not heard a single Conservative in the House denounce this pro-Putin propaganda, so I would ask my colleague this. What does it say about our credibility of supporting opposition in Russia when we have pro-Putin propaganda right here in Canada? The silence from the Conservatives supporting Danielle Smith and her abhorrent comments is very concerning.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very interesting point. I was not aware of Ms. Smith's comments, so I cannot speak to them.

However, not every situation can be viewed through the same lens. There are two sides to every coin, and there are 360 degrees to consider in every situation. I think this situation must be examined as a whole.

In a situation like this, there is probably no one who has not done something wrong once. It is more complex than that, and that is

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why I advocate for seasoned diplomats to take a hand, because they will be able to unravel this knotty problem.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I think it is important to pick up and follow the comments made by the member for Timmins—James Bay. The Conservative Party has been very clear in its support for Ukraine and in pushing the government to do more. Certainly, our focus is on federal politics and on Canada's need to engage internationally in a principled way when it comes to supplying the weapons that are required.

I think the member for Timmins—James Bay should reflect on the failures of his own party in this respect. His party, from what I understand, continues to call for unilateral nuclear disarmament as a supposed solution to the international threats we have seen. Unilateral nuclear disarmament by NATO countries would leave us that much more vulnerable to threats and pressure from the Putin regime.

We are having this discussion with the NDP through our colleague from the Bloc, which is a bit unfair to him in some ways, but I wonder if I could ask him to share his thoughts on the proposal of unilateral nuclear disarmament and what the impacts of that would be.

[Translation]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I would never presume to speak for the NDP member. I am unable to say such a thing.

Nuclear disarmament must be considered. I think the nuclear threat is very real. It is vital to pay attention to the scope of the threats being made.

We can see that as a deterrent, it is working, but there should be a dialogue between adults about this issue.

Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncas (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank and congratulate my colleague from Trois-Rivières for his excellent speech. His speeches are always interesting and teach us something. The tone of his speech differs from some others we may hear in the House when there is disagreement.

My colleague mentioned respect and dialogue. He also talked about the fact that the government primarily relies on communication and posts on various platforms to show that it is trying to do something about the war in Ukraine.

I would like to hear my colleague's opinion on this. What constructive actions could the government take to show leadership as a G7 country, to resolve the conflict and end the war in Ukraine?

• (1120)

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

He raises an important point. There is a difference between communicating, that is, transmitting a message, and the language. The language helps add meaning to the story.

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I think there has been a lot of superficial diplomacy, just for show. Most countries do this, not just Canada. We need to engage in meaningful action and determine which direction we want to take so we can put it into words that actually mean something.

Things are a bit blurry right now. The messages are often contradictory and incomplete. I feel that our diplomatic efforts are purely superficial and have no real impact. That is my opinion.

I would therefore like us to distinguish between the communication tools we use every day and the language that would enable us to settle an impasse.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have a follow-up question for my colleague on something he was discussing earlier. He was speaking about diplomacy and dialogue. At the same time, we know there are security threats to Canada that are associated with the presence of the Russian embassy here in Ottawa.

There was an incident, for instance, where a bike painted with Ukrainian colours was in front of the Russian embassy and was destroyed by what appeared to be people with links to the Russian embassy. There are concerns about cybersecurity issues. There are concerns about other kinds of foreign influence operations that are likely being run out of that embassy.

There is always a tension that I think we have to navigate: Are we open for potential discussion, or are we, at the same time, opening ourselves up to potential security threats when there is the presence of hostile actors in this country? I wonder what the hon. member's reaction—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I need to give the hon. member time to answer.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières has 20 seconds.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure: Madam Speaker, a great country is known for its ability to take risks. This is a very real risk, but one that must be taken if we want to keep the lines of communication open. Right now, on Charlotte Street, the street signs near the Russian embassy read “Free-Libre Ukraine”, not the street names. This is clearly a provocation. However, I think a great country, a G7 country, must act and take these risks.

[*English*]

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have the great honour of splitting my time today with the member for Vancouver East.

Today we have a concurrence debate, and we are talking about Ukraine, we are talking about Russia and we are talking about what more Canada can do to support the people of Ukraine and support the brave people in Russia who are valiantly trying to hold the line on the principles of democracy, the principles of human rights and the principles of international law in their country, which has very clearly been taken over by Vladimir Putin, who is of course not interested in any of those things.

I want to start by telling members a bit about what I did last night. Last night, I had the great honour of joining my leader, the

member for Burnaby South, in meeting with three remarkable individuals. One of those individuals was Irwin Cotler, who I know everybody in this House is well acquainted with. Another was Mr. Bill Browder, who many will know as the architect of the Magnitsky sanctions. He is a really remarkable human being who has done so much to protect those who have been illegally detained around the world.

We also heard from Ms. Kara-Murza. Ms. Kara-Murza is the wife of detained political prisoner Vladimir Kara-Murza. She spoke of the pain she felt. She spoke of the challenges that she, her family and her three sons face. She spoke of her husband. One of the things she said to me was that he is a man of integrity and a man of brutal honesty and that his ethics are so strong. She made a little joke that it is not always easy to live with people like that, people who are so clear in their stance and their ethics.

Ms. Kara-Murza told us about how hard it has been since he was imprisoned in Russia in April. This is a man who has been poisoned twice by the Russian Federation. It has attempted to murder him twice. He has undergone two assassination attempts while imprisoned in a Russian prison since April, because he condemned the illegal war and illegal genocidal invasion in Ukraine.

I want to say his name in this place. One of the things that Ms. Kara-Murza, Professor Irwin Cotler and Mr. Bill Browder said to us is that we need to say his name because that protects him and makes it harder for the Russian Federation to murder him. I will take a moment in this House to say that name, and I hope everybody hears as I say it: Vladimir Kara-Murza.

This is somebody who is fighting for democracy in this world. He has taken on risks. He has taken on incredible pain and suffering for himself and for his family as a fight for democracy. I do not know if any one of us in this room would be brave enough or strong enough to do what Vladimir Kara-Murza has done. I certainly hope we would be. We need to take a moment to honour him and honour what he has done for democracy, for the Russian people, for human rights and for the rule of law.

While the motion deals a lot with protecting Russians, I think we can all agree that what is at the heart of this is the war in Ukraine. Similar to Vladimir Kara-Murza, Ukrainians are not just fighting for themselves. They are not just fighting for their own country. They are fighting for all of us.

In the *Journal of Democracy*, David J. Kramer wrote, “The best hope for democracy in Russia—and all of Eurasia—is for the international community to support Ukraine in its efforts to defeat Vladimir Putin.” He went on: “Putin's fear of a successful, vibrant, democratic Ukraine on Russia's border is the real reason for the invasion. Nothing scares Putin more than for Ukraine to become a successful alternative model to the rotten, authoritarian system he oversees in Russia.”

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• (1125)

Mr. Putin's war is a proxy war. The real goal is not territory; the real goal is hegemony. It should be obvious to everyone now that Putin is waging war to stop democracy from advancing, and he threatens not only Ukraine, but all of Europe and all of us in the West as well. It is important to remember, and I think sometimes Canadians forget this, that Russia is, in fact, our neighbour. Of course, we live on a globe. I do not mean to trigger any of the flat-earthers out there, but Russia is our neighbour.

We know Putin's war on democracy did not start with Ukraine and we know it will not end with Ukraine. Ukraine is one piece in this puzzle. We should not forget that Putin's first tactic has been to try to destabilize democracies across the world through disinformation to weaken our democratic institutions and systems first. His cyber-attacks and disinformation campaigns in the U.S. are now coming to light. He has tried to attack Canada's elections, just as he did the U.S. election, and he continues to use these tactics in Europe and elsewhere. It is very important that all of us in Canada think about this.

Last week, I met with progressive parliamentarians from around the world. I met with an MP, who has her home seven kilometres from the Russian border. While we often feel insulated in Canada and feel that this is not attacking us right now, the reality for that Finnish progressive member of Parliament is very different, and it is important that we keep that all in our minds.

It is also important to recognize that we are not just talking about a war between armies. Putin's strategy has been, and continues to be, to attack civilians. His atrocious war crimes are on civilian targets, like theatres, hospitals and playgrounds.

I know I have brought this up in the House before. I carry with me a piece of the shrapnel that a Ukrainian member of Parliament gave me, so I can remember what rips through the communities in Ukraine. This is not army to army. This is ripping through the community in which that MP and her eight year old. She travels around the world to ensure there is support for Ukraine. She has an app on her phone that tells her when that shrapnel is ripping through her community. When that happens, she phones to find out if her eight year old is all right. This is important for us to consider.

It is important that everybody in the House and in our country stay firm in our support for Ukraine. That is not the case right now. I brought this up in the House yesterday, and I spoke to the media about this yesterday as well. Danielle Smith, the Conservative premier in my province, has said that Ukraine does not deserve to win this war, that it should bow down and that it should stop being supported. I have a big problem with that: I have not heard the leader of the official opposition condemn those comments. The Conservative premier is making these horrific and horrible comments, and I have not heard a single Conservative member condemn them. It would be very welcoming to hear that.

I want to talk about the one thing that came up previously, and that is nuclear war. Unbelievably, a member of the Conservative Party just suggested that we should not be against nuclear war, that we, as a world, should not be against nuclear weapons. I, as a New Democrat, will always be against nuclear weapons, because when we do not prohibit nuclear weapons, the western world can be held

over a barrel by any madman or genocidal maniac at any time. Very clearly, nuclear weapons need to be prohibited. I will stand by—

• (1130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Questions and comments, 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, I really appreciate the manner in which the member has raised the issue of Vladimir Kara-Murza as a noteworthy individual. We should be stating his name, perhaps even in a wonderful unanimous consent motion. Maybe the member could possibly give that some consideration.

I know how sensitive the NDP is on the environmental file. We were supposed to be debating Bill S-5 today. There were other opportunities in which this debate could have been facilitated. Could she comment on whether we are losing out because we are not debating this important legislation today?

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. There is just too little time in this place. What I have found, particularly during this session of Parliament, is that so many people are trying to obstruct us going forward, obstruct us in our work.

For example, the foreign affairs committee has not been as effective and as transparent as it should be. The House of Commons cannot get important bills through, because there is so much obstruction.

There needs to be a really concerted effort to actually get the important work that parliamentarians need to get done. I agree with my colleague that it is very important that we debate bills that are so vital to Canadians.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member is certainly creative in her reimagining of comments that I and others have allegedly made. Fortunately, those comments are on the record and anybody can go back and review them to realize how nonsensical her paraphrase of them was. However, it is an important discussion and question to ask.

My view is that unilateral nuclear disarmament is not an effective way of pursuing global peace, that if western nations and NATO countries were to unilaterally disarm themselves of nuclear weapons that this disarmament would not be reciprocated by countries like Russia and that we would be more vulnerable as a result.

Routine Proceedings

I support efforts to negotiate mutual reductions in nuclear weapons, consistent with the non-proliferation treaty that Canada is a party to, but I do not support NDP proposals for unilateral nuclear disarmament. Unilateral nuclear disarmament actually increases the likelihood that a nuclear weapon will be used by a hostile power. That is my position and I think it is the right position.

I would be curious to hear how the NDP thinks that unilateral nuclear disarmament will make us less vulnerable to these kinds of threats.

● (1135)

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, the NDP have been standing up for nuclear disarmament across the board for a very long time. We have had leaders like Paul Dewar, Linda Duncan, the member for Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke) and others who have been pushing for nuclear disarmament, and it is a very important thing to do.

I sit in the same chair in which the Hon. Douglas Roche sat. He has been fighting for decades for disarmament, and that work has been so important. The Conservative Party has made no move, unilaterally, multilaterally, whatsoever to move forward the case of nuclear disarmament in this world.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, we have worked together on the issue of nuclear disarmament a lot. The Canadian government has appallingly ignored the development. We did not participate in the negotiation of the treaty for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, which actually has entered into force, yet no nuclear state has signed on to it. It is critical that Canada do so.

I do want to pay tribute to the leadership of a progressive Conservative, former member of Parliament, senator and former ambassador for Canada on disarmament, the Hon. Doug Roche, who has been a champion globally.

As we discuss this issue, it was appropriate for the Nobel committee to give a peace prize to those who work for peace, including dissident Russians. It is appropriate that Canada stand by anyone who stands up for world peace and that we recognize in this context that if Russia was not sabre-rattling with nuclear weapons, the world would be safer. We must pursue disarmament.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Madam Speaker, this is an appropriate time to make a note that the Hon. Douglas Roche is celebrating his 50th year since he was elected as a member of the House. It is quite remarkable that a man like Mr. Roche has fans in every party in this place. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge him today.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to enter into this debate today.

As we know, the situation in Ukraine is something the House condemns. The war that has been waged is an illegal war by Russia. The targets of this war are as clear as day. We see it in the news and we hear it from Canadians who have loved ones in Ukraine. We hear it from people who have fled Ukraine and are in Canada.

The news continuously reports the fact that Russia is targeting civilians and public spaces. Children are getting injured and killed.

Just hours ago, a news report said that a woman, who was six months pregnant, was killed. That is the reality of what is going on in this illegal war.

My colleague, the member for Edmonton Strathcona, spoke very clearly about the new Alberta premier. I also wonder what the Conservatives in the House think about the comments of the newly minted premier of Alberta as they related to Ukraine. How is it even possible that the Conservatives are completely silent about that? The Conservative members stood with all of us in The House to condemn this illegal war, to say that we stood on the side of Ukraine. We all gathered in the House repeatedly to send that message.

We now have a Canadian premier, the newly minted premier of Alberta, Danielle Smith, who has come out with those comments to not stand with Ukraine. That is more than shocking and disappointing.

We are talking about the need to stand for democracy, because underneath everything, it is all about that, standing and fighting for democracy across the globe. When it is under attack, we need to be on the right side of history.

Individuals have contacted my office about loved ones who are Russians and are conscientious objectors to this war. They are being targeted by Putin. They need to find a way to get to safety. Right now our immigration measures do not really have a specific measure to support people in Russia who are against this war.

We just heard from my colleague of individuals who literally put their lives on the line. They have been imprisoned, tortured and brutalized because they are against this war, yet they have no ability to find safety.

The question is, what can we do in Canada to support Russians who are against this war? Other colleagues have asked this question as well. I think all members in the House have had constituents contact them to ask what can be done. This motion speaks to that and it is important to look for and examine different ways that this can be done.

● (1140)

For Canadians who are watching this unfold, Canada is doing some work, and absolutely we do need to step up on sanctions to be clear in our support for Ukraine. The question, of course, becomes, given the state of play and where things are, what more can we do to work with our allied countries to support Ukraine? How can we do this work in such a way that will bring an end to the war and ultimately aim to save lives?

Therefore, I will say the comment from Danielle Smith is not at all helpful. On the contrary, it is so disturbing that for Conservative members in this House to be silent about it and for the leader of the Conservatives to be silent about it sends all the wrong messages to everyone who is watching what is going on, and not just here in Canada. This war is impacting the entire global community. Everyone's eyes are on this. Where is that leadership? Is there any ability for the Conservatives to set aside the partisan politics for one minute and be on the right side of the issue?

Routine Proceedings

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

• (1145)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): Can we have some order and allow the hon. member to make her speech without interruption?

The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am being heckled by a Conservative member, saying that what I just said is partisan.

It is not about partisanship. It is about standing on the right side of history, sending a unified, clear message from all Canadians that we are against this war, and that even the Premier of Alberta does not get away with the nonsense and the disgusting comments that have been made about Ukraine. It does not matter who they are.

This war that Putin and Russia have inflicted on Ukraine is an illegal war. There is no justification; there is no excuse whatsoever. If members do not stand in this House to send that message, then they have to be responsible for the horrible news that is hitting our news waves every minute of the day about people dying, about pregnant women getting killed, about children in day cares getting bombed and about residential buildings being on fire and people jumping out of the buildings just to try to survive. That is what this is all about, and it is about democracy for all of us. If any member stands in this House, as the Conservatives often do, and says that they fight for democracy, well then they should fight for it and call people out, even if they are their friends, when they make comments that are so despicable as what Danielle Smith has said.

We are here in this House. Of course we are discussing this. The Conservatives are asking and heckling me once again. They are asking, why are we in this House? We are in this House today and I am saying for the Conservative members to call on the premier in Alberta to stop and to desist and to apologize and take those comments back now. I am saying they should send a clear message from all Canadians with the leadership that is required, and send this message to Putin and to Russia: We will always be on the side of Ukraine and be on the right side of history; they should cease and desist with this illegal war.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the only thing I would add to the member's comments is a reflection in terms of our Ukrainian heritage community in Canada. There are 1.3 million people of Ukrainian heritage, and it goes well beyond the people of Ukrainian heritage, I must say, but when they hear a leader who sits in the chair of a premier, it draws a great deal of attention. I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts in regard to the people of Canada and how they might be interpreting what this newly elected premier has stated.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, I cannot imagine what Ukrainians here in Canada must think when they hear those comments. I cannot imagine what Ukrainians, who are faced with this war in Ukraine, where their loved ones, children, women and civilians are getting killed, must be thinking. I cannot imagine what the global community must be thinking of Canada, when we have a premier, in that kind of leadership role, making that kind of com-

ment. It is shocking. I am not Ukrainian, and I am so angry about it. It is unjustified and unacceptable, and there must be an apology—

• (1150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated listening to what the member had to say today. I certainly share her grief over the number of people who are being attacked in this whole situation in Ukraine, which is very dear to me as my mom is from there.

She also spoke about the fact that many people are dying and drew attention to the pregnant women, who are in their most vulnerable state, who are being killed, and specifically in relation to the loss of a child in the womb in this circumstance of an illegal war. I would like to ask her, in this case, if she has that same feeling with respect to a third party attacking any woman who is pregnant and causing her to lose the child she is choosing to carry to term.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, seriously, I will just say this to the member. For the sentiment she has expressed about pregnant Ukrainian women getting killed, maybe she can send this message to the Premier of Alberta: Apologize.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the really disturbing things that Premier Danielle Smith used her platform for was to say that Ukraine has nuclear weapons, which we know is false. This is part of the Putin propaganda. When we raise Danielle Smith in the House, we have not seen a single Conservative speak up, yet the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan decided to try to avoid the conversation about the refusal of the Conservatives to denounce pro-Putin propaganda and start speaking about nuclear disarmament.

I find it ironic that when the Conservatives are asked to make a simple statement as to whether they support Danielle Smith's claims that Ukraine deserved the attack and that Russia had a right to be upset with it, and the other falsehoods she is perpetuating, we have not seen a single Alberta Conservative stand up and say it is wrong.

I want to ask my hon. colleague this. Why does she think the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan and the rest of the Alberta and Saskatchewan caucuses are rallying to try to divert attention from the despicable language coming out of the Premier of Alberta regarding pro-Putin propaganda?

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, my colleague is dead on with his comments. It is despicable. It is wrong.

It is funny that the Conservatives cannot find the courage to speak up, at least not so far. I would ask any one of them to say clearly that what the Premier of Alberta has said is wrong and to demand an apology. It is so important for Canadians to stand united and send a clear message. We cannot afford to have a premier in this country say that the war that Putin has waged on Ukraine is justified.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to this motion, though my reason for being in the House this morning was to get up and speak to Bill S-5. There will be time for that, obviously, a little later on.

I have been listening intently to the words of all members in the House, and it is obvious that all of us, all Canadians, are profoundly scandalized by the war crimes that we have witnessed through the news. We are scandalized by the disregard for the international order that has been displayed by Vladimir Putin and those who are working with him to carry on this illegal invasion of a peace-loving country that seeks only democracy and freedom.

We are all profoundly scandalized by what is going on. We live here in a free land. We live in a land that is essentially free of violence, and it is certainly free of persecution. While we understand and are repelled by what is going on, we are really seeing it through the intermediary of the news, of the TV news and of the newspapers that we read. I cannot imagine what it must be like to be living in a war zone.

I know that when President Zelenskyy spoke to us a few months ago, he tried to bring it home to us by asking us to reflect on what it would be like if we were living in downtown Toronto, like many MPs here live in downtown Toronto, and one morning we woke to the sound of bombardment bringing down structures as iconic as the CN Tower and whatnot.

He asked us to reflect on what that would be like. How would we explain that to our children, who would be completely perplexed and puzzled and fearful? I think that was a very important approach that President Zelenskyy employed to make us try to understand what it is like on the ground. I do not think we really can, but we are seeking to understand, and even though we are not on the ground, we are no less disgusted and repelled by what Vladimir Putin has done.

My generation never thought we would ever see another war in Europe. We thought that the First World War and the Second World War had driven home the point that conflict can lead only to mass suffering and destruction and all kinds of economic and human pain. We never thought we would see the day, but obviously this has taught us all, in some way, a lesson, a lesson that I think veterans understand.

I know we are approaching Remembrance Day and we go to Remembrance Day events and reflect on the past and on past sacrifices. We underscore the sacrifice of those who fought for liberty, but somehow we always think that this was something from the past, which it was, but also that it was something that would never recur, at least not in a European context.

I was reflecting on Remembrance Day just the other day, because it is coming up and we will all be asked, most likely, to speak at ceremonies. I was thinking about how the context of this year is so different, because we will not be thinking just of past sacrifices; we will not be thinking just of all that veterans have done to protect our freedom and our democracy. I think we will look at their message in a different light. Yes, there is the sacrifice, but the veterans are also sending us a message.

They are saying that they understand something that maybe not everyone understands for not having been through war, that authoritarianism has not disappeared. The impulse toward authoritarianism has not disappeared. Authoritarianism can raise its ugly head very quickly, even in Europe and even though we never thought we would ever see that day. I think there is a special, additional meaning to Remembrance Day this year, which is that we have to be on guard against authoritarianism.

● (1155)

We should be grateful that there are many courageous individuals who volunteer for the armed forces, knowing that they are making sacrifices just by being in the armed forces but also that they may be called upon to make great sacrifices at times of conflict. As we know, our Canadian military is helping out over in Europe, offering training to Ukrainians.

The thing about authoritarianism is that it can be defeated through military action. We saw that in World War II. The military action of the allies was particularly effective. However, there is another element that is required to defeat authoritarianism, and that is dissidence from within. I marvel at those who stand up to authoritarian regimes, whether it be in Iran or those who are protesting in Moscow and no doubt throughout Russia. I do not know what it means to fear that what I say would provoke a violent reaction against me and my family.

We all get up and say things about other members. We criticize their positions and we even use a little humour sometimes to put down the point of view of the other, but we never walk out of this place thinking we are the target for somebody now. This is true of our entire society. We can stand up to political leaders, and people do it all the time. We can mock political leaders and we can satirize political leaders, and so on and so forth, without ever having any fear of retribution. This is something that should be underscored, because there are people putting their lives on the line to stand up to people like Vladimir Putin and to stand up to the Iranian regime, knowing that they could wind up behind bars in what I would say are some very awful conditions that would be foreign to incarceration in our own country.

It is very important that we salute the dissidents. As I think of dissidents, many in the House are probably too young to remember the stature that a dissident like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn had all over the world, but especially in North America. I remember how former President Carter and his wife, Rosalynn Carter, embraced Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and his cause, and how he had the courage to write things that Soviet authorities were not too pleased with, and he paid the price.

This is someone who was actually in the military himself. He was a military person who had fought in the war, but he saw certain things that he did not agree with and he wrote about them in an eloquent manner, and in a voluminous manner. His books were very large tomes, whether we are talking about the *Gulag Archipelago* or others, like *Cancer Ward*. The west stood up for him.

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It is very important that we stand up, not only that we stand up against Vladimir Putin's military machine, but that we stand up for dissidents and that we do so through the sanctions that we apply and that keep coming. I would like to underscore that fact. We have imposed sanctions on oligarchs, on members of the Putin regime, but they have been successive. They have not stopped after one round of sanctions. The foreign affairs minister has announced multiple rounds of sanctions, and I suspect there are many more rounds to come. We have done the same against the brutal authoritarian dictatorship in Iran.

We need to stand up for the dissidents, and one way of doing so is through sanctions. I would like to say how fortunate our government is, not just the government but Parliament is, our country is, to have as an adviser someone whom I and the member for Winnipeg North sat with in this House, the Hon. Irwin Cotler. He devoted his life to standing up for persecuted dissidents, specifically but not exclusively by any means, in the Soviet Union.

• (1200)

To know that there is wisdom being communicated from the Hon. Irwin Cotler to this Parliament and to this government personally reassures me as a parliamentarian and also as a Canadian. We are very fortunate to have someone like Irwin Cotler providing his perspective and his advice on how we can support dissidents and how we can stand up to Vladimir Putin.

As a matter of fact, if I recall, so courageous was Irwin Cotler that he went to Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union, and I believe he was poisoned while he was there. I do not know if that was the official news or headline, but I remember him saying that something was happening, that he was not feeling well and that it was not just the garden variety of food poisoning. I do not know more about that situation, but I seem to recall hearing or reading about it. We are very fortunate to have the Hon. Irwin Cotler who, of course, has been an advocate for the Magnitsky Law and so on.

However, I think Canada is doing its part by supporting Ukraine militarily, but it is also doing its part by targeting those who would be part of the machines, mechanisms or apparatus of repression that are targeting, no doubt, dissidents in both Russia and Iran.

With that, I will now take questions as best I can on a very difficult topic.

• (1205)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise to address a question to my colleague and friend and chair of the environment committee. We did have in mind discussing the Canadian Environmental Protection Act amendments today, but I am drawn to his very thoughtful speech, as he is a very thoughtful member, and the question of how we defeat authoritarianism.

I think that democracy is at risk. Democracies around the world are at risk. We are at risk internally from disinformation that divides us so that we do not agree on our own set of facts, on what has happened and what is to be discussed. We too quickly go into different corners, often partisan corners, to take shots at each other.

Democracy everywhere, including in this country, is at risk when we do not listen to each other respectfully and when we cannot agree on a set of facts. In a larger context, how do we preserve democracy globally? How do we take steps in Canada to repair the rifts of the last couple of years?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, the hon. member's question is a very good one. I do not think that there is a coordinated solution globally. Each freedom-loving country, each democratic country, has to take this problem, this dissemination of misinformation, very seriously.

Things have changed. It used to be that we could have erroneous opinions and we could write them and send them in to the letters to the editor of a publication, but one's opinions were not being torqued through the use of algorithms and so on. We need to look at that as a national government. I think all national governments should be looking at that and trying to minimize the spread of patently false information. Again, on a national scale and on a more local scale, digital literacy has to be a priority in our schools.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his speech, which I think underlined the importance of the debate we are having.

One important point that the member alluded to is maybe the folly of presuming some kind of “end of history” and that in the 21st century we are dealing with the same kinds of problems that reflect the human condition that we have been dealing with for a long time previously. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, there was maybe some of this, in retrospect, folly of “end of history” presumption in that we were going to have this peace dividend when we actually should have been preparing for the reality of new threats always emerging.

The member spoke about sanctions. I think it is fair to say that the government could continuously make announcements of sanctions, adding more and more people to the sanctions list. There is probably an extremely large number of people we could sanction. The key point is this: Are we having the right sanctions consistently applied and effectively enforced?

In that vein, as the member knows, we are very disappointed on this side of the House to see the exception granted with respect to energy sanctions for Gazprom. I wonder if the member has a comment on the exception granted for the export of Gazprom turbines and how that was widely criticized by Ukraine as being a negative in terms of their efforts.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, with Gazprom and the turbines, it has been said in the House that we did not want to give Vladimir Putin an excuse. That is as a pretext to say that we were making the situation worse.

On another point, yes, we have to take difficult decisions, but there are going to be cases where we have to make some judgments. Does creating a complete energy crisis in Germany advance the goal of peace? I am not so sure it does.

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These are decisions, obviously, that the government has to make. They have to be debated around the cabinet table. I have no doubt whatsoever about the proper intent of the government, but it had to make a difficult decision and it looks like it made the right one.

• (1210)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there was very telling essay written not long ago, which stated in part, “liberal democracy has now exceeded many people’s capacity to tolerate it.” Let us think about that. Democracy is hard work and we live in an era when people are tired of hard work. They are tired of moving forward. One of the things that is making them tired is the growing distrust of government and institutions.

I would like the hon. member to reflect on that and to look at the dynamics in the House between the opposition, the government and the other parties. Are we driving people to distrust government by the way we behave here, and are there some things that we should be doing better to preserve democracy here at home and be an example for the rest of the world?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, that is a deep question and it is not unusual for my colleague to really plumb the depths of an issue.

Democracy is hard work. Sometimes people come to see me out of frustration. There are many good causes of frustration today, and there always have been really throughout history, but people ask me why the government cannot just do this or that and why it takes so long. I have to explain that, yes, I guess a corporation can make a quick decision and if it is the wrong decision, it will pay in terms of lost sales and lost profits, so on and so forth, but governments are not corporations. Governments need to build consensus, and that is done through debate.

Debate is long and sometimes arduous. We have to listen to points of view that we do not necessarily agree with and many people need to be consulted, many stakeholders. The objective is to come through with a consensus that people can buy into so that we can move forward, but it is hard work and we see it here in this House and in committees every day.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member’s speech was very interesting and thoughtful.

One of the things that was talked about yesterday when I met with some folks from Russia working on the Magnitsky sanctions is the idea of how our sanctions are imposed. Right now, we will often use the SEMA sanctions, not the Magnitsky sanctions. I am curious as to why the government has made the decision to use that system of sanctions instead of the Magnitsky act that we have. We have not used that act since 2018.

I am wondering if the member has any insight into why that is the case.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, that is a good question. I am not intimately familiar with the Magnitsky act and the difference between that approach and the approach the government is taking.

My sense, being on the government side, is that the government is looking for the most effective way of going about sanctioning individuals who deserve these sanctions. My sense also with the government is that it is always open to improving its approach, and it has shown this in the last few years. When something is not working as well as it could, it will try a different approach.

I am sorry that I cannot address the finer point of the member’s question.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I should ask the member, given the presence of my colleague from Northumberland—Peterborough South, about Bill C-281, which is a private member’s bill that my colleague put forward to strengthen the Magnitsky act by creating a mechanism by which a parliamentary committee can effectively nominate someone to be sanctioned under the act and require the government to respond. The existence of a parliamentary trigger, which exists in other countries, in a way forces the government to be more engaged in responding to what parliamentarians are proposing with respect to sanctions.

Does the member think the excellent proposals from my colleague in Bill C-281, which would create a greater role for parliamentarians in putting forward individuals for sanctioning, would strengthen our democracy and our sanctions regime?

• (1215)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, it is an interesting idea, and I look forward to following the debate. I am sure the government is quite open-minded to all kinds of proposals that will provide proper sanction to those who deserve it.

Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley.

I believe this concurrence motion is very timely. It is important.

An hon. member: It is not.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, I am very disappointed to hear one of the members on the Liberal side saying that it is not important. Maybe I misheard, but it seemed like it.

It is very unfortunate because, even though the war in Ukraine is maybe out of the front pages right now, it is impacting the world and millions of people. There are tens of thousands who have lost their lives. Millions have fled as refugees, with many of them coming to Canada. It is a terrible thing that is happening, and we need to be bringing this forward and continuing to take actions. Words are cheap. It is the actions that matter.

That is the concern I have, that we on this side have, with the Liberal government. There are plenty of words, which I will talk about. There are plenty of words to say that they care and they have sympathy, but oftentimes the action is either lacking, minimal or could have been a lot better. This motion is important to bring forward, and I am hoping it will get unanimous approval.

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I was recently in eastern Europe. I met with NGOs, Ukrainian refugees and government officials. I was in Poland, and I talked with these individuals. We had heard about this in the papers, but I was surprised that there have been millions who have gone through that nation, and tens of thousands who have gone on to Canada, but there are no refugee camps. People have actually opened up their homes and allowed them to come into their homes. They were there, and they have given militarily in a very significant way.

I know Canada has contributed in various ways militarily, in training, and a few guns and some other equipment. That is very disturbing, because words alone do not stop a dictator like Putin. Canada needs to be much more at the plate than it has been and is right now. It is very unfortunate. We have allowed our military to deteriorate.

I was in a meeting with a number of other MPs. It was a bipartisan meeting, and the French ambassador made some comments about Canada's military. He made them public the following day. He said that the world needs more of Canada, and he was talking specifically of our military. We need to be stronger and not allow the rusting away of our arms so we can support, in a very practical way, the self-defence of Ukraine.

The motion says:

That the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration report the following to the House: We

(a) condemn the continuing attack on Ukraine ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin—

Yes, we do condemn it, and this House has unanimously condemned it, but again it is about coming up to the plate and stepping up.

I was born on a Canadian military base, Baden-Soellingen in Germany, during the Cold War. When I was about two years old or three years old, the Iron Curtain went up. My dad talked to me about it years later. He said that it was a very concerning time for him when I was born, wondering what this world was coming to with those threats.

• (1220)

In 1989, 1990 and 1991, thanks to the brave actions of the Polish people, and the other eastern Europeans who stood up as well, the wall fell, figuratively. That was amazing. Then, as was mentioned by my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, there was the peace dividend, and the idea that we could just let our military go to pot. That is unfortunately what has happened.

We have great soldiers in our military. I have only the highest compliments for our service personnel, but our service personnel have spoken to me. One fellow I was talking to was at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier during the Remembrance Day memorial here in Ottawa. He said that, even though he was in the infantry, they only practised one time a year because they did not have ammunition to practise. That is disgraceful. We need to stand up for and strengthen our military, so we can help other countries and not just rely on the United States. We need to be strong in this way. That is something very practical.

In my visit to Europe, and I know others MPs have visited, my wife and I had the opportunity to go to Auschwitz. That was a

grieving visit. It is not something one goes to snap a few pictures. It is a place of real reflection on and contemplation of the depravity of where humans can go.

There is a place where the crematorium and the gas chambers were located. The German SS troops blew it up before the Allied forces took it over, but the remains are still there, and I reflected. I thought of the hundreds of thousands of people who had died in that space, which is maybe half the size, at the most, of this chamber, as far as the gas chamber and the crematorium go. Probably more people have died there than anywhere else in the world in history, and it is just a reflection of where totalitarianism and dictatorships can go. Canada is “The True North strong and free”. We need to continue to stand up for all those who seek freedoms.

The second part of this motion says, “recognize that a growing proportion of the Russian people are bravely resisting and opposing this attack”. I feel for many of the Canadians of Russian heritage in Canada. It is not their decision, what happened, and when I have gone door to door in my community I have met people from eastern Europe, of Russian ancestry or who have immigrated over the past 10, 20 or 30 years. They are most appreciative of the freedoms we experience in Canada, and there are many Russians who are trying to flee that nation, hundreds of thousands of them, because of the Putin's decisions for the military to take men of all ages and press them into service as cannon fodder. They are fleeing, and Canada needs to do all it can to step up to help people trying to flee from Russia.

• (1225)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciated hearing comments from the member opposite about the importance of standing up against totalitarian regimes. As a Jewish Canadian, I found hearing about his experience of touring a concentration camp to be very important.

Does he not, from that experience, think it is so important for our leaders here in Canada to stand up clearly to extremism right here in our country, to speak out against racist movements and anti-Semitic movements in our country, and to be vocal at every moment to call it out?

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, I do believe that we need to be standing up against extremism and speaking about it. Again, the Liberals make a good show of it, but what about speaking up and doing something about Iran and the IRG, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard? The Liberals say they disapprove of it, but they speak out of both sides of their mouths. What about Hong Kong? It took them forever to actually stand up for the people protesting in Hong Kong. What about the Uighurs in China? What about other things all over the world?

It is disgraceful, the government and what it does. Yes, I will commend some of its actions in helping Ukraine, but it is not enough. We need a lot more done in the world. Canada needs more of us to be involved.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed in the sense that the Conservatives had options. They could have suggested an emergency debate. They could have suggested a take-note debate. They could have used an opposition day. There are all sorts of alternatives to deal with the issue they brought forward this morning. It would appear that they did not want to see Bill S-5 debated.

Why is the Conservative Party so upset with the fact that Canadians want to see action on the environment? The Conservative Party persists in preventing debate on Bill S-5, which is up for the first time. Instead, it brings this motion.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, we are concerned and want the government to actually take action when people are dying and there are millions of refugees. We need to continue to bring things forward.

I have an example. About two or three months ago, there was an opportunity to have free flights come here. They would have brought in refugees and sent back humanitarian aid. It was constantly being stymied by the Liberals. I asked what was going on here to try to maybe shame them, and the next day it was changed. I appreciate the change. Sometimes we have to bring things forward to see change. That is the reason. This is an emergency.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, given the horrific comments by Danielle Smith promoting pro-Putin propaganda and blaming the people of Ukraine for causing the war, I would like to see if just one Conservative, and I am not asking for much here, who has a backbone and a willingness to stand up and denounce Danielle Smith and her pro-Putin propaganda.

If I can have that one, we would be much further ahead today in Parliament. I see a hand up. I want to hear him denounce Danielle Smith and her pro-Putin propaganda.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, it is kind of interesting that the member does not want to focus on seeing things happening and bringing people forward. He wants to go into politics on a provincial level. She needs to take responsibility for herself. We are standing—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I would remind members that they had an opportunity to ask questions and make comments. I would like the hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge to respond in the time he has left. I am sure everybody wants to hear his answer.

Mr. Marc Dalton: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives unequivocally condemn Russia and Putin for their invasion. We put the blame on Russia, and we believe 100% in supporting Ukraine.

• (1230)

Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to speak to this motion today. Earlier today, I was listening to the debate and heard the member for Winnipeg North say that it is not the right time to be speaking about Ukraine. The fact of the matter is that under the present circumstances, it is always the right time to be

speaking about Ukraine. I point out that this motion is properly and procedurally before the House this morning.

The people who are watching know what we are debating, but I am going to read the motion into the record. The motion before us that we are debating right now calls for us to do the following things:

(a) condemn the continuing attack on Ukraine ordered by Russian President Vladimir Putin,

(b) recognize that a growing proportion of the Russian people are bravely resisting and opposing this attack,

(c) call on the Government of Canada to develop measures to support Russian dissidents, human rights defenders, and conscientious objectors within the military who are seeking to urgently flee Russia, while ensuring that necessary security precautions are taken.

First and foremost, we need to understand that since World War II, the world has organized its affairs around maintaining international global peace and security. Many institutions were created, starting with the League of Nations after World War I. That organization was ultimately supplanted by the United Nations. Other organizations, like NATO, were created to maintain world peace. For most of the last 70 years, including the last 30 years after the end of the Cold War, the world has benefited from the peace dividend that these organizations have created the environment for.

That all changed on February 24 of this year. Mr. Putin's actions have been a wake-up call for democratic nations like Canada that believe in peace, democracy and human rights. That is why we are all so horrified by Mr. Putin's actions.

Throughout this time, I have had cause to reflect on our amazing democracy here in Canada. As Churchill said, democracy is the worst form of Government except for all the rest.

In Canada, the official opposition performs a fundamental role in ensuring good government. I know that sometimes my colleagues on the government side may find a strong opposition to be a bit of a nuisance. However, I think about countries like Russia, where there is no real opposition and where dissidents who oppose Mr. Putin suffer great penalty, from imprisonment to torture to being murdered, just like the mob makes people disappear. In Russia, there is also no free and fair media. What people see on television and on their social media feeds are the lies and propaganda disseminated and fed to them by the state.

I understand the power of propaganda. Earlier, my colleague mentioned that he visited a concentration camp. Back in May, I was in Berlin and I visited the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. When one walks up to the gate of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, like all of the concentration camps, there are three words written in German on the gate. Those three words are “*Arbeit Macht Frei*”. What do they mean? They mean “work makes you free”. Why were those words on the gates to the concentration camps? It was to propagandize those who were being imprisoned there to think they had hope and to provide them with false hope. That is the power of propaganda and that is what Mr. Putin is doing right now to his own population in Russia.

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There is another reason this motion is so important. Yesterday in this House, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, during question period, said that we have done a lot for Ukraine but that “we have to do more”. Well, here is the opportunity to do more by voting for this motion. All this motion asks for is for the “Government of Canada to develop measures to support Russian dissidents, human rights defenders, and conscientious objectors...who are seeking to urgently flee Russia”. Frankly, I am surprised that the government has not already taken steps to help these people, who are fighting their own government and supporting Ukraine.

• (1235)

Where is the leadership from the Prime Minister? I remember when Prime Minister Harper told Mr. Putin to his face to get out of Crimea. Where is this Prime Minister? Why is he not saying the same things?

One area we have to address is energy and Canada's complete and utter failure to support the energy needs of our friends in Germany and Europe. The fact of the matter is that after seven long years of the government's failed energy policies, Canada, one of the largest natural gas producers on the planet, is completely unable to help our allies in their time of need.

Putin is using energy as a weapon of war against our allies in Europe, and what does this country do instead? We send turbines back to Russia to help them sell their blood natural gas to Europe. It is shameful. It also stands in the way of LNG here in Canada at the same time. It is obvious that these permits for the turbines should be cancelled. The Ukrainian ambassador has made a compelling plea for cancellation and it is time for the government to act.

Regarding the issue of dissidents, Vladimir Kara-Murza is a Russian patriot who fights against this tyrannical state for basic democratic rights. He puts his life on the line every day for the basic human rights that we here in Canada simply take for granted. Do members know what Putin did to him? Vladimir Kara-Murza is in prison. That is how Putin deals with opposition. Again, where is the leadership of the Prime Minister? Vladimir Kara-Murza has been in a Russian prison since April. They accused him of spreading fake news and he has been charged with high treason, yet the government does nothing.

I take the Minister of Foreign Affairs at her word when she says she will do more. Well, here is her chance. Here is her and her government's opportunity to do just that. It is time to show leadership. It is past time for the Prime Minister to learn from Mr. Harper's example and tell Mr. Putin to get out of Ukraine. It is past time to support the energy needs of our allies in Europe and it is past time for the government to take real actions, support this motion and help Vladimir Kara-Murza and the brave Russians like him.

Vladimir Kara-Murza provides real opposition to Putin's tyranny and is currently subjected to monstrous police and judicial pressure from authorities. He and his family live under constant pressure. Putin's mob-style government will stop at nothing to destroy those who threaten his totalitarian control through terror, acts of violence and fear. Mr. Kara-Murza is not the only one. We know what Putin has done to Alexei Navalny. We know what he did to Sergei Magnitsky. Again, where is the leadership?

The Prime Minister and the government must support this motion now, show leadership and help these brave Russian dissidents and our friends in Ukraine.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would ask the member where the leadership is from the Conservative Party. If this is such a burning issue, as the member tried to portray, why did the Conservatives not bring it up in the form of an emergency debate? Why not work with the government on having a take-note debate? Why not have an opposition day motion?

Why wait for the morning we are supposed to be debating the environment and Bill S-5, an important piece of legislation? This would have been the second day of debate on the bill, yet the Conservative Party today says that this motion is important. For the Government of Canada, the issue has always been important. The Conservative Party, on the other hand, chose today for it, a day when we were going to debate the environment, something it does not support, and the environmental legislation that would make our environment a better place for all Canadians. Why?

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, I think one of the things the member opposite does not understand is that this motion is properly and procedurally before the House. We have brought it forward according to the rules of procedure. If he does not agree with that, I suppose he could bring up a point of order. To get back to the very first thing I said in my speech, it is obvious to me that he and his colleagues want to do everything to avoid talking about the substance of this motion.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, from the beginning of the debate, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has been impugning the motives of the official opposition and telling us that this is not the right time. He questions the timeliness of such a debate this morning.

However, I am not hearing much from him on the substance of the issue. Maybe my colleague could help him reflect on the substance of the question.

Paragraph (c) states that we “call on the Government of Canada to develop measures to support Russian dissidents”.

Maybe my colleague could give us a number of measures that might inspire the government to resolve the matter and allow us to move on to other things, namely the debate on Bill S-5.

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, unfortunately I only have a few seconds and there is so much I could say. The bottom line is that Canada needs to show leadership. That is what I said in my speech. We should take a page out of Prime Minister Harper's experience and speak directly to Mr. Putin to say that it is time to get out of Ukraine.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was very interested in my hon. colleague's talk about propaganda, because one of the most dangerous things we have seen with the Putin regime is the powerful use of propaganda and disinformation. That needs to be called out.

One of the things I found very concerning was to see the Premier of Alberta, Danielle Smith, using her position to promote Putin propaganda, like, for example, claiming that it is right for people in Ukraine to be forcibly annexed into Russia. That has to be called out. There is nothing democratic about this. This is not about choice; it is about an illegal annexation that is being done with terror, murder, torture and rape. If we are going to stand up to Putin and Putin propaganda, we have to call out those who are spreading disinformation.

I ask the member if he will denounce Danielle Smith and her totally unacceptable comments promoting Putin's misinformation war against the Ukrainian people.

Mr. Marty Morantz: Madam Speaker, I want to say unequivocally that I completely denounce what the Premier of Alberta said. I disagree with it wholeheartedly, and I think every member of this House feels the same way. I am part of the class of 2019 and have never seen this House as united over a single issue as it is with what is going on in Ukraine. I will continue to speak up for Ukraine and will continue to denounce those who speak for Russia.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will start off by saying that I am going to split my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

I am going to focus on three aspects and issues. I know the primary aspects of the motion today are focused on the report from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. The report condemns the continuing attacks in Ukraine by Russian President Vladimir Putin, recognizes that a growing portion of Russian people are bravely resisting this and, finally, calls on what actions the Government of Canada can do about it.

I am going to provide a little history, from my background and professional opinion, of why we are in this situation in the first place, what has been done, what is currently ongoing and more, to get to the crux of the issue in today's motion, which is what can be done going into the future.

It is on the public record that I was surprised when things happened the way they happened earlier this year, in the February time frame, with Russia's illegal invasion into Ukraine and how much the Russians actually tried to achieve.

This is where the west, including Canada, made a mistake. We should never have pulled all our trainers and diplomats out of Ukraine in the first place. I think this sent a cross signal to Putin and the Russian regime that the west did not care.

That was the wrong strategic message to send. I understand and I wish that I still had access to all of the intelligence reports and stuff, like when I was in the Canadian Armed Forces and we were tracking this stuff fairly regularly. However, three years ago I made the transition here to politics, and I no longer have that same access to information that the Government of Canada and the appropriate officials have.

My point is that there were all sorts of indications, and I think that is why, ultimately, the decision was made, and we can say for prudence's sake, to pull out of Ukraine. I think that by pulling all of our forces out, and when I say our forces, I am talking about the west, from Kyiv and everything to the west, it sent a message to Putin that said, "Hey, Ukraine is available here. We are not interested in defending it."

I really think that, as previous Canadian Armed Forces task force commanders in Ukraine have said, we should be in there, raising the alarm bells diplomatically and through our trainers right from day one, and not necessarily pulling all of our forces out. We should accept the risk.

I think, from my understanding of the geopolitical situation, the real concern, and it is still the concern to this day, was about a possible escalation to a nuclear conflict. How do we manage that?

I just think, all right, we can look at the American forces, the U.S. They could have pulled their forces out, but I think, ultimately, for ourselves and maybe the French and maybe the Brits, we should have left our trainers on the ground and definitely left our diplomats because, despite the fact that the conflict is still ongoing, the right decision has been made by the west to get our diplomatic missions going again in Ukraine.

To speak again about just where it failed and why things have happened the way they have happened, still talking about the history, ultimately, Russia went in there. It did not have a competent force. I think a lot of the Russian generals were too scared to speak truth to power to Putin, so they thought this was going to be a cakewalk. However, based on the history and all the information we now have available, we know that a lot of those conscripts or reserved forces that were sent into Ukraine did not have a clue about what they were getting themselves into and, after five years of NATO forces and the west training the Ukrainian forces, we saw the benefit of what can happen when one has a well-trained western force, i.e. what the Ukrainians have managed to get themselves evolved into under a mission command construct, and what they were able to do, to bloody the nose and put up the resistance. I give so much kudos to the heroics and the courage of the Ukrainian people. They put up a tremendous fight and Canada needs to continue to support them.

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Let us talk about where we are now. Putin continues to do that. He recognizes that he got that bloody nose, that he got beat up pretty bad by Ukrainian forces. What is he doing now? He is basically resorting to tools of terrorism and utilizing and attacking the civilian population, versus going after Ukrainian and legitimate military targets.

• (1245)

We see that as Putin targets Ukraine's major city centres, their infrastructure and their energy infrastructure, doing everything in his power to take out women, children and people who have nothing to do with this conflict. That is where it is getting to.

We have heard comments about propaganda. Absolutely, I am in 100% agreement. If we did a quick survey of all the members in the House of Commons, I am sure every single one of us from across the political spectrum has been getting phone calls and emails from constituents concerned about having heard this or that about Ukraine. It shows the danger that exists out there with the Russian propaganda and how it is trying to influence this. That propaganda is not just in the west. That propaganda is ongoing in Ukraine itself and within Russia itself.

To get to the crux of this motion, the Russian people themselves are recognizing that there is a lot of propaganda that they do not buy. This, tied to the potential increased threat of a nuclear conflict, has them scared. They are looking at the situation now and saying that if this escalates, the west is not going to let this go, and it is their own people who are going to die because of a dictator in Vladimir Putin who is illegally invading another country for purposes that are nothing beyond him propping up his own regime, his own dictatorship and his own concerns for consolidating power. We need to do everything in our power to stop that.

What has Canada done about it? Obviously, we have called this out and there have been sanctions imposed. However, as I said, we have made some significant potential errors, and we could have done a much better job. We have supplied all sorts of money. I will give the government kudos. We got the M777s over there and a bunch of 155-millimetre ammunition, but Ukraine needs more. It keeps asking for this more and more, time and time again.

I stood in this House in the February time frame and asked the government about giving Ukrainians our old armoured vehicles. We have LAV III's; we have Bison ambulances, and we have Coyotes, surveillance-capable packages that are able to go there. We need to get them to the Ukrainians so they have the necessary support and ability to keep this fight going.

However, it is not just me asking for that. Ukrainian MPs came to Canada in June and asked when they were going to get these vehicles, and there is still no answer from the government. Why will the government not just provide the necessary support in armoured capability platforms to the Ukrainian military? I still do not get it.

There is lots we can do with respect to Ukrainian refugees. There have been debates here in the House about that, and additional measures. Colleagues of mine are currently in and out of Poland and Ukraine, and former friends of mine have done the lion's share of getting the majority of women, children and Ukrainian refugees out. I had the pleasure of meeting a number of Ukrainian refugees

in my riding this past summer. Kudos to the Canadian population for everything they are doing to help them out.

However, now more and more is going on. Russian people and dissidents are speaking out who recognize that this has to stop. This motion calls for the Government of Canada to actually do something to help. That is what the motion is calling for, and it is absolutely necessary. It needs to develop the necessary measures to help these Russian dissidents get out of the situation and allow them to be that voice, because the more of them speak out, the easier it is to combat the disinformation.

In conclusion, I have talked about where we have made the mistakes historically, why the situation is as terrible as it is, what Russia is doing and all of its terrible actions, why we need to continue to oppose Putin and, finally, the importance of this motion and why the Government of Canada needs to do more.

• (1250)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I honour the member for the service that he has provided. There is a week coming up in which we need to make sure we do that.

I want the member to reflect on something else that has been in the news, which is associated. The British government has warned ex-RAF fighters not to train Chinese pilots. In addition, we hear that former American service people, including senior officers, have been working with the Saudi Arabian government. I am wondering if he could reflect on what he may know about Canadian ex-military people off on these adventures and whether or not he considers this to be dangerous to the overall picture of world security.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the very interesting question.

I cannot speak with any level of fidelity on what is going on in Saudi Arabia or China from the perspectives of other nations and of ex-military folks, but I denounce it. Regardless of one's background, if one is going to go over and help train Chinese forces or forces in other countries that are not democratic and do not stand up for our values, I have issues with that.

That being said, I want to extend a huge "thank you" and kudos to those former Canadian Armed Forces members who are in Ukraine, fighting with the Ukrainian people and helping to train them, because that is what we need more of. Again, it is sad in some cases, but it is the reality of the world, and they are the true heroes around this globe who stand up and risk their own lives. I get that there are bigger international concerns around it, but I just want to say "thank you" to all Canadian Armed Forces veterans who are in Ukraine making a difference.

Routine Proceedings

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, last spring, as a member of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, I had the opportunity to speak with Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

I asked him whether he thinks there is an imbalance in how the west is dealing with the conflict in Ukraine relative to other equally serious conflicts in the world. I am thinking of Tigray, the Uighurs, the situation in Iran and the current crisis in Haiti.

Does my colleague think that the motion moved this morning by the Conservative Party reflects this overexposure of a major crisis?

We fully agree that this crisis is significant. However, the west has demonstrated a distinct lack of concern when it comes to dealing with major crises, particularly those in Africa. What does my colleague think?

[*English*]

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, that is a valid question.

In the west, governments make decisions based on national interest and things that are going on. Unfortunately, the world is not fair. How do we fix it and make it up? However, I do take issue with the fact that this is a motion the committee approved, and any member of the committee could have brought it forward for debate this morning on concurrence, which is the crux of it.

Getting to the main portion of the member's question, I would agree that more can always be done. In the west, Canada in particular is one of the nations that has not only the political will but the financial capabilities, despite dealing with this massive deficit right now. Canada could be doing more in all sorts of nations. How the government of the day chooses to deal with that is, well, a good question for the government.

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his intervention.

The member spoke about the slowness with which the supplies and weapons have been delivered to Russia. However, on June 28 of this year, the Prime Minister promised \$75 million to help with humanitarian aid going to Ukraine. Unfortunately, none of that, as of September 1, had even been earmarked, let alone distributed.

I am wondering if the member has any questions or concerns as well about the fact that humanitarian aid that this government has promised to the Ukrainian people has not even been delivered, considering that winter is coming and they are in dire need of that support.

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, yes, I am concerned. It is absolutely egregious that the government promises one thing and then does not deliver on it. I am a big believer that we should not make promises, or that it is way better to underpromise and overdeliver than vice versa, as we have seen so much over the last seven years of the Liberal government. It is really good at promising but really bad at delivering.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise and close the debate this morning on this important concurrence motion.

I was disappointed to hear the member Winnipeg North say that he wanted to shut down this debate on the condemnation of the Russian invasion and genocide being committed in Ukraine. We need to reaffirm our position of standing with the innocent people of Ukraine, who are now civilian targets of the Russian Federation. We know Russia has been brutally attacking infrastructure, as well as places like hospitals, apartment buildings, and using not just cruise missiles and artillery but kamikaze drones it has acquired from Iran.

We have to stand against these terrorist actions that the Russian Federation has taken. We have to continue to point out that when it is brutalizing the innocent people of Ukraine, it is committing war crimes. When it is wildly saying that it is going to try to take away Ukraine's language, culture and, again, revisiting that Stalin era under the Soviet Union of the Holodomor when it tried to stamp out Ukrainian nationalism, we have to call it what it is: an atrocity, a genocide. Everyone who is responsible for raping women, murdering children, attacking seniors in Ukraine must be held to account before a higher authority.

I want to thank my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for his articulation of what Canada could do, and should do more, in support of the Ukrainian forces in their war of defending their territory from the barbarians of the north.

Russia continues to recruit and conscript more Russian men to join the battle. It continues to reach out and hire mercenaries from places like Syria and Chechnya, using the Wagner Group, which should be listed as a terrorist organization. We are now hearing that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, RGC, of Iran is also fighting in Ukraine to support Russian efforts.

We have to ensure that we are properly equipping all the Ukrainian armed forces and meeting the demands and requests they have made of Canada and our allies. As has already been articulated by the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, we are sitting on a fleet of armoured vehicles, Bisons, Coyotes and TLAV, all which are about to be retired and replaced with brand new super-Bisons, the new LAVs that are being built in Canada, at GDLS in London, Ontario. Those will be replacing this fleet very shortly.

Why are we not sending those LAVs. These armoured vehicles have proven themselves in places like Afghanistan, to support Ukrainian troops on the ground, providing them with the armoured ambulances, the Bison ambulances, so they can get their wounded off the front lines and into hospitals. We need to actually provide them with Role 3 Field Hospitals. We bought a bunch to support Canada's pandemic efforts. We know these mobile hospitals are sitting in containers, never used. Let us put them on a plane and get them over there so Ukraine can properly triage battlefield wounds, save lives and help soldiers recover.

One part of the motion also calls on helping those who are resisting Putin's hypocrisy, who are opposing the war in Ukraine and are in Russia today. Just yesterday, I met with Bill Browder, who has advocated for the Sergei Magnitsky legislation around the world. I met with Vladimir Kara-Murza's wife, Evgenia. Vladimir Kara-Murza, who is a political opponent of Vladimir Putin, has now been jailed on trumped up charges of high treason. He has been given a 22-year sentence. His crime is that he called out Vladimir Putin for his illegal invasion of Ukraine, a Russian criticizing a Russian.

We are talking about free speech, which no longer exists in Vladimir Putin's Russia. It is about ensuring people have informed debate. Of course, with the disinformation campaign put on by the Kremlin, there is no way to get the truth into the hands of the Russian public.

• (1300)

As Russia conscripts another 200,000-plus men to join the fight in Ukraine, people are leaving in droves and fleeing as refugees from Russia. It is not just having to deal with the displacement and the refugee crisis that has been created in Ukraine because of this illegal invasion, but fighting-age Russian men know this war is illegal. They know Putin is going to lose this war and they are not about to sacrifice their lives for a dictator. We have to provide them with the opportunity to flee the country and come to allied nations, including Canada, so they can have safe haven, because they are taking up a very principled stand as conscientious deserters. Therefore, we have to be there as they object to this unnecessary war.

I also want to comment on the comments by the new premier of Alberta, which has come up a few times today in debate. I will say this. She needs to educate herself on what is happening in the war in Ukraine. She needs to actually go and talk to the thousands of Ukrainian refugees who have now decided to call Alberta home. If she talked to those refugees, she would realize very quickly that neutrality, as she has suggested, is not an option. We cannot trust Vladimir Putin. He is a pathological liar. We cannot trust any piece of paper he has signed, because he has already violated the Minsk 1 and 2 agreements, never mind throwing away the treaty on the nuclear disarmament of Ukraine, the Budapest memorandum. If we cannot trust him, how can we negotiate with him? How do we maintain a level of neutrality?

There is something to be said about respecting the will of their Parliament, the will of the people. Through free will, the people of Ukraine have demonstrated, first through the Orange Revolution and then the Euromaidan on the streets of Kyiv and across the country, that they want to have closer relationships with the West. They want to be a member of the European Union. They want to be a member of NATO. If the people want that, which is one thing that President Zelenskyy came to power on, then we had better support them, because that is a democratic right and a democratic thing to do.

I congratulate Premier Smith on her ability to get elected as the premier of Alberta. She is respecting the democratic process there. I hope she respects the free will under the democratic process that is taking place in Ukraine today and that she will support those people from Ukraine who have decided to call Alberta home.

Routine Proceedings

• (1305)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I would like to request a recorded division.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to order made Thursday, June 23, the recorded division stands deferred until later today, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a number of petitions I want to present to the House today that deal with a variety of issues.

The first petition raises the concern of petitioners with respect to a commitment made in the Liberal Party's 2021 election platform. That was a commitment to, in effect, politicize charitable status determinations and deny charitable status to organizations that take positions on important issues with which the Liberal Party of Canada does not agree.

They call this the application of a values test to charitable status determinations. They want to see charitable status determinations made on a politically and ideologically neutral basis that respects the letter and the spirit of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms when it comes to freedom of expression without discrimination.

The petitioners call on the House to protect and preserve the application of charitable status rules on a politically and ideologically neutral basis without discrimination and they also ask the House to affirm the right of Canadians to freedom of expression.

• (1310)

FALUN GONG

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition I am tabling is about the ongoing persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China.

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The petitioners note the various forms that persecution has taken over decades, as well as the work done by the late, great David Kilgour, as well as David Matas and others on exposing the persecution and the organ harvesting and trafficking component of that persecution.

The petitioners ask the House to take action with respect to this persecution, to stop the killing and organ harvesting from Falun Gong practitioners and to take every opportunity to speak out against the persecution of these practitioners.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition is in a way similar. It relates to organ harvesting.

The petition is in support of Bill S-223, a bill proposed in the other place by Senator Ataullahjan, which is currently in the House before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. It is currently stalled before that committee, and petitioners want to see this Parliament be the one that finally gets Bill S-223 passed.

The bill would prohibit someone from going abroad to receive an organ taken without the consent of the person whose organ it is. It would also create a mechanism by which people could be deemed inadmissible to Canada if they were involved in forced organ harvesting and trafficking.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition relates to another human rights issue involving the People's Republic of China. It deals with the ongoing, arbitrary and illegal detention of Canadian citizen Huseyin Celil.

The petitioners note the significant amount of public conversation and government conversation, rightly so, around the arbitrary and illegal detention of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor. They also note that like the two Michaels, Mr. Celil is a Canadian citizen and is facing ongoing arbitrary detention.

Mr. Celil is a human rights activist detained in China for supporting the rights of Uighurs. He was taken from Uzbekistan, illegally rendered to China and he has been in detention there for over a decade and a half.

The petitioners have a number of asks of the government. They want to see the government push and demand that the Chinese government recognize Mr. Celil's Canadian citizenship and provide him with consular and legal services in accordance with international law. They want the government to formally state that the release of Mr. Celil from Chinese detainment and his return to Canada is a priority of the Canadian government, of equal concern as the unjust detentions of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor.

The petitioners want the government to appoint a special envoy to secure Mr. Celil's release and also to, as it has done with other cases, to seek the assistance of the Biden administration and other allies around the world in obtaining Mr. Celil's release.

CARBON PRICING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, this next petition highlights the concern of petitioners about the government's plan to triple, triple, triple the carbon tax. The petitioners note that in the 2019 federal election, the federal government said that the carbon tax would be frozen at \$50 a tonne annually and—

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I really do enjoy this member's presentation of petitions, and he is diligent in presenting them, but I do think some of the last rhetoric may not have been found in the petition and was actually the talking points of the Conservative caucus we hear every day. I would ask the Speaker to rule on whether saying “triple, triple, triple the carbon tax” is part of an appropriate petition presentation.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am not sure what is in the petition itself. I would hope that members are sticking to a short summary of the petitions themselves.

I know there are other members who want to present petitions as well. I will allow the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan to continue, but I also want to remind him to ensure that what he is saying is within the petition itself. I do not want this to be a point of debate.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan has the floor.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, if there are other members, maybe I could be given a signal when there are three or four minutes left in the time, and I will stop there. I do have a few petitions, but I am happy to stop partway through to ensure others have an opportunity.

This petition does not specifically use the phrase, “triple, triple, triple”. However—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I ask the member to ensure he sticks to what is in the petition and not put his own views forward or his party's views forward.

Please stick to the petitions and summarize what is in the petition.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I was going to say that I think it is a reasonable summary, insofar as the text of the petition specifically notes that in the 2019 federal election the then Liberal environment minister said the carbon tax would be frozen at—

Mr. Ken Hardie: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I believe the rules of presenting petitions are that there should be a brief summary and do not allow a member to literally fill up the time that might be asked for by other members presenting petitions. The member should be directed to keep it brief. This is not a speech.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I did just mention that to the hon. member, and I would say that applies to everyone. Again I would just ask the member to provide us with a brief summary of what is in the petition. When presenting petitions, we cannot be providing our own views on the subject matter.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I will certainly triple my efforts to stay true to the rules of this place.

Petitioners are concerned that the Liberal government has repeatedly claimed that the carbon tax would be revenue-neutral, whereas in many cases that is not the case. These petitioners say that low- and middle-income Canadians are already overtaxed. Specifically, they are asking the government to keep its promise to not increase the carbon tax beyond \$50 per tonne.

● (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I am sure the member is aware that we are not supposed to be actually reading the petition either. We are supposed to be reporting a summary—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I understand. The hon. member is actually summarizing the petition by reading a couple of the remarks. I think that every member does that, so I just want to allow the hon. member to continue so that we can get on with the business of the day.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is a bit entertaining that I have received, in the middle of the same petition, objections to both not sticking to the text of the petition—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, the hon. member is now going into debate, and I would ask him to read what is in his petitions. Does the hon. member still have petitions to table?

ENERGY-RELATED MANUFACTURING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do, but I am finished with the petition respecting the carbon tax. I would not want to go into it for a third time.

The next petition is one that is very dear to my own constituents. It is expressing support for Alberta's industrial heartland as one of the most attractive locations for chemical, petrochemical, oil and gas investment. Petitioners note the role of Alberta's industrial heartland. They note that energy-related manufacturing plays a crucial role in Canadian energy development and security and in providing jobs and opportunities for Canadians. The undersigned call on the Government of Canada to advance policies that support growth in Alberta's industrial heartland and growth in energy-related manufacturing in general, as well as to support a permanent accelerated capital cost allowance for energy-related manufacturing.

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition deals with the issue of energy security.

Petitioners note that the demand for oil and gas in Canada is still very significant, that Alberta and western Canada in particular produce the most environmental oil and gas with the highest labour standards compared to other countries, and that Canada should be only using oil and gas from within Canada, rather than importing from other countries, especially hostile ones. Petitioners therefore call on the House to work toward the elimination of foreign oil and

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gas imports into Canada over a five-year period, thus creating more jobs and helping to build a stronger economy.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the next petition raises concerns with respect to Bill C-7 from the last Parliament and the fact that the bill would allow euthanasia for those with a mental illness as their sole medical condition.

This petition quotes the Canadian Mental Health Association in saying that CMHA does not believe that mental illnesses are irre-mediable and it supports recovery. Petitioners also note that suicide is the second leading cause of death for Canadians between the ages of 10 and 19. Petitioners call on the government to reject proposals to allow euthanasia in cases where mental health is the sole condition at play and further to protect Canadians struggling with mental health challenges and facilitate treatment and recovery for them as opposed to death.

I think I will leave it there for the present.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the petitioners are asking that the Government of Canada and the Parliament of Canada consider moving in the direction the European Parliament voted to pursue back in September of 2021, and that is to phase out the use of animals in research. The petitioners note that animal models do not closely resemble human biological systems and are not necessarily as accurate for medical research as other available alternatives.

The undersigned ask that the government follow the lead of the European Parliament and commit to phasing out the use of live animals in research.

GUARANTEED LIVABLE INCOME

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I am proud to present a petition that calls on the Government of Canada to implement a guaranteed livable income for all Canadians. There are 689 signatories to this petition who, among other things, note that a guaranteed livable income would reduce poverty, which, in turn, would actually reduce demand for social services, law enforcement and health care, thereby leading to reduced costs. It would also replace the patchwork of federal and provincial income assistance programs. Last, it would implement and establish an income floor for all Canadians, reflecting regional differences in the cost of living.

* * *

● (1320)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
FOR A HEALTHIER CANADA ACT**

The House resumed from October 7 consideration of the motion that Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, at last we are talking about Bill S-5. The Bloc Québécois supports the principle of Bill S-5 with respect to strengthening environmental protection for a healthy Canada. I want to stress the word “strengthening”. The Canadian Environmental Protection Act, or CEPA, has not been updated since 1999. I am therefore speaking for numerous organizations and thousands of people who have been urging the federal government for years to carefully review the act. People have even come to my riding office to talk about it. It is an important job, of course, but it is also a monumental task if we want to do it right and get it all done within a reasonable time frame.

The senators received the bill on February 9, and they finished their study on June 22. It goes without saying that they proposed amendments. They also criticized the speed at which they were expected to work, especially since this is a complex legal issue and this bill has some important technical aspects. Changing one part of an act can sometimes have a ripple effect on other sections. I will get back to this later.

One of these amendments concerns new substances, more specifically, living organisms. Yesterday morning, I asked the representative of Environment and Climate Change Canada questions on this topic during the briefing on Bill S-5. She told me that, following the Senate's amendments, a consultation was planned. However, the required public consultation was not announced to stakeholders and the public until last Thursday. Why did the government wait until mid-October to hold the consultation when it could have done so any time after June 22? The results of the consultation are vital for our committee work.

I would like to point out that it is not enough to revise, modernize and strengthen CEPA. We need to make sure that this bill is only the first of many that will ensure that all aspects of the act are completely reviewed and adjusted in light of the scientific knowledge and the assessment and monitoring technologies we now have at our disposal. These future bills, which should complement this one, should be drafted and tabled as soon as possible. I hope that we will not have to wait another 20 years.

Special attention should definitely be paid to the problem of air pollution and contaminants being released into the environment, which the scientific literature tells us affects the health of women, children and vulnerable individuals, as well as the issue of genetically modified organisms. This one revision is not enough.

However, the good news is that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and his parliamentary secretary, the hon. member for Cloverdale—Langley City, have said much the same

thing. I think that there is enough time left in this parliamentary session to look at the rest.

I do not have a medical background, but at the risk of repeating myself, although I am certain my colleagues will forgive me, every time I have an opportunity to speak in the House or even to the people in my riding, I always pair the environment with health. These topics are interrelated. I have listened closely to environmental protection organizations such as Nature Canada, Vigilance OGM, Breast Cancer Action Quebec and the Association québécoise des médecins pour l'environnement.

Last March, 54 organizations and more than 200 women concerned about these issues signed a letter to the members of the board of directors studying Bill S-5, the members of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Prime Minister. This 13-page letter highlights the long list of health problems associated with certain chemical substances and recommends amendments that would remedy the shortcomings.

Let us look at one example. How many consumers know that Canada's chemical regulatory system is officially based on post-market reporting? Manufacturers do not have to submit a report until after their product has gone on the market. This report is used before the effects have even been evaluated.

In 2022, the scientific and medical literature provided ample proof of the risks associated with cumulative exposure to PFAS and BPA, which can be found everywhere on a daily basis, including in packaging. They are known endocrine disruptors.

● (1325)

Here is a list of health effects: altered estrogen action, breast cancer, altered sperm count and quality, obesity, and type 2 diabetes. As if that were not enough, I could add hormone dysfunction and immunological effects such as decreased vaccine response. I am certain that this is important information. I could also talk about reproductive issues, including decreased fertility.

I will not name them all, because that would take too long. Given that the data provided by Environment and Climate Change Canada in 2018 showed that less than 2% of the regulated industry community was inspected in 2017-18, there is cause for concern. This means that the act is not being enforced as strenuously as it once was. In 2015-16, the Department of the Environment reported that 43 companies had been investigated for violating Canadian law. In 2018-19, that number had dropped to 12. The COVID-19 pandemic still lay ahead.

Government Orders

At the very least, it is unfortunate that it took more than 20 years to revise this important act. That being said, let us look to the future. Let us bring the act robustly into the 21st century and protect it from lobbies and commercial interests. Industry players are often quick to hold up their rights against those allowing for a better application of the law and enhanced monitoring, against the public's right to be informed and protected from substances that are hazardous to people's health.

Let us look more specifically at Bill S-5. The government made a big thing of the amendment on the right to a healthy environment. We were not fooled, and Canadians should not be either, by the Liberal government's claim that we have a real right to a healthy environment. This is not the case, according to the senior public servants who presented Bill S-5 to parliamentarians when it was tabled.

Transparency has its merits, so I will say straight out and in good faith that the clauses regarding the right to a healthy environment and those concerning vulnerable populations are in the bill's preamble. This means that their scope is within the act and that they have no impact on other Canadian laws. What does that mean?

My colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, whom I commend, had something to say about this before we returned to our ridings. It means that, even if protection of the right to a healthy environment is added to the government's mission, that does not create a basic right to live in a healthy environment.

I would like to quote my colleague from Cloverdale—Langley City. In his October 7 speech, he said that the "implementation framework is expected to set a path for a progressive implementation of a right to a healthy environment...and to evolve over time, based on the views of Canadians and the experience gained by the government."

I think it would be appropriate to clarify what it really means to talk about a right that will evolve over time in a preamble. What does that mean exactly? I hope that it does not mean that we will spend another 20 years finding out.

Fundamental rights are the rights granted to every individual and guaranteed under the rule of law and in a democracy. Fundamental rights include human rights, the rights of citizens and civil liberties. The right to a healthy environment, which can have all sorts of meanings, is not a new idea.

It first started in Switzerland in 1971. Sweden added that right to its constitution in 1974. The primacy of this right has not eroded over time. Over the decades, governments have made considerable efforts to integrate this right in their policies and legislation. We certainly cannot say that Canada is a leader in this regard.

There may have been a time when the issue was given less importance in the political agendas of governments, but our environmental and health problems have surely moved things along. One fact remains: When a right makes its way into a constitution of a state of law, that right becomes a fundamental right. According to the UN, 153 states have legally recognized this right in their constitution. Before anyone says they do not believe me, I will point out that the legislative framework of the states in question and their choice of terminology and implementation do vary.

The few countries where the constitution has no influence over environmental legislation are those that added this right more recently—such as Kenya in 2010, the Dominican Republic in 2010, Jamaica in 2012 and Fiji in 2013—or countries facing civil war or other types of social, economic and political crises. Take the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Africa has the largest number of countries where the constitution appears to have no impact on environmental legislation.

• (1330)

A few weeks before COP26 last year, the UN adopted a resolution making the right to a healthy environment a human right. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights now has a special rapporteur assigned to this issue, because the deterioration of the environment and climate change are recognized as interconnected human rights crises. The aim is to promote a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

Almost at the same time, New York modified its constitution to include the right of everyone to clean air and water and a healthy environment. As in the six U.S. states that took this step before New York did, it was an arduous struggle. Detractors of legal, social and environmental progress always say the sorts of things we will hear here in the House: it is too vague; it is imprecise; anyone can go to court; we need to protect business activity and confidential business information. We will hear these things. Of course, there was also the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle who spoke of the potential litigation a revised act would attract.

I would like to remind members that the OECD confirmed that including environmental provisions in the European constitutions led to an in-depth revision and a marked progression of environmental policy, and facilitated the implementation of inspection, monitoring and enforcement processes.

Sometimes, we need to look to the past in order to have a clearer picture of what is happening now. That is why I wanted to see how this issue was being examined in the Canadian context, in the federal context, which continues to show its limitations.

Several academics have focused on the issue over the years. Some feel that this type of mechanism should be included in Canadian environmental protection legislation. In 1990, the Canadian Bar Association made that recommendation in a document entitled "Sustainable Development in Canada: Options for Law Reform". More specifically, it recommended that the federal government attempt, through a long-term strategy, to include in the Constitution the right to a healthy environment and, pending interim measures, adopt at least one law recognizing that right. We are far from that today.

Government Orders

The association recommended the adoption of detailed provisions on public participation, as well as provisions to facilitate public access to the civil and criminal courts, to eliminate the limits under common law around legal standing in nuisance cases, to expand access for individuals and environmental groups, and to increase potential remedies in the event of environmental damages.

That was over 30 years ago. I would also like to thank the Library of Parliament who, at the same time, felt it was appropriate and timely to publish a research report on the topic. I encourage my colleagues to read it. This all goes to show that successive governments have had ample time to do the right thing. I hope, therefore, that members will understand my disappointment at the half-hearted mention of the right to a healthy environment in a preamble.

We are not falling for it. I do not think anyone has fallen for it.

As we know, every level of government can pass laws to protect the environment if those laws are related to an area of constitutional jurisdiction under the Constitution Act, 1867, a concurrent jurisdiction. In 2006, Quebec amended chapter IV of the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. It reads, "Every person has a right to live in a healthful environment in which biodiversity is preserved, to the extent and according to the standards provided by law." Unlike the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the Quebec charter, in the political context of Quebec, is quasi-constitutional in scope. It is plain to see that Quebec does not need Canada's help in promoting and protecting the fundamental rights of Quebecers.

I know full well that the federal government has not developed the humility needed to recognize the political merit of what I just mentioned, or the humility to learn from the progressive public policies implemented around the world, even though it sees itself as a leader in all things relating to the environment. Why not have the ambition to give serious meaning and scope to this provision that it plans to include in the preamble?

Since 2006, the amendment to chapter IV of the Quebec charter not only enshrines a fundamental individual right, but also puts forward a normative principle on which the courts can rely to give an environmental dimension to other fundamental rights set out in the charter, including the right to life, personal security, freedom, private life, property and equality. That is where we are, at least in Quebec.

• (1335)

What is before us, with all the fanfare and under the banner of the right to a healthy environment, is not even the bare minimum. The bare minimum would be to include it in the body of the act.

As I pointed out earlier, the addition of this right is not in the act and its preamble. It therefore has no impact whatsoever on other federal legislation, not to mention that its implementation framework is still very uncertain as to the strictness and scope of its application, in light of the CEPA provisions.

If the government were serious about creating a new right, if it were truly a partner with states of law and progressive democracies, if it were aiming for transparency, if it had confidence in the application of its law, and if it had political courage, it would propose a round of negotiations to truly enshrine it in the Canadian Charter of

Rights and Freedoms. Otherwise, this provision kept in the preamble will change nothing.

On April 13, 2022, partners from all political parties represented in Quebec's National Assembly adopted a motion affirming the primacy of Quebec's jurisdiction over the environment. Elected representatives in Quebec unanimously oppose any federal intervention in environmental matters in Quebec. The Bloc Québécois fully endorses that position.

The Bloc Québécois wants to work with all partners to ensure that the amended act best reflects the recommendations from health protection, environmental protection and industry groups and stakeholders from various industries, without losing sight of the fundamental role of this law and the following priorities: improving transparency on mandatory labelling; improving enforcement of the regulations and ensuring stricter requirements for the assessment of products by the importers; addressing disproportionate exposures and the impacts of toxic chemicals on health, while specifying the effects on vulnerable communities; improving the collection of biomonitoring data to better understand and treat exposure in those communities; establishing clear timelines for the assessment of substances and taking measures for processing substances deemed to be toxic. These elements merit careful consideration by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. I would really like to do a truly collaborative study, a study that would prioritize the participation of experts, those who know this and not a parade of various lobbies.

Finally, as the saying goes, if something is worth doing, it is worth doing well. It would be unfortunate, even irresponsible, to move quickly. Doing so would compromise the quality and depth of the work to be done. Let us be serious but let us not waste too much time. I will ensure that there are no sections or provisions that can be considered as intrusions in the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. I will work collegially to ensure that the revised act is truly strengthened and that it allows the federal government to better protect health and the environment while ensuring, without compromise, respect for Quebec's environmental sovereignty.

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for her thoughtful remarks and her good work on the environment committee. The hon. member will remember that CEPA reform was first introduced as Bill C-28 in this House in the last session and is Bill S-5 in this session.

I wonder if the hon. member can reflect on whether the Senate strengthened Bill S-5 and improved it. Will she support getting it to committee quickly so we can thoroughly discuss the issues she has raised on the floor today?

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is also a member of the committee, for the question.

I think that the Senate did rather good work and introduced new ideas. It made important amendments. Earlier, I was talking about the amendment regarding living organisms. I completely agree with referring this bill to committee as soon as possible for a thorough and detailed study so that it may be sent back to the House quickly, by the end of spring or by summer, I hope.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague from Repentigny could expand on how we can improve this bill, especially around the right to live in a healthy environment and around how we have to not only strengthen the rights of Canadians to live in a healthy environment, but uphold those rights through individual powers to ask the government for remedies when those rights are violated.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, it truly works best when it is integrated into charters of rights. That is the best approach. Of course it requires a great deal of courage from the federal government to open constitutional talks.

In 1990, the Canadian Bar Association proposed enshrining this in a charter, but it also said that we could have interim legislation. That is where the door could open slightly. On October 7, my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands said that there were obstacles to clause 22. I admit that I have not had the time to look at that, but I think there are ways around this.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I just want to thank my colleague from Repentigny for exposing this bill's shortcomings in relation to the real right to a healthy environment. A real right is never weighed against other factors. A right is a right. Is there anything she would like to add about that?

How does she think that concern should be addressed?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, if I understand correctly, my colleague is again referring to the right to a healthy environment. His question is very similar to the question from our other NDP colleague, so I will offer the same answer.

Bill S-5 contains some interesting amendments from the Senate. As a political party, however, we would like to make other amendments on transparency, disclosure on mandatory labelling and strict product assessment requirements. A number of other amendments could be made. The title of the bill includes the word “strengthening”. We have some ideas about how to strengthen the Canadian Environmental Protection Act.

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's speech and analysis of the bill. I entirely agree with her when she says that the issue of the environment and that of health are closely linked. They are intricately linked. We could take a holistic approach to these issues.

Government Orders

I have a two-part question. What does industry think of this bill? Has public health ever given an opinion, are they closely monitoring the issue and would they be a good expert to consult?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam speaker, since my colleague was a nurse in another life, I understand why she also sees the link between the environment and health.

I have had Zoom meetings with industry people who all agree on the first part of the bill tabled by the government. However, they are not so sure about the Senate amendments. In our opinion, the Senate amendments really strengthen the law.

I will now put on my other hat, that of the union president I was in my former life. I am suspicious when industry says they agree with what is coming. It makes me think that we are not going far enough and that the measure needs to be strengthened. Let me give an example. Automobile manufacturers were uncompromising for 75 years in their response to the challenges of science. They were against seat belts; they were against anything that could improve vehicle safety. They lobbied strongly, but governments, elected officials, stood firm to impose safety equipment because that is what people needed.

I think it is the same thing now for the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. Let us strengthen it and stand firm in the face of lobbying to achieve something. This is about our health.

Speaking of health, the Association québécoise des médecins pour l'environnement, a branch of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, has provided some very interesting opinions on the subject.

• (1345)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my dear colleague from Repentigny, especially for her remarks about my efforts in this place. We agree that Bill S-5 needs a lot of improvement.

I want to ask a question about—

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it about interpretation?

Mr. Terry Duguid: Yes.

[*Translation*]

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

Perhaps the hon. member could unplug and then plug in her mike again.

*Government Orders**[English]*

It always helps if it is plugged in.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

[Translation]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, we are all human. That is not a problem.

I want to ask my friend a question. What does she think of the Senate's amendments that eliminate the issue of balance, balancing with other factors?

In Bill S-5, with the Senate amendments, there is not a real right to protect the environment. What is her response?

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands. She is absolutely right. As I said, and as we have talked about at length, it is all smoke and mirrors. No one is fooled by this.

We know that this does not make any meaningful changes in terms of rights. It is really just a pseudo-right, as indicated in the preamble of the act, and it does not affect other acts of Parliament or federal laws. Yes, the senators explored this. They criticized the fact that it was not a true right, that it was a pseudo-right. We want to work on that in order to integrate it into the body of the act, as a bare minimum.

I know my colleague has been working on this bill for years. I look forward to working collaboratively with her.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is really important that we are talking about a bill that is about dealing with the central crisis of our time, which is climate. I would ask my hon. colleague what she thinks about a government that has made promise after promise to create a clean-energy economy but has missed every single climate target it has set.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Pauzé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, and I will be very brief. We often hear that it is important to walk the talk.

In the case of the federal government, the Government of Canada, it is definitely not walking the talk.

[English]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would first like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to split my time.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1350)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, with that, I would like to split my time with the wonderful member for Victoria.

It is a real honour to rise here this afternoon to speak to Bill S-5, the government's new environmental protection act. I am happy to

say that I will be supporting the bill at second reading with the hopes that it can be substantially strengthened at committee.

The bill has come to us from the other place, and the Senate has made some important amendments to the initial government bill it considered. I am pleased to hear words from the government side that suggest it will be supporting those amendments.

This is an important bill, as it would amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, or CEPA as it is known, which was enacted in 1999, 23 years ago. This act is largely concerned with—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There are a lot of discussions happening, which is overshadowing the member's speech. I would ask members, if they want to have discussions, to take them out into the lobby.

The hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, this act is largely concerned with protecting the environment and human health from toxins and maintaining air and water quality, but there is widespread agreement that CEPA is overdue for a substantial improvement. For one thing, it is widely considered to be unenforceable as it now stands, as there are multiple obstacles to enforcing it and remedies cannot be used.

A lot has happened in 23 years. New chemicals have been invented that potentially impact our health, and the public has been increasingly concerned about the health of our environment and the impact of it on our health and on the populations of animals and plants that we share the world with and depend on for our well-being. A poll in 2017 found that nine in 10 Canadians are concerned about exposure to toxins from consumer products, 96% agreed that labels should disclose the presence of those toxins in consumer products and 92% agreed that Canada should recognize the right to live in a healthy environment.

I would like to concentrate my remarks today on that final point: the right to live in a healthy environment. There are 159 countries around the world with legal obligations to protect the human right to a healthy environment, but Canada does not have those legal obligations. There are environmental bills of rights in Ontario, Quebec, Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, but there is no federal law that explicitly recognizes the right to live in a healthy environment in Canada.

International efforts to recognize that right go back to the 1972 Stockholm declaration, which recognizes the right to “an environment of equality that permits a life of dignity and well-being”. Fifty years later, this past summer, on July 28, the UN General Assembly passed a unanimous resolution that recognized the right to a healthy environment around the world. With Canada voting for that resolution to finally join the rest of the world and with the 92% of Canadians agreeing with it, it is certainly high time that we had federal legislation that recognized this right. I am happy to say that Bill S-5 provides a step in that direction.

The preamble of CEPA will now include the following statement: “Whereas the Government of Canada recognizes that every individual in Canada has a right to a healthy environment as provided under this Act”. That is a good step, but there are limitations to that statement. For one, as the member for Repentigny mentioned, it is in the preamble where it does not really carry much legal weight. Also, the right is clearly restricted to the provisions of the act. In other words, it is around the control of toxins, air quality and water quality.

This new act would also state that those rights are “subject to any reasonable limits” and that those limits will be elaborated on in the implementation framework through “the consideration of relevant factors, including social, health, scientific and economic factors”. It is therefore important to see how these rights will be upheld. The implementation framework of this bill will apparently also elaborate on mechanisms to support that right.

While Bill S-5 seems to be a step forward in recognizing the right to live in a healthy environment, there are serious concerns that the right will not be backed up by measures that improve the enforceability of the act. In fact, the Senate committee studying the bill reported:

This committee would like to state their concern that the right to a healthy environment cannot be protected unless it is made truly enforceable. This enforceability would come by removing the barriers that exist to the current remedy authority within Section 22 of CEPA, entitled “Environmental Protection Action.” There is concern that Section 22 of CEPA contains too many procedural barriers and technical requirements that must be met to be of practical use. As Bill S-5 does not propose the removal or re-evaluation of these barriers, this Committee is concerned that the right to a healthy environment may remain unenforceable.

In discussions that I have had with top environmental lawyers about Bill S-5, I have heard more concerns that the implementation framework proposed in this bill would interpose the government between public rights and the remedies needed when those rights are violated.

• (1355)

My first suggestion would be that the bill be strengthened by giving the residents of Canada more power to ensure that their right to live in a healthy environment is upheld. That is one of the things that my private member's bill, Bill C-219, would do.

Bill C-219 is entitled the Canadian environmental bill of rights and will be debated later in this session. I would like to spend some time covering its provisions, because it suggests several ways Bill S-5 could and should be improved. I would like to mention here that Bill C-219 was drafted by my former colleague Linda Duncan, a brilliant environmental lawyer who was the MP for Edmonton Strathcona for many years. She introduced this same private mem-

ber's bill four times during her career as an MP. It was never voted down but, unfortunately, died in each of those parliaments before becoming law.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the limitations of the right to a healthy environment proposed by Bill S-5 is that it is restricted to the provisions of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. It does not cover environmental protections outlined in other parts of the federal environmental mandate, such as the Fisheries Act, the Species at Risk Act, the Impact Assessment Act, the Migratory Birds Convention Act, and so on. Bill C-219 would provide umbrella coverage to all federal legislation outside of CEPA. CEPA was carved out of Bill C-219, apparently to avoid clashing legislation.

On top of that wider coverage, Bill C-219 would provide stronger protections of the right to a healthy environment. Specifically, it would give residents of Canada the right to, among other things, access information about environmental concerns, standing at hearings, access tribunals and courts to uphold environmental rights, and request a review of laws. It would also provide protection to whistle-blowers.

To conclude, I reiterate that I will be supporting Bill S-5 at second reading, but I hope the government will look carefully at my bill to see how it might inform efforts to improve Bill S-5 in committee amendments. I also hope that if the government is serious about extending the right to live in a healthy environment to all Canadians, that it will support my bill, the Canadian environmental bill of rights, to extend and strengthen that right to the entire federal mandate.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, small businesses are at the heart of our communities and their owners are the dreamers and the doers that keep our economy strong. Whether it be the local café that brews that perfect cup of coffee or the family store downtown, small businesses create an invaluable sense of community.

Richmond Hill owes a great debt of gratitude to our resilient small businesses for their continued perseverance. On Canada's 43rd Small Business Week, I am proud to acknowledge Richmond Hill's local shops but I also recognize the hardships that they have faced and adapted to in light of the pandemic.

Statements by Members

During the summer, I had the pleasure of visiting over 15 small businesses mostly led by inspiring women leaders. At Naeb Restaurant and Mexican Amigos, we heard their concerns over funding for growth. At Zarsima Hair Salon, Bottiba Boutique and Diva Brows and Beauty Academy, we heard their struggles to adjust the prices of their services due to inflation.

These are the realities of many small businesses, and our government has heard them loud and clear. This week, we celebrate our unique small businesses and the incredible people behind them. We once again recommit to supporting them, as long as it takes.

* * *

● (1400)

SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to also wish a very happy Small Business Week to all small and medium-sized businesses in Canada, specifically in the Bay of Quinte. Employing nearly two-thirds of the entire Canadian workforce, small businesses are struggling. With rising interest rates hammering bottom lines, the struggle to find employees, the need to invest in new technology and the cost of all items rising because of unjust inflation, small businesses are now looking at a tripling of tax increases in 2023, but Conservatives will not stand for it.

Farmers alone, many of them small business owners, pay an average of \$45,000 to the carbon tax but only receive \$862 in rebates. Seventy-two per cent of Canadians think that their taxes are too high and businesses do not need their taxes raised any more.

This Small Business Week, Conservatives pledge to fight to lower small business costs and taxes and to ensure that not just Canadians but small businesses are put first: their bottom lines, their savings, their businesses and their country.

* * *

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this month marks Women's History Month in Canada. It is a time to reflect on all of the incredible women who make our communities proud. Whether by breaking barriers in areas like politics, business, arts and culture, or sports, we must celebrate them and reflect on their courage.

Today is Persons Day, marking the historic victory of the Famous Five, who paved the way for women in public life and politics. It is a reminder of the great progress we have made as a country. If it were not for their monumental steps, we may have not seen the 103 women in this chamber with us today.

I want to recognize all women in leadership roles. Their success is a reminder to all of us of the potential we have to make an impact and change the world.

I ask everyone to take a moment today to recognize the strong women in their lives, because when women thrive, we all thrive.

[*Translation*]

LOCAL FARM WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Cercle de fermières de Saint-Lucien is celebrating its 50th anniversary on October 19.

Sixty-eight of the original members are still active in this organization, which was founded in 1972. They are all generous and committed women who make a remarkable contribution to the community. I want to recognize their commitment to promoting Quebec's cultural and artisanal heritage and passing it on to future generations. We have a rich story worth telling, and these women are extraordinary ambassadors.

I want to recognize the incredible contribution of Francine Leroux, the organization's president, who in 2019 founded Maison Francine Leroux, a place of learning and sharing for farm women that is tailored to their needs. That is where they keep their nine magnificent looms and provide training to the younger generation in order to keep the organization and its mission alive.

It is good to know that Drummond can count on such passionate women who are working hard to make Quebec a better place.

I wish the Cercle de fermières de Saint-Lucien a happy 50th anniversary and many more wonderful years to come.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESSES

Mrs. Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, investing in Canada's small and medium-sized businesses results in prosperity for all. It is not complicated. When people are given the means to realize their dreams, we can foster skills and innovation that grow our economy and create good jobs.

That is why I want to highlight the extraordinary work of our economic development agencies, our CFDCs and BDCs here, in Quebec, who every day, every week, help flagship companies in my riding realize their entrepreneurial dreams and showcase the entire region.

Together, we will build a green and prosperous economy, an economy that benefits everyone.

* * *

● (1405)

[*English*]

ACCESS TO ADDICTIONS TREATMENT

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from coast to coast to coast we are seeing record-breaking tragic overdose deaths. Conservatives believe that addiction is a health issue and must be treated as such. We believe there needs to be resources for treatment and a shift in our focus toward recovery.

Alberta's drop in opioid-related deaths shows that recovery-oriented policy is working. According to experts, many push decriminalizing illicit drugs as a silver bullet. However, the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police has been clear that it does not support decriminalization without first having the necessary prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery supports in place. Decriminalizing without appropriate access to treatment and supports is akin to putting the cart before the horse. According to experts, we must do better.

There is not going to be a one-size-fits-all solution. We need a suite of programs and initiatives to address the crisis, but I think the most important thing we need is to expand access to treatment and to focus our space on recovery. Recovery is possible.

* * *

GUELPH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to celebrate the start of Small Business Week, I would like to recognize the important work done by the Guelph Chamber of Commerce.

Throughout their history, chambers of commerce have been focused on working collaboratively with local businesses on the main streets of every riding in Canada, connecting community partners and all levels of government to enhance the prosperity of all regions. The Guelph chamber's many initiatives have supported the social, environmental and economic development of our community.

We are also fortunate in Guelph to have a vibrant business community led by many women. As a former president of the Guelph chamber, I know first-hand just how important this work is to our community, and I have been fortunate to work closely with them in my capacity as a member of Parliament on a number of occasions. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with them and our community partners to ensure economic recovery, housing stability, environmental progress and social supports within our community.

I thank the Guelph Chamber of Commerce and the chambers across Canada for the wonderful work they do for all of us.

* * *

HESPELER VILLAGE MARKET

Ms. Valerie Bradford (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the incredible work being done by the Hespeler Village BIA, community leaders and local small businesses that have worked so tirelessly to make Hespeler what it is today.

There is no better example of this growth than the Hespeler Village Market. I, like many residents of Kitchener South—Hespeler, had bittersweet feelings about the arrival of fall, as it means the Hespeler Village Market is closed for another season. Started only in 2016, this urban farmers' market focuses on building community connections and supporting local businesses. Every Friday afternoon and evening, rain or shine, local vendors set up shop in downtown Hespeler to create a place where everyone can come together to enjoy live music while doing their shopping and meeting neighbours.

Statements by Members

I ask this House to join me in acknowledging the contributions the Hespeler market has made to the connectedness and vibrancy of the community.

While the summer market season has sadly drawn to a close, we look forward to seeing everyone back at the Hespeler market next spring.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Scott Aitchison (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a housing crisis in Canada. Too many first-time homebuyers are giving up on the dream of ever owning a home. Market rentals are hard to find. Affordable rentals are impossible to find.

I have heard from housing providers and community groups all across the country that are so eager to help be part of the solution, but are continually stymied by NIMBY municipal politicians and special interest groups that create delays, add costs and often kill proposals for new homes. Worse yet are the community groups and housing providers that may have finally received their municipal approvals, but get stalled by the bureaucracy of the CMHC. Despite billions of dollars promised by the current Liberal government, it has created a system where there are too many forms, too many requirements, too much red tape and an Ottawa-knows-best approach that actually makes it almost impossible to get grants or loans from the CMHC.

We must say yes to building more homes. This crisis requires all levels of government and the private sector to work together to ensure that Canada becomes a country where everyone has the dignity of a home.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to recognize Small Business Week.

I have always been impressed by the spirit of entrepreneurs and small business owners, many of whom invest their lives in their dream businesses with the hope that their idea will become a success.

One of these people in my community of Kingston and the Islands is Dave McNamara. Dave opened the Union Kitchen + Cocktails months before the pandemic began. Despite the hardships that would follow, not only did Dave ensure the success of his new venture, but he went on to open another restaurant this past summer. An instant hit in the downtown area, Baja Craft Kitchen offers unique Mexican dishes.

Statements by Members

Business owners like Dave exist throughout our country. They are the backbone of our economy and this week we salute their incredible grit and determination.

* * *

● (1410)

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to add my voice of disgust to the shocking news that the Prime Minister knew about disgusting, anti-Semitic hate that was being spread and funded by the government for a month before any action was taken. The worst part is he took action only after he got caught and exposed for doing nothing.

I may not be of Jewish faith, but as a Christian, as a voice in this House and simply as a human being, I feel an obligation to call out and condemn this shameful silence. Why, at a time when anti-Semitic acts here in Canada and around the world are on the rise, did it take a month for the Prime Minister to do anything? It is clear that he knew, and it is clear that he did nothing until he was caught.

I stand with Jewish leaders in condemning the deafening silence of our Prime Minister. We need to be united in confronting anti-Semitism when we see it, every single time. Shame on the government and shame on the Prime Minister.

* * *

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mrs. Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, silence. That is what Canadians heard from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Canadian Heritage after it was discovered that more than \$500,000 was granted in public contracts to a public anti-Semite racist and bigot. Silence. Deafening silence.

This individual has tweeted some of the most heinous and vile things imaginable. He called Jewish folks human bags of feces. He said that they should be shot in the head. I see a smirk across the way, and that is shameful. He labelled Black and indigenous people as house slaves. He repeatedly called francophone speakers frogs. This is who the government hired to teach Canadians about anti-racism.

All of this horrific and shocking news was made evident, but what is perhaps most abhorrent is the fact that the Prime Minister did nothing for one month. There was a whole month of deafening silence. The point—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

* * *

[Translation]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ARGENTEUIL—LA PETITE-NATION

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on October 11, I had the pleasure of welcoming nearly 100 people to my conference on economic development in my riding of Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation. Participants came from the

municipal, agricultural and tourism sectors, chambers of commerce and industry, as well as community organizations.

I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Hochelaga and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing, Diversity and Inclusion. Everyone appreciated her participation. As we know, economic recovery is one of our government's priorities, and I strongly believe that we must work closely with key players in the field.

The topics discussed during the workshops were the environment, tourism, agriculture, jobs, high-speed Internet access, municipal financing, housing and the role of organizations in the regional economy. We had frank discussions about local concerns, about the challenges related to rural living. This conference helped me gain a better understanding of the issues. That is exactly what we will be working on in Argenteuil-La Petite-Nation.

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[English]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with the pandemic came a spike in calls to frontline agencies for help with domestic violence. Like the pandemic, that increase has not faded away.

In the previous Parliament and again this June, the justice committee unanimously recommended that the government bring forward legislation to make coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate partner relationships a criminal offence as one additional tool to help fight intimate partner violence.

Unfortunately, when the government tabled its recent response, there was no sense of urgency. In Canada, we continue to see a woman killed by an intimate partner, on average, every six days, and coercive and controlling behaviour is almost always a precursor to this physical violence.

In the face of government inaction, New Democrats will be seeking other ways to make sure victims and survivors get access to the help they need, with both improved access to support and making coercive and controlling behaviour a criminal offence in my private member's bill, Bill C-202.

I ask all members of the House to continue to support concrete action to address the ongoing scourge of intimate partner violence in Canada.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

QUÉBEC CAPITALES BASEBALL TEAM

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec City is not just about hockey. It is also about baseball.

On September 18, the Québec Capitales won the Frontier League championship with a 2-1 victory over the Schaumburg Boomers.

The Capitales previously racked up seven Can-Am League championships, but this win is extra special because it is the Capitales' first season with the Frontier League. What an electrifying debut.

All season long, the players treated their fans to outstanding games, and the entertainment, along with Capi the mascot, was the icing on the cake. Capi is all about the hugs. We should talk to my office manager about that.

Fans know they will always have an amazing time. Manager Patrick Scalabrini and president Michel Laplante are a big part of the team's success. We are already looking forward to next year.

Congratulations to the Québec Capitales.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, who got rich? That is the question.

The Prime Minister paid \$54 million for a malfunctioning, intrusive and economically destructive ArriveCAN app, which developers have since shown could have been built over a weekend for less than \$250,000. Canadians deserve to know the truth. They deserve to know what happened.

Parliament's Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates will be investigating this scandal as to how taxpayers were taken to the cleaners by this costly cover-up.

I am calling on the Bloc and especially my NDP counterparts to help us find out which Liberal signed off on this epic case of greed and abuse, and more importantly, who got rich doing it.

* * *

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Lisa Hefner (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2016, Kim MacDonald was diagnosed with breast cancer. Today, this Hamilton Mountain resident and popular Weather Network personality, friend and fighter is five years cancer free.

Kim did not emerge from this ordeal unscarred, but some would say she is now more powerful. Through Breast Cancer Canada, Kim bravely shared her story and made her private struggle public. She bared her chest post double mastectomy, and she showed us how the scars were transformed into gorgeous sunflower tattoos. Kim identifies with sunflowers because they stand strong and follow the sun.

I am grateful to honour Kim today to bring attention to Breast Cancer Awareness Month. One in eight women will be diagnosed in their lifetime, so they should get screened and ask questions.

As someone who just lost her father to cancer, I want to thank Kim for being a shining role model, for standing strong, following the sun and showing us what beautiful really means.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the cost of government is increasing the cost of living. The wasted \$500-billion money-printing inflationary deficit is driving up the cost of the goods we purchase and the interest we pay. Inflationary taxes are making it more expensive for our businesses and workers to produce these goods and services. Next year, Canadians will be paying \$3,000 per family because of this inflation caused by the Prime Minister.

When will he reverse his inflationary policies?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservative Party leader really wanted to be there for families who need help in these difficult times, he would support our proposal to help low-income families with dental care and rental assistance. Not only is he not supporting these measures to help low-income families, he is blocking them in the House of Commons. It is one thing to disagree with our proposals to help families and quite another to try to prevent that money from getting into the pockets of the families who need it.

● (1420)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the help for housing he is bragging about will go to almost no Canadians, and those who will get it will get, at most, 500 bucks. These days, one cannot even rent a doghouse in the backyard for that amount of money. The reality is that the Prime Minister has presided over the worst housing bubble on planet earth. UBS says that Vancouver is more overpriced than New York, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Los Angeles, which are all places with more people, more money and less land.

Will the Prime Minister get the gatekeepers out of the way and stop printing money to inflate our housing market?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the official opposition makes a big show of being concerned about families, but if he actually wanted to support low-income families he would step up and support our measures to give more money to low-income families for the cost of dental care for their kids or to help the 1.8 million Canadians who would benefit from additional help on the housing benefit. The reality is that not only does the Leader of the Opposition not support those measures to help low-income families with real money this fall, but he is blocking their passage in the House, preventing anyone from getting that money.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the Prime Minister who is blocking people from actually getting a house. It is \$2,000 to rent an apartment in Canada these days, and the average price is \$1 million for a home in Toronto. Now he wants to make it more expensive to heat homes by tripling the carbon tax. Even the Liberal premier in Newfoundland and Labrador has said that rural seniors will struggle to keep the heat on.

Will the Prime Minister show some mercy for those people who are struggling to heat their homes and cancel his plan to triple the tax?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's obsession with attack politics means that he is not supporting measures that are focused on helping low-income families pay for the cost of dental care for their kids with an extra \$1,300 over the next two years or an extra \$500 for low-income renters that would hit about 1.8 million Canadians across this country. He flip-flopped and reversed himself and supported our GST credit, which is supporting Canadians, but not only is he not supporting concrete measures for dental and rental, but he is actually blocking their passage in the House.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the question was about home heating. This Prime Minister wants to triple, triple, triple the tax on seniors for the crime of heating their homes in February. It is not a luxury to heat one's home in Canada in the wintertime, yet the Prime Minister wants to punish people for doing it. Forty per cent of Atlantic Canadians are living in energy poverty, yet the Prime Minister wants to hit them all with a big fat tax hike.

If he is not going to back down on his plan to triple the tax, will he at least have the decency to exempt home heating this winter from that tax hike?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that as we debate in this House we ground ourselves in facts. The reality is that an average family in this country receives more money from our putting a price on carbon pollution than it pays. It is support for families, even as we fight climate change. In the leader's own riding, families have received, including last Friday with the latest cheque, a total of \$550 because of the climate action incentive. We will continue to fight climate change. We will continue to put more money in the pockets of families.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Prime Minister is imposing this carbon tax hike on all 10 provinces and three territories. Six provinces will not get any rebate at all. Even in the remaining four, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has shown that the majority of people pay more in taxes than they get back in rebates. It has all been a falsehood.

Furthermore, the Liberals have not hit a single, solitary climate target since they took office. Finally, it is a little rich for the Prime Minister to call little old ladies in rural Newfoundland and Labrador polluters for heating their homes in the winter when he makes them pay for him to jet around and go to Costa Rica in the middle of the summer.

Why would he not halt the high carbon hypocrisy?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition focuses on me, I will stay focused on Canadians.

That is why we are moving forward with a price on pollution that puts more money in the pockets of average families and that does not help the wealthiest Canadians. We know that Conservative politicians on the other side of the aisle are always looking to give tax breaks and advantages to wealthy politicians. They still think trickle-down works. We are seeing, across the Atlantic, how that does not work.

We have made investments in Canadians, supporting those who are most vulnerable and those in the middle class. We will continue to do so. Why are the Conservatives continuing to block dental and rental supports for low-income Canadians?

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we finally learned that the lucrative Roxham Road contracts awarded to a Liberal donor were worth \$28 million. I say "finally" because we have been asking about this for a year. The government has been dodging questions and denying access to information requests for a year. Under pressure, the government finally disclosed how much the contracts known to the media were worth, but it did not disclose the contracts themselves.

We know that there are other contracts, namely for hotels. If the government has nothing to hide, why is it refusing to disclose all of the Roxham Road contracts?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are ensuring that our immigration and refugee systems remain robust and humane. That is why we invested in the necessary facilities.

The decisions regarding contracts were made by public servants, as was mentioned yesterday in committee. The Canada Border Services Agency, or CBSA, is the one that contacted the property owner. The contract involved the only property possible under the circumstances, and the CBSA was already using it to intercept and process irregular border crossers. The rental agreements were negotiated based on fair market value to arrive at a competitive price.

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is withholding information about the Roxham Road contracts on the grounds of “national security”. What nonsense.

In order to offer untendered contracts under the pretext of national security, the law states that there must be a disaster or a threat to life. Roxham Road is neither of those.

Yesterday, the fine Liberal donor who got \$28 million in contracts disclosed in committee that it was the government itself that insisted that these clauses in the contracts remain confidential. That is very suspicious.

Is the Liberal donor who got the \$28 million just the tip of the iceberg?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we heard in committee yesterday, it was the Canada Border Services Agency that contacted the owner and negotiated the contracts. This included the only land available given the circumstances, and the CBSA was already using it to intercept people crossing the border irregularly. The lease agreements were negotiated to reflect current prices, and this was done independently, by civil servants.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance admitted what the experts are saying: It is highly likely that we are going to have a recession here in Canada. However, the government does not have a plan.

We need a plan because people are going to suffer. People are going to have a hard time making ends meet. They are going to lose their jobs.

Will the government deliver a plan or will it do nothing until people are suffering?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has taken action from day one.

When we came to Parliament this fall, the first thing we did was introduce the GST credit bill, which will help 11 million Canadian families. Even the Conservatives have decided to support it.

After that, we introduced dental care for low-income families and assistance for low-income renters. We know there is more to do. We will keep working so we can be there for Canadians. We will keep working with all parliamentarians to do what needs to be done to help people going through tough times.

[English]

Mr. Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government does not have a plan to deal with the recession. The

Oral Questions

Minister of Finance admits that one is coming, and we need a plan. Right now, the current EI system, the one brought in by the Conservatives, only covers 40% of Canadians. We need a plan that covers all Canadians.

Will the government put into place a plan to deal with the recession that would support families and ensure that every worker in our country would be covered if they were to lose their job?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has demonstrated time and time again over the past seven years that we have Canadians' backs, whether it was with lowering taxes for the middle class and raising them on the wealthiest 1%, or delivering a child benefit that has lifted millions of Canadians out of poverty.

The things we have done continue to focus on having Canadians' backs. Through the pandemic we supported them with unheard of direct supports and managed to make sure not only that Canadians kept safe, but also that our economy rebounded faster than other places. We will continue to be there through the troubled waters ahead. We will be there for Canadians, as we—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

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TAXATION

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Prime Minister, Canadians are sinking faster than ever as well, and as Canadians prepare for a harsh winter, Liberal inflation has driven up food, gas and utility costs for struggling families. The Ontario Energy Board estimates that natural gas prices are rising 153% just this month. Families across Canada could see gas bills rise anywhere from 50% to 300%, and it is all because of these failed Liberal energy policies.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing, end his plan to further punish Canadians for necessities and cancel the tripling of the carbon tax?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me start by congratulating the member for Calgary Forest Lawn on his new role as Conservative finance critic. I am sure we will disagree about many things, but I also do believe there are issues where we will find common ground.

One good example is Bill C-30, which would provide inflation relief payments to 11 million Canadian households. Thanks to unanimous support in the House, including from the Conservatives, I am very hopeful that bill will receive royal assent very soon.

Oral Questions

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal inflation is vaporizing any supports they could even come close to giving, and the carbon tax will never be high enough for the costly coalition. In Calgary, the average gas bill is \$170 a month, but because of failed Liberal policies, it could be anywhere from \$300 to even more than \$500 after the price increase. When the Prime Minister triples the carbon tax, it alone could make up 60% of heating bills.

When will the Prime Minister finally stop draining Canadians' bank accounts and cancel the tripling of the carbon tax?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only way to eliminate energy poverty and reduce household energy costs in Canada is by fighting climate change. With the volatility of oil prices and the record profits of oil companies, Conservatives are proposing Canadians be chained to the oil and gas markets and completely vulnerable to foreign wars and cartels. Our plan would give Canadians autonomy and sovereignty in their energy needs and their finances.

Why do Conservatives want to let foreign oligarchs dictate Canadian household finances?

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a bit rich to hear the Liberals blaming foreign oligarchs for attacking the Canadian energy sector. Every day we hear heartbreaking stories of Canadians struggling with the cost of living crisis caused by the Prime Minister's policies. Liberal inflation is forcing people to cut back on groceries, with many having to turn to food banks for the first time ever. Canadians are stretched beyond their limits.

Will the Prime Minister finally do the decent thing and end his plan to triple taxes on gas, groceries and home heating?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that the cost of living is a real challenge for many Canadians, and that is why I am so pleased that we were able to put forward a plan to double the GST tax credit. This would provide nearly \$500 to vulnerable Canadians families, and I am delighted all members of the House, including the Conservatives, have supported this plan.

Now it is time to provide some more support, such as \$500 to help the most vulnerable pay their rent, and let us get behind making sure all kids in Canada under 12 can go to the dentist.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to Liberal policies, gas is up to nearly two dollars a litre and grocery bills are up 15%. It now takes about half of a Canadian's paycheque to pay their housing costs, and the cost to heat those homes during a Canadian winter is about to rise up to 300%, yet somehow the Prime Minister thinks this is the time to propose Liberal tax hikes that would make everything more expensive.

When will the Prime Minister stop making things worse and just end his plan to triple taxes on gas, groceries and home heating?

• (1435)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly one thing we can agree on is that it is important to address the affordability issue, and that is exactly what we have been doing through doubling the GST tax credit and introducing dental care for children in this country.

With respect to the price on pollution, and it is a price on pollution, the hon. member knows that, with the average rebate, 80% of families get more money back in this country than they pay. Therefore, this is not an issue around affordability.

Let me be clear that, if we want to ensure affordability in the long term, we have to address the climate crisis. The leader of the opposition has been campaigning for over six months and the words "climate change" have almost never crossed his lips. Where is his climate plan?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the Liberals fail to understand is that the Liberal carbon tax is having a real and direct impact on the rate of inflation. Winter is coming. What does that mean for Canadian families? It means that heating costs will go up. It means that transportation costs will go up and, as a result, the cost of food will go up. All three are basic necessities for Canadian families. The Liberal government refused to cut taxes.

Does the Prime Minister realize that his actions are contributing to inflation?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are proving once again how much they love austerity. It is fine to criticize, but they do not have the guts to say what they would do. Where would the Conservatives make cuts? Would they cut supports to children who need a bit of help or cut child care? Would they cut supports for seniors, workers or families? It is easy to criticize, but the Conservatives do not have the courage to say what they would do instead.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we should have done what every G7 country has done, that is, lower taxes. Only Canada under this government has refused to lower taxes. To stand alone like that suggests that the others may be right and we are wrong. Every G7 country, even the U.S. under Biden, the Prime Minister's friend, has lowered certain taxes. This government has refused to do the same.

Why is the government refusing to lower taxes, which is contributing to rising inflation?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Conservatives want to imitate what is currently going on in England, but I am not sure that is the right path to take.

Here at home, programs have been put in place to help children. I am thinking about the Canada child benefit that lifts children out of poverty. Is that what the Conservatives would cut? They should say so. Is it the guaranteed income supplement, which gives seniors a bit of a boost? Is that what they would cut? Would they cut the workers benefit? Again, it is easy to criticize, but they should have the courage to say what they would do.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week in Washington, the Deputy Prime Minister announced to the world Canada's new foreign policy with respect to energy. She announced that Canada will fast-track energy projects to export more oil and gas. Fast-tracking projects implies a certain number of things. She might cut the environmental assessment, forego consulting Quebec, the provinces and first nations peoples or skirt the whole issue of social acceptability. She might also do all of that simultaneously.

What will it be?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is determined to address the global energy security crisis and the climate change crisis. To do that, we are investing in good energy projects across the country. We are working directly with the developers to ensure that they advance as quickly as possible and we are working on harmonizing the regulatory process with the provinces and territories. That said, these projects will have to comply with our climate and environmental ambitions and respect the rights of first nations.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the new policy to fast-track energy products announced by the Deputy Prime Minister has already had an impact in Canada. We learned last week that a call for tenders was issued for oil exploration in 100,000 square kilometres of ocean off the coast of Newfoundland. However, this drilling is exempt from environmental impact assessments.

Is that part of Canada's new energy policy or is it Canada's same old habit of sacrificing the environment when oil is involved?

• (1440)

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the commission that made this recommendation is an independent commission. Independence is a term that the Bloc Québécois should understand well. It is not the federal government or the Newfoundland government, it is an independent commission. This energy development project will be subject to our rigorous environmental assessment process and public consultations.

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): However, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment authorized the Bay du Nord oil project in Newfoundland, and he said that it was the last oil project that would be approved. He does have some power after all.

Oral Questions

Now, there is a new call for oil exploration off the coast of Newfoundland. This is for serious contractors only. They have to commit to spending a minimum of \$10 million each on oil exploration in order to obtain the permit. These people are paying a lot of money to look for oil because they expect to find it and develop it.

How many more projects like Bay du Nord does the government want to find off the coast of Newfoundland?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a moment about the green transition and the need for Canada to invest and attract private capital in this major transition. To do that, we need to build more.

This is a very big challenge before us, and I think that it must truly be a national project, a project for Quebec and for Canada. In order to do that, we must work—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the environment minister now says that he does not like foreign oil oligarchs. Well, that is news, because I was beginning to think OPEC was going to give the Prime Minister an outstanding achievement award for all that he has done to promote foreign oil interests by blocking the 15 proposed LNG projects that existed when he came to office. He has reduced Europe to its knees and turned it to be dependent on Putin. By blocking oil production in Canada, he has prevented us from supplying ourselves and forced us to import more oil.

Why will the Liberals not stop sending paycheques out and pollution up?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly, Canada has worked very hard with our allies around the world to augment the production of oil and natural gas. We committed to increasing production by 300,000 barrels by the end of the day to help our allies in Europe.

With respect to domestic energy security, here are the facts. When the Conservatives were in government, foreign oil imports were double what they are today. In fact, they have declined 80% from when Stephen Harper was the prime minister of Canada.

The facts speak for themselves. Under this government, more Canadians are using Canadian and North American energy. The leader opposite may not like it, but a fact is a fact.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Before going to the next question, and I do not want to interrupt, but I want to remind that with the shuffling and everything going around with the seats, I can hear those who are nearer to me they are pretty loud. I would ask them to tone down their outbursts. They are not constant, but they are outbursts and I ask that they just keep them down.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is a fact for us: 15 LNG projects were proposed when the Prime Minister took office. Zero are completed. Even the one that we approved in our final days in office, he has still failed to bring to completion.

Now, after the Prime Minister stood in the way of LNG Quebec and east coast LNG projects, Europe is totally dependent on Putin to keep the heat on this coming winter, funding that war. What has the government contributed? It has sent Putin back his turbines to help him pump his gas.

Why are the Liberals funding Putin's war instead of paycheques for Canadians?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me just say that a fact is a fact. The projects that he is talking about were assessed under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act 2012, in which Stephen Harper took out all of the environmental protections. One of the big reasons why these projects did not proceed is because they completely gutted the environmental assessment process.

We have put in place better rules to ensure that good projects are going to get built in this country, and we are certainly moving in that direction.

* * *

● (1445)

TAXATION

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the winter months are coming across the country and Canadians are hesitating to turn on the heat. Why? Because they are already paying more for gas. They are already paying more for groceries. Now, thanks to the Prime Minister, they are paying more for home heating, in fact, in some cases, 300% more.

Will the Prime Minister cancel his plans to triple the taxes on gas, groceries and home heating?

Hon. Steven Guilbeault (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that those members would talk about energy poverty, because when they were in power, the first thing they did was cut energy efficiency projects for the lowest-income Canadians. Hundreds of people were laid off. That is the first thing they did when they came into power in 2006.

Then what did the Conservatives do? They eliminated subsidies to help Canadians buy electric vehicles. Then what did they do? They limited support for renewable energy projects. If there is energy poverty in the country, it is because the Conservative Party was in power for 10 years.

The Speaker: Some of the comments have not been very parliamentary. I want to remind hon. members about that.

The hon. member for Edmonton Riverbend has the floor.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Prime Minister, people cannot afford to heat, eat and live. Does he not realize almost half of Canadians are \$200 away from insolvency? A recent report now indicates that families spend more on income taxes, at 43%, than they do on basic commodities, at 35.7%. That means that the young couple that emailed me from my riding, James and Debbie, cannot afford to put their little girl into skating.

Will the Prime Minister cancel his plans to “just in” increase their taxes?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand Canadians are struggling with the cost of living. That is why we have a plan to double the GST tax credit. I am really glad all members of the House, including the members opposite, are supporting that plan and Canadian families will be getting nearly \$500 in inflation relief soon.

Now it is time to get together and support the rental payments and support dental care for kids under 12. By the way, I wish the members opposite would support, for Edmonton families, our great day care plan, which is lowering the day care cost for that family by 50% this year.

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CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Laurel Collins (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want bold climate action and workers want to know they will have well-paying jobs for the future, but the Liberals have failed to deliver. Instead, they are giving billions of dollars to rich oil and gas companies, while workers and communities struggle.

Unions, environmental organizations and workers have been calling for a clear path forward, an industrial strategy and investments in good, clean jobs. The global economy is already moving toward a clean energy future, and Canada is failing to keep up.

My question is simple. Why is the Liberal government leaving Canadian workers behind?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly, I agree with the hon. member that we do need to have a proactive economic strategy that ensures Canada seizes the opportunities that will be created through a low-carbon transition. That is why we brought forward a critical minerals strategy, a hydrogen strategy. That is why we are working on regional energy and resource tables with most of the provinces and territories, and eventually all of them.

Certainly, those are the conversations the hon. member and I have been having, as we have actually talked about a number of these issues. I certainly look forward to continuing that work going forward.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Alberta workers have delivered a very clear message to Ottawa today that the energy transition is happening and they need the Prime Minister to show up. We see that Biden is transforming the American economy with well-paying union jobs, yet the Prime Minister has missed every climate target he has set. Clean energy represents a \$61-billion opportunity in Alberta.

We know the Alberta Conservatives would throw workers under the bus just out of ideological spite, but my question is for the Prime Minister. Is he willing to work with the Alberta Federation of Labour on establishing its plan for a clean energy transformation?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with labour across the country. In fact, we are going to be the first country in the world to be producing green steel, green aluminum, and we are working on green batteries.

We do not need to look back very much. Just look at the announcement we made with Rio Tinto recently. While it is going to be reducing its emissions, the site itself will be the largest site in the world to be producing titanium to be on the global market. Just recently, we broke ground on the Dofasco plant in Hamilton.

We are going to be producing green steel that is going to be part of the car of the future. The country is on the way to win at every step of the way.

* * *

● (1450)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the world grows darker, we are stronger together. Last week, the Minister of National Defence participated in a meeting of NATO defence ministers and visited Poland to address key challenges to our collective security, including increasing our support for our Ukrainian partners.

Could the minister tell the House how Canada continues to step up and support NATO, as well as the brave Ukrainian military fighting back against Putin's brutal and reprehensible attacks?

Hon. Anita Anand (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, in Poland, I signed a memorandum of understanding, strengthening the defence relationship with Poland, and committed 40 Canadian Armed Forces engineers to help train Ukrainians. Then at NATO, I announced another tranche of military

aid for Ukraine, including cameras for drones, satellite services, 155 millimetre ammunition and additional aid.

We will stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine in the short and long term.

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[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics worked very hard to convince us that Mr. Guay, who received \$28 million for his land in Lacolle, had never met with any MPs from their party to talk about those contracts.

However, we know that Mr. Guay attended at least four cocktail party fundraisers for the Liberal member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, contrary to the testimony in committee, the member met with Pierre Guay on several occasions?

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said, the rental agreement was negotiated based on fair market value to arrive at a competitive price.

In their testimony yesterday, the public servants and Mr. Guay made it clear that Mr. Guay was approached by public servants to negotiate a lease and that no public office holder was involved in the negotiations for this lease.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that Mr. Guay was paid \$28 million for contracts awarded without tenders.

In committee, the Liberals did everything they could to suggest there was never any contact with elected members. However, Mr. Guay is known to have attended at least four cocktail party fundraisers with the Liberal member for Châteauguay—Lacolle.

Is there a conflict of interest, yes or no? Could land have been leased from someone who is not a Liberal donor?

[*English*]

Hon. Helena Jaczek (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the contract award has been clearly revealed by our department. The government has been delivering open and fair procurement processes, while obtaining the best value for Canadians in all that our government is contracting in terms of the needs during the Roxham Road situation.

*Oral Questions***DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for over a month, the Prime Minister's Office knew the public rantings of a known anti-Semite and then continued to fund him until he was caught. This is not incompetence, it is purposeful and condones the very real and growing anti-Semitism.

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion knew. They knew for a month and they did nothing. It is hard to imagine a month of silence of hate-fuelled bigotry against any other group in our country.

Who else knew and why is no one on the other side being held accountable for promoting hate with Canadian tax dollars?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question. Anti-Semitism, hate and racism have no place in our society. I have said this before and I will say again that the anti-Semitic, violent, racist statements made by this individual and the organization are reprehensible and vile. The funding to this organization has been cut.

Our government will never tolerate this hate, and we are implementing new measures to make this never happens again.

• (1455)

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it took two days to cut funding to Hockey Canada and it took one week to cut funding to the WE scandal.

The Liberals condemn it now because they got caught, because the media asked them, because they could not hide it any more. It took a month to do and say nothing about a racist anti-racism consultant they knew spewed public hatred. They continued to fund him for a month.

Who is getting fired for this?

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt that the comments made by this individual and this organization are absolutely appalling. We condemn the anti-Semitism, racism and hatred that he has spread over a number of years.

I want to thank my colleague, the member of Parliament for Mount Royal, for bringing this individual to our attention. When this issue was raised, we immediately asked the department to confirm the project funding details and inform us about the procedural next steps. After the review, we followed the process in place, cut the funding to this organization and demanded the money back.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, nearly nine months ago, convoys of transport trucks were heading to Ottawa, announcing their plans to lay siege to the city.

We learned yesterday that hotel operators knew they were coming. They warned the City of Ottawa that, in the middle of the pan-

demic, 15,000 people were trying to book every hotel room in the city for three months. Ultimately, only the federal government did not see the siege coming.

When the government says that it was in constant communication with the City of Ottawa before the trucks arrived, what were they talking about, if not this? Were they exchanging recipes?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we invoked the Emergencies Act because it was an unprecedented situation. Witnesses testifying at the commission have demonstrated that people's lives were disrupted, including families and young people who needed cancer treatments and care for other very serious illnesses.

In an effort to manage the situation, we first sent RCMP officers to help the City of Ottawa, and now we are going to work with the judge to learn from the experience.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that they did not manage the crisis. The total lack of leadership on the part of this government is telling. That is what the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, showed the commission today.

He personally spoke with the Prime Minister on January 31, day three of the crisis, to ask for police reinforcements. He then spoke with the Minister of Public Safety on February 3. It took three more weeks for Ottawa to take action, three weeks. If the situation was so urgent that the Emergencies Act needed to be invoked, then why did it take three weeks to deploy police officers? It is urgent, but there is no rush?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague, the timeline is very clear.

From day one of the illegal blockade, we managed the situation by providing the resources, the RCMP officers and all the tools that the police needed. Now we are going to co-operate with the commission to learn from the experience. It is a very serious situation.

We invoked the Emergencies Act because it was necessary, and it worked very well on the ground.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year, the average family spent 36% of their income on basic necessities like food, shelter and clothing. Do members know what percentage was spent on taxes? It was 43%. That is over \$40,000 per household, and the Prime Minister is planning on tripling the carbon tax, further penalizing families when they purchase their basic necessities. The Prime Minister is also planning a payroll tax increase on January 1.

Will he recant and offer some relief to struggling Canadian families?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that EI contributions are how they insure themselves in case they lose their jobs. Mr. Harper understood that too, which is why the EI contribution rate was higher in every year that he was prime minister than it is this year and than it will be next year.

Here is what The Globe and Mail had to say about the EI debate we have been having in Parliament: The finance minister's "math is impeccable". As for the Leader of the Opposition, The Globe and Mail said this about his EI claim: "his claim is misleading".

• (1500)

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families can no longer afford the Liberal government. The average Canadian family now spends more on taxes than it does on the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter. The Prime Minister spent \$12,000 of taxpayer money on groceries in a single month when Canadian families are skipping meals to pay their grocery bills.

When will the Prime Minister do the right thing and cancel the January 1 tax increase on Canadians' paycheques?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives in this House have the opportunity to do the right thing right now. There is a bill before the House that would see Canadian children in low-income households have access to dental care. There is a bill before the House that would see low-income renters have access to rental support.

On this side, the government side, we have been there consistently for families since we were elected in 2015. I hope we can count on the Conservatives, who claim to care about Canadian families, to join us in these instances.

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are being buried under layers of red tape and tax hikes by the Liberals. Take onions: It is now cheaper and easier to import onions from Turkey than buy Canadian. First there is red tape, as Canadian onion exporters face inspection delays and costs, and then there is the carbon tax, which also drives up costs and makes Canadian onions more expensive than those shipped from around the world. The Liberals are making Canada one of the worst places to compete in the global marketplace.

Will the Prime Minister end his plan to triple the carbon tax on Canadian small businesses?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome that question from the member opposite.

First of all, in terms of making Canadian businesses competitive, we are aggressively pursuing trade agreements around the planet to diversify our supply chains. Second, what we are doing with respect to small businesses is empowering inclusive trade, which means supporting women entrepreneurs with a \$6-billion program. It means empowering Black entrepreneurs with a \$200-million pro-

gram. It means supporting indigenous people on this land so they can reach their economic potential. We will continue that work because we know that what is best for inclusive businesses is best for Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, for the important announcement she made about the community volunteer income tax program on Friday.

Can the minister tell us more about the enhancement of this federal grant, which helps individuals access the credits and benefits they need, and in particular, can she tell us about the funding for organizations that serve northern and indigenous communities?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Yukon for his kind words and his hard work.

This past weekend, I announced an increase in funding for free tax clinics. This funding will help organizations that serve northern and indigenous communities in particular by helping people access the credits and benefits to which they are entitled. We will continue to do whatever it takes to improve access to benefits and credits.

Mrs. Dominique Vien (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to a recent poll, 85% of Quebecers have had to change their habits to deal with the rising cost of living in 2022. They are reducing their outings, choosing house brands or putting off renovations. They are struggling to keep their heads above water. Instead of helping them, this government wants to deduct more money from their paycheques.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to cancel his planned tax increase?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands very well that many Canadians are struggling with affordability and the cost of living. That is the reality. That is why I am very pleased that all members of the House have decided to unanimously support our plan to deliver inflation relief payments. It was a significant moment.

The time has come to take the next step together and deliver the housing and dental care payments.

Oral Questions

● (1505)

[English]

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, northerners are facing unaffordable gas, groceries and home heating bills. I was in Inuvik recently, and two and a half litres of orange juice was over \$21, ground beef was over \$16 a kilogram and Kraft Dinner was over three dollars a box. Liberal inflation and carbon taxes are already punishing northerners and it will soon be impossible for them to afford it.

On behalf of all northerners, will the Prime Minister end his plan to triple taxes on gas, groceries and home heating?

Hon. Dan Vandal (Minister of Northern Affairs, Minister responsible for Prairies Economic Development Canada and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was in Inuvik as well, about six weeks ago, and there I announced \$163 million of new money for the nutrition north program. The program moves beyond a simple subsidy for nutrition north. It offers a new community food programs fund directly to support community-led food initiatives. We are providing more funds directly to indigenous partners through the harvesters support grant, increasing traditional country foods for our partners.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, there is a simple answer to this problem: The Liberals could end the carbon tax.

Experts are warning that Canadians could see heating costs double this winter. As we brace for the winter months, Canadians will be paying more to heat their houses, gas up and stock their fridges due to the out-of-control inflationary spending from the Liberal government. Canadians are going to need more than just hot air from the members opposite to stay warm this winter.

Will the Prime Minister end his plan to triple the taxes on groceries, gas and home heating?

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, I think we can all agree that the affordability challenges facing Canadians are very important. That is why we are moving forward with the GST tax credit. That is why we are moving forward with dental care for children in this country.

It is important for the hon. member to understand that the direct rebates to families paying the carbon tax are greater for 80% of the families than what they actually pay. This works to help with affordability.

I would also say that we have to take into account the future costs of inaction on climate change. Absent urgent action, those costs will be \$25 billion by 2025 and \$100 billion a year by 2050. For the sake of our children, we need to take action on climate change.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small and medium-sized indigenous businesses across the country experienced great volatility

during the pandemic. With the federal government's support, many were able to stay in operation by taking advantage of loans through the COVID indigenous business initiative.

As the economy continues to rebound and companies recover, could the Minister of Indigenous Services please update this House on what measures are being made available to support indigenous businesses?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for caring about the success of small businesses and, in particular, indigenous small businesses, which were equally hit hard during the pandemic.

We have announced that we will be providing 50% loan forgiveness for indigenous small businesses across this country. That is about 3,800 small businesses that will go on to hire friends, family and neighbours and continue to grow our economy here in Canada.

I am thankful for all small businesses, including those run by indigenous people in Canada.

* * *

LABOUR

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government was asked a very clear question about support for Alberta workers. Its answer was insulting, so I am going to ask it again: Will the minister support the Alberta Federation of Labour's plan for a future economy?

Albertans are tired of empty words and no action. There is a massive opportunity for good-paying union jobs, and Alberta workers risk getting left behind because of the government's inaction. We need the government to commit real dollars and take real action now. Where is the plan for Alberta workers? Where are the—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

● (1510)

Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will underline the fact that I was in Calgary just a couple of weeks ago meeting with the Alberta federation and a number of the unions in Alberta talking about exactly these issues. I would say there was an enormous amount of agreement about the need to develop an economy that is going to be strong and that will create jobs and economic opportunities.

We are working very directly with labour in Alberta. We are working very directly with some of the member's colleagues, whom she may want to talk to about that, to ensure that we are moving forward in the right way.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, obviously there is no plan at all.

[*Translation*]

We learned that the Liberals spent \$28 million to lease land near Roxham Road and they did so secretly.

Instead of suspending the safe third country agreement to streamline the process for refugees, the Liberals chose to funnel millions of dollars of public money to a Liberal donor without a call for tenders. For a Liberal, a crony is always a crony.

When will the Liberals suspend the safe third country agreement as the NDP has been calling for?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rental agreements were negotiated based on fair market value to arrive at a competitive price. Given the location of the land and its proximity to the border, this was an ideal location for CBSA.

Our government is delivering open, fair and transparent procurement processes, while obtaining the best value for Canadians.

* * *

[*English*]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Hon. Natalie Jameson, Minister of Education and Lifelong Learning and Minister responsible for the Status of Women for the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CANADA DISABILITY BENEFIT ACT

The House resumed from October 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit and making a consequential amendment to the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:12 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-22.

[*English*]

Call in the members.

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 190)

YEAS

Members

Aboultatif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barron	Barsalou-Duval
Battiste	Beaulieu
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Benzen
Bergen	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blanchet	Blanchette-Joncas
Blaney	Block
Blois	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Cannings	Caputo
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Chong
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cooper	Cornier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Dalton	Damoff
Dancho	Davidson
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Dowdall	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Epp	Erskine-Smith
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Fast	Fergus
Ferreri	Fillmore
Findlay	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Gallant	Garneau
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goodridge	Gould
Gourde	Green
Guilbeault	Hajdu
Hallan	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner

Routine Proceedings

Hoback	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Jeneroux	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Kelly	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Koutrakis
Kram	Kramp-Neuman
Kurek	Kusie
Kusmierczyk	Kwan
Lake	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lantsman
Lapointe	Larouche
Lattanzio	Lauzon
Lawrence	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lehoux
Lemire	Lewis (Essex)
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Liepert
Lightbound	Lloyd
Lobb	Long
Longfield	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maguire
Maloney	Martel
Martinez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McDonald (Avalon)
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLean
McLeod	McPherson
Melillo	Mendès
Mendicino	Miao
Michaud	Miller
Moore	Morantz
Morrice	Morrison
Morrissey	Motz
Murray	Muys
Naqvi	Nater
Ng	Noormohamed
Normandin	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Poilievre	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rood
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schiefke
Schmale	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Small
Soroka	Steinley

Ste-Marie	Stewart
St-Onge	Strahl
Stubbs	Sudds
Tassi	Taylor Roy
Thériault	Therrien
Thomas	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Valdez	Van Bynen
van Koeverden	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vecchio	Vidal
Vien	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi— 328

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron	Boissonnault
Gray	Sorbara— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to the order made on Thursday, June 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

● (1535)

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

(Division No. 191)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus

Routine Proceedings

Arnold	Arseneault	Kitchen	Kmiec
Arya	Ashton	Koutrakis	Kram
Atwin	Bachrach	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Badawey	Baker	Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Baldinelli	Barlow	Kwan	Lake
Barrett	Barron	Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste	Lametti	Lamoureux
Beaulieu	Beech	Lantsman	Lapointe
Bendayan	Bennett	Larouche	Lattanzio
Benzen	Bergen	Lauzon	Lawrence
Berthold	Bérubé	LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Bezan	Bibeau	Lehoux	Lemire
Bittle	Blaikie	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Blair	Blanchet	Liepert	Lightbound
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney	Lloyd	Lobb
Block	Blois	Long	Longfield
Boulerice	Bradford	Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Bragdon	Brassard	MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
Brière	Brunelle-Duceppe	MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Calkins	Cannings	Maguire	Maloney
Caputo	Carrie	Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Casey	Chabot	Masse	Mathysen
Chagger	Chahal	May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Chambers	Champagne	Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Champoux	Chatel	McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
Chen	Chiang	McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Chong	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	McLean	McLeod
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper	McPherson	Melillo
Cormier	Coteau	Mendès	Medicino
Dabrusin	Dalton	Miao	Michaud
Damoff	Dancho	Miller	Moore
Davidson	DeBellefeuille	Morantz	Morrice
Deltell	d'Entremont	Morrison	Morrissey
Desbiens	Desilets	Motz	Murray
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal	Muys	Naqvi
Dhillon	Diab	Nater	Ng
Dong	Dowdall	Noormohamed	Normandin
Dreeshen	Drouin	O'Connell	Oliphant
Dubourg	Duclos	O'Regan	O'Toole
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz	Pauzé	Perkins
Ehsassi	El-Khoury	Perron	Petitpas Taylor
Ellis	Epp	Plamondon	Poilievre
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Powlowski	Qualtrough
Falk (Provencher)	Fast	Rayes	Redekopp
Fergus	Ferreri	Reid	Rempel Garner
Fillmore	Findlay	Richards	Roberts
Fisher	Fonseca	Robillard	Rodriguez
Fortier	Fortin	Rogers	Romanado
Fragiskatos	Fraser	Rood	Ruff
Freeland	Fry	Sahota	Sajjan
Gaheer	Gallant	Saks	Samson
Garneau	Garon	Sarai	Savard-Tremblay
Garrison	Gaudreau	Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Gazan	Généreux	Schiefke	Schmale
Genuis	Gerretsen	Seeback	Serré
Gill	Gladu	Sgro	Shanahan
Godin	Goodridge	Sheehan	Shields
Gould	Gourde	Shiple	Sidhu (Brampton East)
Green	Guilbeault	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simard
Hajdu	Hallan	Sinclair-Desgagné	Singh
Hanley	Hardie	Small	Soroka
Hepfner	Hoback	Steinley	Ste-Marie
Holland	Housefather	Stewart	St-Onge
Hughes	Hussen	Strahl	Stubbs
Hutchings	Iacono	Sudds	Tassi
Idlout	Ien	Taylor Roy	Thériault
Jaczek	Jeneroux	Therrien	Thomas
Johns	Joly	Thompson	Tochor
Jones	Jowhari	Tolmie	Trudeau
Julian	Kayabaga	Trudel	Turnbull
Kelloway	Kelly	Uppal	Valdez
Khalid	Khera	Van Bynen	van Koeverden

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Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vidal
Viersen
Villemure
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williams
Yip
Zarrillo
Zuberi— 327

Vandal
Vecchio
Vien
Vignola
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid
Zimmer

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron
Gray

Boissonnault
Sorbara— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 20

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in relation to the consideration of Government Business No. 20, I move:

That debate be not further adjourned.

● (1540)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Services is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Patty Hajdu: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to express my disappointment at hearing members of the opposition, in particular the Conservatives, asking our Deputy Prime Minister to smile a little more. This is recognized as a known sexist remark. I would just say that—

The Speaker: I am afraid that this is more of a point of debate and not a point of order. However, I do want to remind both sides that when someone is answering or talking, as I am, to listen and to respect each other.

We will now return to the motion that was put forward.

Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places or use the “raise hand” function so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here we are again. The Liberal government, which promised Canadians that it would not shut down debate, is doing it again.

It is shameful. These are important measures to get right. There are concerns that have been expressed on this motion, as well as the bill that it pertains to, and the government is not listening. I am very disappointed to see, once again, a lack of transparency and Liberals not keeping their promises, which is what we have come to expect from this government.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad and grateful to be able to answer this question and to agree with the member that this is a very important bill. We should move forward because, as we all know, the next occasion is going to give us more time and a better place to study the bill clause by clause and to look at it carefully to make sure that it serves the needs of Canadians on dental care and rental support.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find it mighty rich that Conservatives are using all of their stalling tactics to prevent children from getting dental care, while MPs in the House get dental care, Conservative MPs.

I find it extremely disturbing and shameful that they are doing this. We need to move forward with this so that children get help so that they can deal with their dental work.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. As we do this, we are going to save probably around \$2 billion in emergency services in current dental work not having to be given.

A lot of Canadians, and low-income Canadians in particular, do not have access to dental care because of affordability, and \$2 billion in hospitalization costs could be prevented with better dental care for children and low-income families.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ): This is another slap in the face of parliamentarism, Mr. Speaker. It is a two-handed slap, one hand being Liberal and the other New Democrat. Again, it seems as though we are in a bad movie.

Bill C-31 is ill-conceived. We should have worked on this bill because it was scribbled on the back of a napkin. Then, we can see there is a desire to expedite debate. There is talk of dental insurance, but there is no clear indication in the bill that it was dental insurance, quite the contrary. What we are seeing now is a government that drafted bad legislation because it was in a too big a hurry to consummate its marriage to the NDP to really put any work into it.

My question is simple. Is the minister embarrassed to introduce this closure motion?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for wanting to take a closer look at the bill. That is exactly what we can do if we vote for the motion today. We can go to committee and take the time needed to listen to experts to see how taking care of our children's dental health means taking care of their health in general. It avoids them having to go to the hospital for emergency surgery that would not be needed if they had access to quality preventive dental care. It is for all children who need it in Quebec and elsewhere.

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I found it very ironic that the new shadow minister for civil liberties just tried to lecture this side of the House on not allowing the democratic process to take place when only hours ago, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan moved a concurrence motion in order to stall for time in the House. It is a tactic that we have seen year after year being played by the Conservatives to affect the agenda from moving forward. Now, once again, they are trying to do it on an issue that is as important as dental care for children under 14 years of age, who otherwise might not be able to afford it.

Could the minister comment as to whether he is equally frustrated as I am with respect to the fact that, on an issue that should enjoy the support of all members of the House, we seem to be seeing more Conservative tactics and delays?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, we obviously all feel the urgency of moving forward. December 1 is coming. This is when we would like children of low and middle-income families to benefit from better dental care.

By the way, about a third of all surgeries under anaesthesia for children between the ages of one and five are because children do not have access to proper dental care before they end up in emergency surgery. We know we can do better, and with the assistance of all members of the House, we know we will do better.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister knows that Ontario, as an example, has five programs that help low-income children access dental care. Dental care is a program that should fall under a provincial mandate for health.

I am very curious as to why the minister would not have collaborated with the provinces to enhance the programs instead of creating another program, more bureaucracy, more red tape, duplication and triplication of programs. Instead of helping more people in a more streamlined way, the Liberals just seem to be adding more layers of red tape when they could just be helping Canadians.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for pointing to the need of having more people having access to better dental care in Canada, including through complementing the work provinces and territories currently do. It is only about 4% of total dental care expenses that are currently covered by provinces and territories. About seven million Canadians, 30% of all Canadians, do not go to see a dentist every year, because they do not have the means to do so. Therefore, we need to do better, and

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we are doing this in collaboration with and in support to provinces and territories.

• (1550)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, after listening to the minister's speech and reading the bill, I feel certain important elements are missing.

Basically, before any action is taken, there is a fundamental principle to respect. That is the jurisdiction of the provinces. Before doing anything, did the minister even consult or consider the possibility of simply transferring the money to the provinces?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, as my colleague suggests, there are considerable benefits for the provinces and territories in having the Government of Canada invest more in dental health. For example, it costs between \$12,000 and \$25,000 to treat a child who has a widespread infection because dental health problems were not resolved through preventive services before the child ends up in urgent care, which is very costly for the provinces and territories.

We know that we can do better. We look forward to discussing it in committee to ensure that this bill is as robust as possible.

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, as much as I appreciate the minister moving forward with this bill and fast-tracking it, I am deeply disturbed by the Conservatives using all their tactics, like concurrence motions and whatnot, to delay children getting help for their dental work. I also feel the Liberals have not done enough to move on their promise on their mental health transfer, the four and a half billion dollars over five years.

Does the minister agree that the Liberals need to move rapidly also on their promise for a mental health transfer, because we are in the middle of a mental health crisis in Canada?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, the member is correct that we need to do more. We are doing more, in fact, because we have a \$6-billion transfer already in place, which will be negotiated over the next few months, on home care, community care and mental health care. In long-term care, there will be an additional \$3 billion. Just a few months ago, we announced an additional \$2 billion for reducing backlogs in surgeries and diagnostics.

We know there will be more, and we are very proud to work with all members of the House who know and feel that we all need to do more.

S. O. 57

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to highlight the fact that members in this chamber are making comments about whether it is ironic, or whatever. The facts are the facts, and the fact on this piece of legislation is that it is being sped through this House at an alarming rate. We are not being given adequate time to even study this massive omnibus bill, which brings together multiple ministries, in a timely manner.

It is quite concerning to me that the government has moved time allocation on this, something it said it was not going to do because of some of the abuses that happened in previous governments, but here it is yet again, using this tool to try to force things through. Liberals are also making programming motions to force it through in committee.

Why are the Liberals so scared of this bill having adequate critique in committee?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, we should all commend the member for asking for additional time to study this bill. That is exactly what we are going to do at committee, which is where members of the House can spend more time and energy in the appropriate setting, asking for experts and other stakeholders to come to the committee so they can ask questions and get answers.

This is where we want to go next, because, as the member knows, we need more time to take action in delivering dental care and rental supports for low-income and middle-income families.

Mr. Adam Chambers (Simcoe North, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government is going to use the exact same process to disburse payments to receiving individuals as it did with CERB, using the CRA to disburse the payments.

Will the minister say on the record whether he believes in the process that the government has set up? Is it a good process, is it the one it intends to use, and does he stand by that process?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, there are two things: first, the process, and second, the outcomes.

This is the right process to proceed quickly to deliver better dental care for children.

On the outcome, about two million school days are missed by children every year because they need to go for emergency dental care. This is time wasted, obviously, for children. It is also an important burden for families. We need to do better. When children get sick, it is bad for their health and it is also bad for their long-term development, socially and health-wise, especially when they miss days at school.

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, we know our health care system is fractured. We do not truly have a head-to-toe health care system. It stops here. We know dental care is finally coming in to ensure that people get access to dental care.

• (1555)

Mr. Frank Caputo: How is the NDP in B.C. doing it, then?

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, it is because of the NDP, absolutely, to my colleague who is heckling me. We are making sure we have pharmacare so that people who do not have private insurance can access the medicine they need when they need it. Also,

when it comes to mental health, we need parity. Mental health is health.

Does the minister not agree that we do not have parity between mental and physical health in this country and that we need legislation so we can make sure there is truly parity between mental and physical health?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, we all agree that mental health is health, and mental health care is health care. That is exactly what we should all recognize. We fully support the views of the member that we need to invest more in better health care and better mental health care.

I would like to point out, in addition to what the member said on dental care, that approximately one family out of three in Canada does not have access to dental insurance. That explains, in large part, why many of those families and children do not get appropriate, accessible and affordable dental care.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for allowing this debate.

However, I do question the timing of this announcement, which was made in the middle of Quebec's election campaign, when seniors' groups were making their demands known to the Quebec government.

The government announced dental care funding, but groups like Réseau FADOQ responded that this was not what they were expecting from the federal government. They are asking for health transfers to increase to 35%. Their request was for the government in Quebec.

They understood that. When will the government understand it?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, I am certain, because I know the member well, that she also knows what it is like for seniors to take care of their general health, whether we are talking about seniors in long-term care facilities, in residences or every senior who has difficulty affording dignified dental care.

I am sure the member also agrees with everyone in the House that taking care of seniors is also important.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, \$10 billion is the number that we need to understand very clearly in the House that this bill is going to cost Canadians.

We also understand that perhaps what the minister is saying could be nuanced a bit in the sense that 11 of 13 jurisdictions have dental programs at the current time for low-income and special needs children. There is also the NIHB program.

Perhaps the minister would want to nuance what he has said around that a bit. However, \$10 billion is the real reason we should not have closure on this bill. We should have very robust and open debate with respect to how we spend Canadians' money.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague, because I do not think I have done that yet, on his appointment as my critic. We are going to be working together to support health and the appropriate health care of Canadian citizens.

Let me once again point out that about 4% of total dental care expenditures are currently covered by provinces and territories, and 40% by citizens. Approximately 33% of families with children do not go to see a dentist every year because they are afraid of the cost that it would involve for their families. This is very concerning, obviously, because of the severe impact it has on the mental and physical health of all those children and families.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the minister could provide his thoughts on the importance of passing the legislation in a timely fashion, so that what is being resourced here can actually be delivered, given the importance of getting this money into the pockets of Canadians who need it in order to guarantee that dental service.

If it was up to the Conservative Party, without this time allocation we would likely not see the legislation pass this year. Therefore, the government, working with the NDP, has come to an agreement that would ultimately see these benefits being delivered. Could the minister provide his thoughts on the timing of the passage of this bill and how important that is?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, it is all right for people to not always agree on every bill. It is perfectly fine in a democracy. However, it would be unfortunate if, just because some members in the House do not like or do not approve of a particular bill, the majority of the members of this House could not vote in favour of it and move forward towards delivering the types of services my colleague has already mentioned.

We want to move ahead. I mentioned \$2 billion as being the cost of emergency hospital costs because people did not have access to preventive dental care and instead ended up in a hospital for the types of services that would not have been needed had they had access to appropriate affordable dental care.

• (1600)

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate joining the debate.

I was a member of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan for eight years before I was able to have the honour of this job. We dealt a lot with health and dental care, and I know there are jurisdictions across the country that have dental programs in place for low-income families and for children with disabilities.

Could the minister please outline how many of the provinces asked for this program? I know the health ministers meet at federal-provincial-territorial meetings. How many of the provincial health ministers had this dental program as their top ask or their top priority, consulting within their jurisdictions or with their partners?

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I would really like to hear that answer, and I would appreciate it if the minister could talk about the consultations he had with health ministers for this program.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, my colleagues are as knowledgeable as we are. The \$2 billion I just mentioned earlier are costs that provinces and territories need to pay because of the need to hospitalize people, children in particular, who do not have access to good-quality, preventative dental care. These are big costs that provinces and territories need to incur. More importantly, these are severe health costs that families and children need to bear because they do not have access to affordable quality dental care.

We are working together, complementing each other, supporting their efforts and adding to those efforts the fact that we are going to support about 500,000 children with this particular bill and support families with children and all those who care for those people in the current system.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, the underlying premise of Bill C-31 is an assumption that the government is even capable of delivering a \$10-billion program, yet its record in government is appalling when we think of the mess it made of passports, when we think of the mess it made of ArriveCAN, when we think of the mess it made with the Canada Infrastructure Bank and even with the delivery of the CERB program.

What makes the minister think that he and his government can actually deliver a \$10-billion national dental care program in a coherent and accountable way?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, the member is experienced enough to know that this is indeed ambitious, but it is necessary. As we have said, this is going to help about seven million Canadians who currently do not go to see a dentist or dental hygienist because they just cannot afford the dental care they need. What do they do? They wait until their oral health has become very bad, and then they end up in a hospital, with all of the physical, mental and social difficulties that come with ending up in a hospital, as opposed to going and seeing a dentist, with the diagnostics, treatments and preventative services that I think all families and children need in this particular country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, during the 2015 campaign, the Liberal Party promised to uphold the standing committees' independence, but today's motion regarding Government Business No. 20 flies in the face of that principle of independence, in particular subparagraph (c)(ii), where the government says, "amendments to the bill, including from independent members, shall be submitted to the clerk of the committee by 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 20, 2022, and distributed to the committee members in both official languages by noon on Friday, October 21, 2022".

Why is the government shutting down debate in the House? Why is the government—

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An hon. member: Interfering.

Mr. Brad Vis: Why is it interfering in the committee's debate?

• (1605)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Everyone knows we do not provide that kind of help in the House.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, our colleague's French was already fantastic, but with a bit of help, it is even better. His question was excellent. He is a man of principle and he mentioned the word "principle". We are at second reading. This is when we look at the principle of the bill. We then go to committee to determine whether the provisions of the bill allow us to achieve that principle. We need to vote on the principle now to be able to move on to the important detailed study of this bill, which we look forward to doing in committee, obviously within an independent framework, because committees remain independent in their work.

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have great concerns about the fact that we are not continuing this conversation in the House. When we look at the various scenarios where we have a lot of apprehension about the way the government has managed to bring its programs forward, I have concerns.

I hear all the time from my constituents that the Liberals put these programs out there, but they do not put the meat on the bones before they present it in this place. That is my concern. When we are talking about that kind of money, are we going to be in a circumstance like we were with CERB, where they just shut off all the checks and balances and let people apply, and then, after the fact, try to deal with the challenges? I understand that there probably are some young people falling through the cracks, but to have the federal government engaging in this way is very concerning.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, my colleague speaks about her concerns, and she can legitimately have concerns. Those concerns, indeed, need to be addressed by the committee. She also mentioned meat on the bone. Meat on the bone is what the committee will need to do very soon, hopefully, looking at each clause to make sure it is best suited to support the principles defended by this bill at second reading.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I had a meeting this morning with representatives from the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association. They raised a concern about the government introducing an alternative to dental insurance. A lot of companies, particularly SMEs, will withdraw from group insurance programs. That could have major consequences for access to several types of insurance that are not limited to dental insurance. Access to such insurance is a major competitive advantage for employees and employers.

If government dental insurance is imposed, our businesses may no longer have access to insurance plans. Has the minister considered this possibility?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue is quite right in saying that this is a risk that must be considered.

Any public program obviously comes with considerations of possible movements and possible partial or considerable withdrawal from programs already offered by other governments or the private sector. That is an element that the member and other members on the committee can raise during the study of the bill at committee after second reading.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to reiterate a question that has already been asked of my colleague and I would like a clear answer.

Many have asked if the provinces were consulted. Did the provinces ask, yes or no, for this type of dental program that is presented in this grand bill that contains all kinds of things? The question is simple and I would like my colleague, who is good at dodging answers, to answer it.

Yes or no, did the provinces ask for this? Yes or no, were the provinces consulted on this program?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, I am very happy that my colleague asked that question.

All of Canada's health ministers have had the opportunity to speak with one another quite regularly over the past several months. We did so again a few weeks ago, and I did so several times over the summer.

We have spoken frequently about this dental insurance program since it was first announced a few months ago. My officials and provincial and territorial government officials speak with each other very regularly in order to share all relevant information, because we know, as my colleague suggested, that this work must be done in a complementary way to support the dental care needs of all Quebecers and all Canadians.

• (1610)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, it is really unfortunate that the Conservatives are seeing this as a cost to Canadians, when it really has to be seen as a benefit to low-income families. Having said that, I think we also need to recognize the urgent issues we need to address, especially around mental health. The Mental Health Commission of Canada estimates, for example, that mental health issues and illness cost Canada at least \$50 billion every year. We need to focus on that as well.

Could the minister please respond to the issue?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, I think we are all grateful to hear this question. As we said earlier, mental health is an integral part of health. Mental health care has to be a part of health care.

We also mentioned earlier that approximately \$6 billion is already in the fiscal framework for the next five years to support mental health care, home care, community care and additional investments for long-term care. We know, because we said it during the campaign, that we will be doing more. In particular, we will be putting into place mental health transfers specifically targeted to the things that our colleague mentioned earlier.

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

I have grave concerns. The government cannot deliver a \$57 passport. How is it going to deliver a \$10-billion dental care program?

I want to put that aside, though, and build on the question from my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable and my colleague from Regina—Lewvan because we have not heard an answer. How many provinces asked for this? His answer should start with a number.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Madam Speaker, there are two answers

The first is the \$25 billion through the Canada child benefit. It is a big amount of money. Every month, it lifts approximately 400,000 children out of poverty, plus obviously, all of their parents. That is a big amount, but it has a big impact in our society. It makes our society more fair and prosperous.

We believe that better equity, better justice and better health for Canadians should also be achieved through investing in the dental care and dental health of our children and families.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, Government Orders will be extended by 26 minutes.

[English]

It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time to put forth with the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

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

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

• (1655)

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

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(Division No. 192)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blaney	Blois
Boulerice	Bradford
Brière	Cannings
Casey	Chagger
Chahal	Champagne
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Commier
Coteau	Dabrusin
Damoff	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Dong
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith	Fergus
Fillmore	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Freeland	Fry
Gaheer	Garneau
Garrison	Gazan
Gerretsen	Gould
Green	Guilbeault
Hajdu	Hanley
Hardie	Hepfner
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Idlout	Ien
Jaczek	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jowhari	Julian
Kayabaga	Kelloway
Khalid	Khera
Koutrakis	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lalonde
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lightbound
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martínez Ferrada	Masse
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod	McPherson
Mendès	Mendicino
Miller	Morrice
Morrissey	Murray
Naqvi	Ng
Noormohamed	O'Connell
Oliphant	O'Regan

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Perron
Poilievre
Redekopp
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Ruff
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Stewart
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Viersen
Villemure
Vuong
Warkentin
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Williamson

Plamondon
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Rood
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Fortin
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Maguire
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Melillo
Moore
Morrison
Muys
Normandin
Patzner
Pauzé

Aitchison
Allison
Baldinelli
Barrett
Benzen
Berthold
Bezan
Blanchette-Joncas
Bragdon
Brunelle-Duceppe
Caputo
Chabot
Champoux
Cooper
Dancho
DeBellefeuille
d'Entremont
Desilets
Dreeshen
Ellis
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Findlay
Gallant
Gaudreau
Genuis
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Goodridge
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Kram
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Lawrence
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Motz
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O'Toole
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Perkins

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The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 20—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-31

The House resumed from October 17 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this very important motion that would put into process how we will ultimately resolve the bill before us, Bill C-31, a bill to enact very important supports for Canadians, in particular Canadians who are struggling the most right now and Canadians who are experiencing the effects of global inflation and everything that is going on in the world at this moment.

Specifically, this programming motion would set in motion a series of events. The first thing that would happen is we would finish disposing of this piece of legislation today at second reading. We would then send it off to committee. Once it gets to committee, it would have a certain amount of time to go through clause-by-clause and other considerations the committee might have. Then it would return to this House later next week to be finally voted on.

I think this motion to program Bill C-31 is very important. It is very important because so many Canadians out there who are experiencing the hardships associated with rising costs right now would benefit from the supports in the bill. I know there have been many complaints, from the Conservatives in particular, about the democratic process and how this is an affront to democracy, but in all fairness, if we look back at what happened this morning, we can see that the Conservatives were utilizing the opportunity to bring forward a concurrence motion to essentially shut down government debate.

Government Orders

Quite often this question will be asked: Why can the government not seem to program properly to put bills forward or schedule its agenda? What we hear repeatedly is that the government is completely incapable of doing that. Well, the reality is, as Parliament is set up this way, that the opposition has certain tools and tactics it can use to slow things down. In reality, this is, really, the tool opposition MPs have. The tool an opposition has in Parliament, whether it is this Parliament or a provincial legislature, is to slow things down and get things to move as slowly as possible to try to perhaps drum up more support for its position or whatever it might be.

I understand that. I understand why the opposition is doing what it is doing from time to time. I understand where its desire comes from to slow things down and effectively stop legislation from moving forward. However, I also have great concern over doing that on this particular bill. This is a bill that would genuinely help the most vulnerable people in our communities.

When games are played by opposition parties to slow certain bills down that might not have the immediate consequential impacts that this one does, I can at least understand why they are doing it, even though it frustrates me at those times as well. In this particular case, it cannot be accepted. We have our positions on this. It is quite clear that different parties feel different ways about it. My understanding is that the Conservatives are still not in favour of Bill C-31. They did seem to jump on board with the GST rebate bill the government tabled a few weeks ago, but with this particular one they are not doing so.

It has become very clear to the House where the direction is. I can pretty much predict what the vote will be when we vote on this bill, whether we vote on it next week or eight weeks from now. The only people, individuals or stakeholders who would be affected by further delays are those who would benefit from these very important supports. That is why, in working with the NDP, we are programming this particular bill, Bill C-31. It is so we can see it through the rest of the legislative process, bring it into law and get supports to Canadians.

As I indicated earlier, many individuals in our communities are facing a rising cost of living. Everybody is facing it, but it is certainly affecting certain people quite a bit more than others in terms of their ability to support themselves. That is what this government has been focused on. It is focusing on providing supports and making sure that the individuals in our communities who are suffering the most can actually get benefits.

● (1700)

This is what we saw during the COVID pandemic. Unfortunately, one of the realities of the pandemic is that the disparity between the haves and the have-nots has grown even more. We need to focus on bringing forward supports that can try to address this.

When individuals are properly maintaining their health because they have access to the various different social supports that are out there, we will see more prosperous individuals who will contribute more effectively to our economy, which is a good thing, quite frankly, for everybody. That is why I am very pleased to see this particular piece of legislation move forward through this programming motion and be brought into law.

The part I want to focus on is dental care. One out of three Canadians cannot afford dental care. The bill goes toward helping those Canadians specifically. What the bill proposes is that families that make \$90,000 and less will be able to access supports for dental care for children under the age of 12.

I heard a comment from my Conservative colleagues in particular during the half hour of questions and answers with the minister that these supports already exist in provinces. I can speak to Ontario, as an example, it being my home province. It is correct that some supports do exist, but the bulk of those supports are primarily geared toward assisting individuals once they are experiencing an emergency. If I heard the minister correctly earlier, he said the majority, or a certain percentage, I believe it was around 30% or 40%, of children who were accessing emergency dental care were being given anaesthesia. They were in a state of having to have emergency surgery.

That is not what this is about. This is not about just providing for individuals once they get to the point of having a medical emergency. It is about helping with preventative dental care and getting the support to young children who need it in advance so they do not get to that place of having to show up at an emergency department to get emergency dental care.

That is the first thing I would say about the argument regarding the provinces that are already providing these supports. The other thing I would say is that it is not holistic. It is not complete. It is not a standardized program throughout our entire country. When we can provide a standard quality of care throughout the entire country, and in this case as it relates to children under the age of 12 who qualify, everybody will be taken care of to the same minimum level of care.

It is one thing for an Ontario MP to stand up and say that these already exist in Ontario, even if it is only to a certain degree, and there is some truth to that, but it is not entirely true. It is one thing for MPs to stand up and say that, but it does not mean it is consistent across the entire country. This is a legislature that looks at the entire country, not just one province or another province. In my opinion, it is very important that we establish this minimum standard of benchmark, especially when we know that one-third of Canadians cannot afford dental care. My plea to colleagues across the way is that in the interest of establishing this standardized care, we need to move forward with a dental plan.

The other question we heard from the Conservatives, and this was asked of the minister as well, was how many provinces asked for this. A couple of my Conservative friends repeatedly asked how many as the minister was trying to answer the question. I did not realize that we had to wait for provinces to ask us for something before we could propose an idea. The job of this legislature is not to just sit here and wait for provinces to ask for things and then respond. Our job here is to represent all Canadians, so if we could come up with a good idea and a good concept for all Canadians, we should do that.

Government Orders

● (1705)

What the Conservatives are really trying to get at when they say that is that we are only doing this for political reasons because the NDP wanted it in a supply and confidence agreement. Fair enough, I will say to my Conservative colleagues. There is truth in the fact that when we are in a partnership and looking to work with other people, we have to make concessions. We compromise and we work together.

I will be equally critical of my friends in the NDP. To stand there and say that they forced the government to do this is a bit of an overreach, and to suggest that somehow the government was forced into doing this is not true. What we see here is an opportunity to work together with another political party to advance goals that are in the best interests of Canadians.

A lot of great legislation was adopted in this House during minority Parliaments, which is when different parties have to work together. The creation of our flag, the flag that is right next to the Speaker's chair, was created during a minority Parliament. The NDP never misses an opportunity to remind us that the great legacy of Tommy Douglas is health care, which is another thing that happened during a minority Parliament. I believe OAS was also created during a minority Parliament.

That is the whole point. I find it very rich when the criticism is "How dare you let another party tell you what to do?" This is the whole point of our coming together in this place, to work together. It is to realize that one of the most important objectives of the NDP in this Parliament was to do something for young children in terms of dental care. We recognized that and we had equally important pieces of policy that we wanted to put forward. We recognized that because this is a minority Parliament, we have to work together. We have to collaborate. We have to sit down and ask how we advance objectives. That is a responsible legislative process unfolding.

I must admit I am perplexed when I hear criticisms, in particular the bulk of it coming from the Conservatives, about two political parties working together in this legislature. That is indeed exactly what we are supposed to do, if not always, most importantly during the time when there is a minority government.

I will conclude by saying that this programming motion that we are debating right now regarding Bill C-31 is incredibly important. I think it is time to put the political games aside for a second and recognize that whether members support the legislation or not, whether members think this would drive inflation or not, regardless of any individual thought on it, members must recognize and must agree that there will be some people out there who would benefit from this.

If members know that the writing is on the wall and that it is inevitable, and they know where this is going and know what the outcome will be, let us have our say in here. Let us say our piece. Let us get up and debate it. Let us put forward our ideas, our concepts and our positions on it, but then let us let it come to a vote.

Let us not use this bill as an opportunity to use that one tool I spoke of earlier that the opposition has, which is to slow down and stall legislation. Let us at least let this very important piece of legislation move through the process so that those who really need it,

whether or not members agree that this is the best way to deliver it to them, let us just make sure that they can get these supports so that they can be taken care of, especially right now in the time of need of so many individuals in our country.

● (1710)

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the earlier debate, the hon. member referenced questions that colleagues from this side of the House were asking as to the status of the consultations and the actual number of asks from provinces.

I come much more from an ag background, where there is a long-standing tradition where ag is a shared jurisdiction. We have a long-standing tradition of a 60-40 cost share on much of the programming.

When we are dealing with the area of health, where does jurisdiction come into it? What is the agreed upon cost share? We hear the provinces asking for more money. That is where the relevance comes from the question of the interaction between the federal government and the provinces.

I will ask the question again. What are the provinces telling the government about dental health care?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are trying to set this narrative that we are trying to propose something that was never asked for. My counter-argument to that earlier was that I do not understand why we need to wait to have that request made of us. Why is this legislature not mature enough and capable enough to set policy on its own without requiring that?

The member compared it to agriculture. The delivery of health care might be the responsibility of the provinces, but certainly the cost of health care is not solely on the provinces. The cost of health care is through a formula that has been prescribed. In my opinion, that is what is so important when talking about this. Yes, there is shared jurisdiction in terms of paying for it. Delivery might be more on the provincial side, but that does not mean the federal government cannot initiate policy that will help out individuals through CRA, as this would do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Denis Garon (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. He refers to provincial programs as though they were leftover programs and inadequate solutions, when the Quebec program already exists. What we are asking is not just to tell them to accept the program as it is and give us the money. What Quebec is asking for is the right to opt out with full financial compensation for programs with comparable objectives.

I understand that they want to do something big that they call "national". They say this is the Parliament of Canada and that this applies to all Canadians, but when it was time for the carbon tax, the provinces that performed like Quebec with its permit trading system, the government was very proud to allow Quebec to opt out because it was effective.

Why does that work for the carbon tax but, suddenly, when the government has this desire to centralize everything, the principle of asymmetry no longer exists?

• (1715)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the member and I have spoken specifically on the carbon tax in the past and I have been very complimentary of Quebec's very aggressive position when it relates to pricing pollution. It understands it. It gets it.

As it relates to this particular bill, conceptually I am very much supportive of ensuring that individuals under 12 years of age who are in families that make less than \$90,000 a year get access to this funding. If the member is suggesting that we need to further look at the bill to ensure individuals are taken care of and that Quebec in particular would have an opportunity to realize some savings due to the fact that it is already doing this, then that is something that could come up in committee where the bill is going to next.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, this debate always strays away from the real need for dental care in this country. When people say programs already exist, it is simply not true. There is no province that provides coverage for every family, every individual, every person with a disability who earns less than \$90,000 a year. It simply does not exist in this country. I can tell the House about a family that came into my office for help on another federal program and literally burst into tears when they found out they could take their kids to the dentist.

We have heard the Conservatives, in particular their leader, talk like Santa to working people, but when it comes to trying to delay this program so that cheques do not come out before the end of the year, their delay tactics look a lot more like Scrooge.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, what the member is saying is right. That is the impression that would be given to somebody who is paying attention to what is going on in the House.

To the member's point, he is absolutely right that there is no program that covers all children under 12. In fact, I hope the program does not stop there. I hope that one day there will be a dental care program similar to the health care program where everybody is covered. That is where we ultimately need to get. When the founders of our health care system created it, there was an understanding that pharmacare and dental care were on the horizon, that those things would happen in the future, and yet here we are so many decades later still waiting.

I applaud the NDP's passion for this and continually pushing for it. I am glad that we can work together on this. I hope this is not the end and that we can continue to see dental care expand not just to the criteria that we are seeing here, but, indeed, to more Canadians in the years to come.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I very much support this bill and I value the opportunity to ask the member a question and, in the process, explain why I voted against the motion to have closure on debate.

I want this bill passed, but I find closure is used all too frequently. In the first Parliament in which Stephen Harper had a majority, I

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was sitting as an opposition member and almost every bill had closure. All of us, including the Liberals, lamented it because every time we have closure, we diminish the process of democracy and debate in this place.

There has been a rule traditionally that no member can read a speech. Because we ignore that rule in this place, the House leaders from the different parties are able to say that all of their members need to speak to this or that they cannot tell us yet how many members will speak to it, clogging up the procedures. I think they could be unclogged by reinforcing that rule. Does the hon. member have any other thoughts on what could work?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the question is slightly rhetorical because I think the member already knows my position on this.

I totally agree and support what she is saying. I am reluctant to say members cannot read speeches because some people rely on that and prefer it. I can understand that. However, where the member is going with this is that she is basically saying that whatever anybody delivers in here needs to be something of substance and coming from a place of informed opinion, as opposed to just grabbing something that is handed to them and reading it.

One of the other stall tactics we see is not just putting up as many speakers as the party can. After a whole wack of speakers have spoken, then the opposition will put forward an amendment, which basically resets the roster and everybody can speak to it again. I used to be frustrated when I would see and hear about what Stephen Harper was doing. I admit that I was not as informed about the realities of how this place functioned at the time. I now understand it and I see what happens. I really hope that we can amend the Standing Orders to better reflect and put to rest that method of debate.

• (1720)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend for his very passionate speech on Bill C-31.

Can he outline what kind of impact getting dental care will have on his community and the children in Kingston?

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, the most important thing is that we ensure we are giving kids the access they need to preventative dental health care. What we see quite often is that those who cannot afford dental care end up in our emergency rooms accessing emergency dental care, which is being paid for through our health care system anyway. What we can accomplish by providing that preventative work in advance is that we can help ensure that kids do not end up in an emergency room and put to sleep in order to have emergency dental work done on them.

The impact it will have on individuals in my community is similar to the impact it will have on individuals in his community and communities throughout Canada. This will help create a baseline by which we all agree that children need access to dental care to ensure they have a shot at a healthy life in the future.

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

For my constituents back home in Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, I am rising on Government Business No. 20, which was tabled on October 17, to resume consideration of the motion by the government House leader, seconded by the Minister of Health, on Bill C-31.

This is a programming motion that effectively curtails the normal Standing Orders, which guide the democratic process by which bills are debated, reviewed and voted upon in Parliament and effectively streamlines that process to the objectives of the government. That is problematic. It is problematic for one very important reason, and that is a reason that was outlined in the Liberal platform of the 2015 election.

Government Business No. 20 is a programming motion that not only cuts off debate on a bill that is going to cost approximately \$10 billion, but it dictates to parliamentary committees what they can and cannot do. In the 2015 election platform of the Liberal Party of Canada, it stated very clearly that committees would be the masters of their own parliamentary work. Indeed, this is a democratic principle that is upheld through both convention and some of our existing Standing Orders.

The motion before us today effectively wipes away the democratic processes outlined in the rules that govern the operationalization of democracy in Canada, so that the government can push forward a piece of legislation to expedite its own political objectives.

Before I go into the programming motion and what it effectively does, I will say that for the last two weeks we have been more or less debating this bill. The bill was tabled on September 20, and we debated it on September 23, September 26, October 3, October 5, October 7 and now today for a total of 11.5 hours. For all the rhetoric about the Conservatives stalling everything, it has been 11.5 hours for a bill that is going to cost \$10 billion.

Effectively, for every hour of debate, we are talking about \$900 million and change in taxpayer money. Think of all the small businesses in Canada that are struggling right now and that pay taxes for us to debate and distribute funds accordingly. Ten billion dollars is a lot of money, and we are here in this House to debate it. Our primary constitutional responsibility is to review and approve par-

liamentary expenditures, and to debate and review legislation. The motion before us today effectively cuts that off.

Since the debate started, the Liberals have been saying that Conservatives do not care about young children, that we do not care at all because we are opposed to this motion. I will just remind them of the second promise made in 2015 that the Liberals do not seem to care about, which was to eliminate water advisories on first nation reserves. That has not been accomplished in seven years, so the rhetoric coming from the government about Conservatives not caring is simply untrue. All Canadians care about children getting the proper health and sanitary measures that should exist in every community in this country but that effectively do not. I am just going to put that on the table.

Now, let us look at Government Business No. 20 a little more closely. Paragraph (c) reads:

...if the bill is adopted at the second reading stage and referred to the Standing Committee on Health, during its consideration of the bill,

(i) the committee shall have the first priority for the use of House resources for committee meetings....

Paragraph (c), subparagraph (i), essentially states that the government is taking over the administration of committees with this motion and saying that all other committee business is secondary to this bill right now. There might be a valid argument for that, but there is a lot of other important work taking place in Parliament that is now subject to this motion. The first thing this motion does is curtail not only the independence of the health committee, where this legislation will be referred, but the entire administration of parliamentary democracy in Canada.

Subparagraph (ii) reads:

...amendments to the bill, including from independent members, shall be submitted to the clerk of the committee by 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 20, 2022, and distributed to the committee members in both official languages by noon on Friday, October 21....

● (1725)

Therefore, now that we have voted, after our debate ends this evening on the motion before us and later on the legislation by 11:45 p.m., the government is now dictating to members when they can or cannot submit an amendment to be reviewed in committee by a specific date. Again, that is contrary to the principle that the Liberal Party ran on in the 2015 election that committees are the masters of their own parliamentary work.

What this would do is effectively diminish the power of committees and say that the Government of Canada is going to take over what committees are doing and that it is going to control how democracy operates. I do not agree with that practice. In paragraph (c), the motion states:

(iv) the committee shall proceed to clause-by-clause consideration of the bill no earlier than 7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 24...and if the committee has not completed its clause-by-clause consideration of the bill by 11:59 p.m. that day, all remaining amendments submitted to the committee shall be deemed moved, and the Chair shall put the question, forthwith and successively without further debate on all remaining clauses and amendments submitted to the committee, as well as each and every question necessary to dispose of the clause-by-clause consideration of the bill....

Paragraph (c), subparagraph (iv), indicates again that the government is controlling the democratic process. It is setting specific timelines for parliamentarians, irrespective of party, on what they can and cannot do at the Standing Committee on Health. That is not a principle that any member of Parliament should be happy with.

Subparagraph (v) in the motion is so specific that it even states which members of the committee could table the bill back in the House of Commons. Not only are we told by the government when we can table amendments to be reviewed in a very short period of time of less than a week, but the motion is stating that any member of the committee could effectively put something forward.

I could go on, but this is a very prescriptive programming motion. Again, they are the principles the Liberal Party ran on in 2015, principles that I know the member from Kingston who spoke right before me seemed very concerned about when he was on the environment committee. The member for North Vancouver sat beside him, not as a member of the standing committee but as an observer, and he understands that what his government is doing is contrary to the principles that he ran on in the 2015 election and, frankly, contrary to the Standing Orders and the operationalization of democracy in Canada.

During our 11 and a half hours of debate, there were a couple of key points raised. One is how this bill relates to the inflation crisis that we are facing here in Canada. Just today, Tyler Meredith, former financial adviser to the Prime Minister, outlined in an article in *Bloomberg*, that the people impacted most by inflation are the ones who could benefit from the money in this bill. In other words, low-income Canadians, those who make under \$35,000 a year who might qualify for the rent subsidy and those who might qualify for the dental subsidy, are the ones who are being impacted by inflation. We know, on this side of the House of Commons, that one of the primary reasons we are in an inflationary environment today is government spending. Looking carefully at how public dollars are being spent in this country, that needs to be considered.

The second point is a question about governance. Over the last three years, when some programs that I even voted for were operationalized by the government, they were not done very well. We have no assurances from Bill C-31 that there would be transparency and that there would be effective checks to ensure that money being disbursed to Canadians would be used wisely. I know \$650 for dental care means a lot to people, but at a minimum I believe that receipts or a bill should have to be submitted before the money is received to outline a minimum threshold to ensure transparency.

I could go on, but I look forward to any questions in the House this evening.

• (1730)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):

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Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct with respect to laying out what this programming motion would do. It is very prescriptive. It talks about the various different stages the bill would go through before coming back to the House. However, the member must recognize and understand the reason it has to be done this way. It is because Conservatives who are opposed to this bill just will not let it go through.

If I were to ask the member why they need to put up speaker after speaker, he would give me a reason about the democratic process and it being an affront on democracy if not everybody can speak their piece and whatnot. The reality of the situation is that he knows just as well as anybody else in the House that the Conservatives are playing games with the legislative tools that they have in order to slow down the process in the House. Can he at least not reflect on that?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, no, the Government of Canada is playing games with the pocketbooks of Canadians.

We worked in good faith with the government to pass Bill C-30 to give GST rebates, but we have not seen the level of co-operation needed by the government to work to address the primary concerns, one of which I just outlined, with transparency in what has been put forward by the government in this legislation.

The government needs to come clean with Canadians as to why it has not provided clean water to first nations across the country, despite making that promise for seven years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Lemire (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, whether people like it or not, Canada was founded on the division of powers and respect between the federal and the provincial governments.

In this bill, we see once again the federal government interfering in the jurisdictions of—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I am sorry to interrupt the member, but the member for Nunavut is indicating that there are problems with the interpretation.

It seems to be working again. The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Mr. Sébastien Lemire: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the following question of my hon. colleague: Does he not think that the government's priority should be to respect provincial jurisdictions, and, if the government wants to invest in areas under provincial jurisdiction, it should transfer the money to the provinces so they can make decisions based on what is already in place?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc Québécois for his question.

It is true that we must respect provincial jurisdictions. It is even stated in clause 4 of this bill that the provision of this benefit will take provincial programs into account. No province has requested that program. It is an important question that the government is not answering.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the NDP has been supportive of the bill because it has been made obvious that there are gaps in the dental care program. This bill attempts to fill some of those gaps.

Why, during this time of inflation, when families are forced to make difficult choices as to what they can afford for their dental care needs, which is an essential part of their overall health, do the Conservatives continue to play with these delay tactics?

• (1735)

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, as I outlined in my speech, there have only been 11 and a half hours of debate for a bill that will effectively cost taxpayers \$10 billion. When I was debating Bill C-31 last week, I outlined some of the work from every big bank in Canada that talked about the inflationary impact of further spending right now.

If the government continues to spend money, the people who are going to be impacted the most are low-income Canadians. We need to get a handle on our spending right now to prevent further inflation and a further demise of the spending power of low-income Canadians, who are struggling the most.

Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

I want to thank my colleague for the passion with which he conveys his points in the House. He spoke about transparency, and that is very important because, on the one hand, the Minister of Health was asked a question three times about whether the provinces asked for it. He did not answer it. On the other hand, the parliamentary secretary flat out said that they do not need to talk to the provinces if they are doing something that is right.

I am just wondering if he can comment on that discrepancy. If that was the case, why would the Minister of Health not just flat out tell us that?

Mr. Brad Vis: Madam Speaker, I think my hon. colleague answered his own question. The reality is that we have meetings regularly between each provincial health minister and the federal minister to outline priorities.

Dental care was not one of those priorities. Increased transfers to the provinces to deal with our doctor shortage was one of the priorities put forward by our provincial ministers.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, as this is the first time I have risen in the House since, I would like to mention that we have had a pretty terrible week in the riding of Barrie—Innisfil with the loss of two South Simcoe police officers, Constable Morgan Russell and Constable Devon Northrup. I want to thank, on behalf of the people I represent in Barrie—Innisfil, not only all of the Canadians who have reached out to my office but also those who have shown support for the South Simcoe Police Service family and the families of the fallen officers.

Sadly, we had another reminder of the danger that police officers face again today. An RCMP officer in Burnaby has been killed, stabbed, in the line of duty. On behalf of the people I represent, I

express my sincere condolences to that family and the RCMP family as well. It is an inherent reminder, as we talk about many issues in this place, of the dangers that police officers face day in and day out as they put on their uniforms to protect our communities, not just in South Simcoe or Barrie—Innisfil, but right across the country.

I am rising today to speak on Bill C-31, which is the rent and dental piece of legislation the government has proposed. There is most definitely an affordability crisis in this country. We have seen that over the course of the last several years. Much of this has been predicted. In fact, Conservatives were predicting, through our finance critic at the time, that we were heading toward this inflation crisis.

The reason for that is the amount of liquidity that has been injected into the market, and that continues to be injected, by the government through bond purchasing by the Bank of Canada and through other government programs that have been announced, not the least of which is this, a \$10-billion program. This inflationary crisis, which was considered to be transitory at the time, will continue. It is actually almost becoming structural.

We have seen that the Bank of Canada has had to increase interest rates in a fairly aggressive way to mitigate some of the inflationary crisis that is facing Canadians. It is facing Canadians right across the country, such as those who I represent in Barrie—Innisfil. I had a chance to travel the country over the summer and speak to many Canadians who were quite concerned about the rising cost of food, groceries and shelter, as well as the increases in the carbon tax and the impact they are having, not just on individual families, but also on businesses.

I heard from one restaurant owner who sent me a copy of a bill. The carbon tax portion of his heating bill was over \$1,300, which is an additional cost to his business. Let us assume, for example, that he works off of a 10% margin, which is quite likely in today's competitive retail space. That means that, in order to pay for that carbon tax bill, that restaurateur would have to sell 13,000 additional more dollars' worth of food that month to pay his carbon tax bill. Those are the types of things that are impacting Canadians.

I got an text from a resident of my riding, Kevin, just over the weekend. He mentioned to me that he got his carbon tax rebate last week of \$163. He wrote, "How is that supposed to help. It's not even a small dent in all of our extra expenses with gas for our 2 cars and heating for this winter." I do not want to say what he wrote next because it is an expletive, but he then said that he has paid way more in carbon tax than he would ever get back. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has confirmed that.

The majority of people in Ontario will be getting less back in their carbon tax rebate than they will be paying in carbon tax. That is clearly the case in Barrie—Innisfil and the people who I represent. They are disproportionately being impacted by this carbon tax because of the cost of gas that they have to put in their cars to travel to go to work and for heating their homes. We are also hearing about a potential 300% increase in home heating costs this winter. How are Canadians going to handle that? This is not just the people who I represent. We have heard stories about Atlantic Canada about the cost of propane and the impact the carbon tax is having on that.

• (1740)

We have asked the government many times to give Canadians a break and stop the impact and increases of the carbon tax, which is now \$50 a tonne and is going up to \$170 a tonne. This is in spite of an election promise in 2019 by the Prime Minister that the carbon tax would not increase over \$50 a tonne. However, eight months later, there was an announcement by the environment minister and the Prime Minister that called for a tripling of the carbon tax.

This is not just going to impact families in a negative way, especially at a time when they can least afford it, but it is also going to speak to and impact the competitiveness of our Canadian businesses, such as the example of the restaurateur I gave. It is time right now for this government to look at the self-inflicted wound that it has created on the Canadian economy and to do something about it.

There were several times before the summer break when Conservatives proposed real and pragmatic solutions to solving the inflation and affordability crisis that is impacting Canadian families and businesses. However, in every circumstance, the NDP-Liberal coalition voted against. What do we have in front of us here today? We have a patchwork bill that is somehow going to solve a dental and rental crisis.

For rent, the government would be giving a one-time \$500 payment to those who qualify, and not every Canadian is going to qualify for this. However, the \$500 would not even cover today's rents across the country, particularly in Barrie—Innisfil, where it would not cover more than a week's rent.

Somehow this patchwork solution is the Liberal's solution to a problem they have created, which is really the problem we are facing right now. The Liberals and their NDP partners have boxed themselves into what I would classify as an ideological box, and they cannot ideologically align with and accept the very real solutions required for us to solve this inflation and affordability crisis. That is the problem we are facing right now, so they come up with these patchwork solutions.

On the dental program, I mentioned this last week, and I tried to table the healthy smiles Ontario program, which gives low-income people and children under 17 with disabilities the ability to get their teeth cleaned, have examinations and have dental work done. In fact, in my county, Simcoe County, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has a bus that goes around and provides dental work, programs, examinations and preventative work for students while they are at school.

Several times the health minister was asked how many times the provincial health ministers had been asked about this program?

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How many of them actually asked for this program? He would not answer the question, because right now, 11 out of 13 provinces and territories have a program for healthy smiles. In fact, 70% of Canadians right now are covered through a health insurance program.

We have heard that there may be consequences to what the government is doing, one of which is that small and medium-sized enterprises may look at not providing this type of coverage if the government decides it is going to do it. Clearly, through this motion, the government is trying to effectively ram a \$10-billion bill through the House of Commons without looking to solutions.

What is the solution? The solution is for government to get out of the way and allow for the power of our Canadian businesses, the people they employ, and the products and services they produce in every sector and every region of this country, and that includes the typical wealth-creating sector, which is the natural resource sector.

Right now, we are seeing around the world the geopolitical problems that are going on because of the ideological attack on what has always been and always will be a great revenue and wealth generator in this country. We have the ability to supply the world with clean Canadian energy and see the revenues that come with that, yet, because of the ideological alignment of the NDP and the Liberals, we are not doing that.

If Canada is not providing clean Canadian energy to the rest of the world, then who will? Would it be Russia, Venezuela or Iran? Those are the choices we face to find the solutions to open up the revenue side of the ledger so we can pay for the expenses this government has incurred and the inflation and affordability crisis that Canadians and businesses are now facing.

• (1745)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard the member mention a few times now that there is no need for this dental program because it already exists out there, at least in Ontario, the province both of us are from.

However, the healthy smiles program, the one he talked specifically about, is for children whose parents are on Ontario Works, whose parents are on ODSP, or who are receiving disability benefits. This is not about providing a baseline dental program for all children in families with an income of under \$90,000.

Would the member at least recognize that what he is continually referencing with the healthy smiles program in Ontario is nothing like what is being proposed in this legislation?

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Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, over 70% of Canadians are already covered by a dental plan, and many low-income youth and families are covered by already existing provincial and territorial plans.

The reality is that the government is looking at some crass political play with its partners in the NDP to somehow give the impression that it is implementing some sort of dental program.

Earlier the health minister said that he has not even discussed any of these programs with dentists or with provincial authorities. This is a government that cannot even deliver the most basic services, yet its expectation is that it is going to deliver a complicated dental program across this country with very few checks and balances in place.

This is crass politics, and it is vote buying at its best.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to express my sincere condolences on what is happening in my colleague's riding. It is a very sad situation.

I would like his opinion on this. We know this Liberal government is already having a lot of trouble getting many of its departments to run properly. We know that the government has struggled with many important and major files in recent months. I am thinking of the Canada Revenue Agency, passports, immigration, and so on.

What does my colleague see happening in the future, and how will the government again fall short with this new program?

• (1750)

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his sympathy for what happened in my riding.

[*English*]

It has been clearly demonstrated that the government has mismanaged almost every aspect of every program it has implemented. This is why this debate has gone on, because we are trying to find solutions to this problem. The list is as long as the day of some of the promises it has made and failed to deliver on.

There was no greater example of that than today, when I met with the Canadian Real Estate Association, which is not seeing the type of affordable housing that the government is announcing. The Liberals are great at making announcements but awful at delivering programs. It is all about the big cheques and the photo ops.

I share my hon. colleague's concern. I said it earlier and I will say it again: This is nothing but crass politics to make it seem like the Liberals are doing something, when in fact the program will do nothing.

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I, too, would like to give my condolences to the member for what has happened in his riding. It is always very sad to hear about these kinds of incidents of violence anywhere.

I just wanted to ask a question in relation to what I asked a previous member. There have been a lot of gaps in the dental care and

health care system. I really feel that this bill tries to fill some of those gaps. Reaching that 30% is so important.

I wonder if the member could elaborate on where he is getting his data to explain how that 30% of the population is meeting its dental care needs.

Mr. John Brassard: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her kind words.

I have very little faith in the government's ability to deliver even the most basic programs. I lived through the passport fiasco, as we all did, throughout the summer. We want to make sure, obviously, that we have healthy children in this country. Many of the provinces already have existing programs. It is a little concerning to me that the health minister would not even speak to his provincial counterparts or find out what their needs are before tabling a \$10-billion piece of legislation.

One would think a little more legwork would have gone into it before the government brought it forward. It is right that we have these many concerns.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill, to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (temporary enhancement to the Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax credit).

* * *

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 20—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-31

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in the House and give a speech for Canadians.

Before I begin, I want to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Vancouver Granville.

*Private Members' Business**[English]*

Bill C-31, an act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing, is extremely important. I think back to 1967, when Lester Pearson said that no senior should live in poverty. On that principle, which is so important, in 2015, when we came to government, we wanted to make sure that we built the framework necessary to bring Canada forward as a strong country so Canadians would be proud of their country, which is contributing not only to Canada but to the world. Therefore, we brought in the CCB, basically under the principle that no child should live in poverty. That was an extremely important bill we brought forward that has lifted hundreds of thousands of Canadians out of poverty.

In 2018 we worked with the provinces and territories to build a better pension plan, the CPP, for Canadians. As we know, some pensions are worth less as we move forward, so that will be a way of securing them as well.

In 2021 we brought in the child care bill, which has helped all Canadians but will also help the economy, because it will enable more Canadians to work and contribute.

Last month, in September, we brought forward Bill C-22, which we passed today, to support people with disabilities. It was again brought in under the principle that no person with a disability should live in poverty.

Today, we are bringing forward Bill C-31, which is about affordability. It is another very important piece in supporting Canadians as we move forward, and it will ensure that all Canadians have an opportunity to succeed.

No one should be denied dental care. All members of Parliament have access to dental care. All Canadians should have access to dental care.

We are also ensuring that people are not priced out of access to housing. That is why we will be bringing a top-up support of \$500.

Bringing in this dental support is a big piece with respect to affordability. It is another piece to help Canadians. Let us be clear. We can connect dental care with health care. It is a direct parallel. They work together to improve the benefits that Canadians can access. In case the House is not aware, one-third of Canadians do not have access to health care. Therefore, this bill will allow Canadians and families—

• (1755)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): I have to interrupt the hon. member.

It being 5:55 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]***NATIONAL RIBBON SKIRT DAY ACT**

Mrs. Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, Lib.) moved that Bill S-219, An Act respecting a National Ribbon Skirt Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, first I want to acknowledge that I am addressing you from the unceded territory of the Anishinabe people. At the core of the beliefs of the Anishinabe is the notion of respect. Each element is part of the cycle of life. Each has its purpose and deserves as much respect. Our relationships are what matter the most, and we should cherish them.

I am also conscious that we have people joining us from across Turtle Island who are located on both treaty and unceded lands of Canada's indigenous peoples. In the riding I represent of Fredericton, or Ekpahak, we are on unceded Wolastoqiyik territory, where the beautiful and bountiful river flows through our communities and reminds us of our collective responsibility to each other and the land.

Today I have the incredible honour of sponsoring Senate Bill S-219, an act to establish national ribbon skirt day for January 4 in Canada. The bill comes to this place thanks to the work of Senator Mary Jane McCallum and the inspiration of Isabella Kulak. Dr. Mary Jane McCallum is a first nations woman of Cree heritage from Brochet, Manitoba, and an advocate for social justice.

Before arriving in the Senate of Canada, she spent much of her career in the dental field, focused on education and on the health of indigenous communities. Throughout her career, she has worked tirelessly to provide dental and health services to a variety of northern, first nations and indigenous communities, especially by managing youth and health programs in her home community. Senator McCallum also raises awareness and understanding of the experiences of indigenous peoples by sharing her personal experience as a residential school survivor.

I tell members all this because the senator's passion for advancing the health and prosperity of indigenous communities is reflected in this important piece of legislation. We have the opportunity to vote on this bill because of Senator McCallum's unwavering commitment to real reconciliation between Canada and indigenous communities across Turtle Island.

What I am seeking to impart on my colleagues today is the fundamental importance of celebrating indigenous women, girls and two-spirited people, the importance of championing their resiliency, their diversity and their power on their terms. That is the spirit behind ribbon skirts. They are a strong symbol. They are beautiful, and they carry teachings and stories. They also represent cultural and spiritual protection, like armour.

Private Members' Business

Where I am from, there is a not-so-new tradition of Wolastoq Wednesdays, started by school staff, indigenous organizations and communities across the territory. Today people of all ages show their pride in culture and identity. I am also a member of a national Facebook group called Ribbon Skirts Everyday, where an online community has been built. I urge all members of this House to explore their own ridings' resurgence of ribbon skirt makers and wearers.

There are exciting entrepreneurial activities around the growing practice of ribbon skirt making as indigenous women stock up for every occasion. Whether they are mother-daughter sets, traditional wedding dresses or regalia, ribbon skirts' meanings vary from person to person. From personal to traditional designs, from ceremonial to casual, ribbon skirts are a beautiful manifestation of strength found in the feminine spirit.

Colours are chosen with intention, and intricate appliqué designs can represent family clans, sisterhoods, wampum history or traditional names. Each one is unique and made with love and positive thoughts. They are also often made for statements and disseminating truth, with dedications to missing and murdered indigenous women or for bringing awareness for the children and families who experienced residential schools.

There were times in our history when ribbon skirts would have been banned, seen as outside the norm, shamed. When the potlatch ban in Canada started in 1885, ribbon skirts, along with ceremonial items, were outlawed by the government. Sadly, this history sometimes rears its ugly head. Two years ago, 10-year-old Isabella Kulak from Cote First Nation took a stand in her ribbon skirt against her Saskatchewan elementary school.

In December of that year, she was shamed for wearing a ribbon skirt instead of the store-bought dresses the other girls were wearing for a formal day. Her parents shared the story on social media, and soon after, she became the catalyst of a movement. Indigenous women from all over the world began showing their support by donning their ribbon skirts in solidarity.

Let me share Isabella's story, in her own words, through a letter that she wrote to Senator McCallum, which was read into the record. It states:

Dear Senator McCallum

My name is Isabella Susanne Kulak and I would like to start off by telling you what the ribbon skirt means to me. The ribbon skirt represents strength, resiliency, cultural identity and womanhood. When I wear my ribbon skirt I feel confident and proud to be a young indigenous girl.

When I was 8 years old I was gifted my very own ribbon skirt from my auntie Farrah Sanderson. I wore it with pride and honour to my traditional ceremonies and pow wows. On December 18, 2020 it was formal day at Kamsack Comprehensive Institute where I attend school, so I chose to wear my ribbon skirt just like my older sister Gerri. When I got to school a teacher assistant commented on it and said it didn't even match my shirt and maybe next formal day I should wear something else like another girl was wearing and pointed at her. Those words made me feel pressured to be someone I am not. I eventually took off my skirt as I felt shamed.

● (1800)

Today I no longer feel shamed and I feel proud and powerful enough to move mountains because I know that people from around the world are standing with me. I am very grateful to be Canadian, to be Indian and to represent my people by wearing my ribbon skirt proudly! Thank you to Senator McCallum and to all the people who supported me from around the world, from Canada and from all the First Nations across the nations of the earth.

Sincerely Isabella

I want Isabella to know how strong and amazing she is for not only finding the strength to stand up to discrimination, but for turning her experience into empowerment for other young girls and women. I have two beautiful Wolastoqey nieces, Hailey and Olivia, who love ribbon skirts, and because of Isabella's efforts, they can wear them with their heads held high, knowing they are not alone and that their ancestors are proud.

I cannot help but think of the children from residential institutions, of Phyllis Jack Webstad and her orange shirt. There is a saying that bears repeating: They tried to bury them, but didn't know they were seeds. In so many ways indigenous youth in particular are changing history. They are shaking off colonial expectations and imposed practices and beliefs, and they are redefining who they are and how the world sees them. It is moving to say the least, and I am so excited to see the Canada they create for us all.

We know there are still challenges in Canada today that require our attention and bridges that still need building. We need to try every avenue to support indigenous women, girls and two-spirited peoples, including through expression, art and social enterprise.

What we learned from the story of Isabella Kulak is that not everyone has learned the true history of our relationship, the significance of respecting the first peoples of the land, or even that they are still here. As a former educator, I know that education is the antithesis of ignorance. Anti-racism is rooted in education, and it has real tangible results. Keep learning, Canada. Keep listening. Keep opening our hearts and our minds to new understandings, even if they make us uncomfortable. This learning is not about guilt; it is about action.

Let me take this opportunity to remind this House of the findings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report, the 94 recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and more locally in each of our provinces and territories, child and youth advocate findings on indigenous child welfare. There are still serious gaps in key outcomes that we can close with concerted effort, investment and education. There have been dark times, but I am optimistic more so than ever that the tides have turned. There is political will. There is co-operation. There is hope.

Ribbon skirts may not seem like revolutionary tools, but I believe they are. Today's ribbon skirts are as much about modern indigenous culture as they are about tradition. As the world has moved forward and evolved, so too have the diverse indigenous nations across the country. Today we see so many living up to the words of Lee Maracle: "Find freedom in the context you inherit".

Ribbon skirts represent freedom, living out loud and being proud of who we are. These are realities we can all get behind.

In Canada, the first step to knowing ourselves and our communities is knowing where our traditions come from and how we relate to others through those traditions. Kaija Heitland, a Métis woman who belongs to the Cowichan Valley Métis community, started the project Indigenous Nouveau to facilitate a greater visibility for her community and the Métis to showcase the unique beadwork and quillwork patterns, arts, culture and history.

She describes the history of ribbon skirts as follows: The history of the ribbon skirt comes down to us through many cross-cultural interactions, and so many different interpretations and expressions exist. Many first nations and indigenous groups across Turtle Island have a strong tradition in this iconic piece of clothing, and all have their own stories and protocol surrounding them. What we know today as the modern ribbon skirt is a collaboration. Ribbon skirts are a symbol of resilience, survival and identity, but their meaning changes with each person who wears one and each person who shares their story. For indigenous peoples, the ribbon skirt represents personal reclamation. It represents reclaiming identity and wearing that identity proudly. It is a cultural protection against assimilation and degradation. It is a reminder of the various roles of the community as women and as members. It reminds us of the sacredness of women and the power in that. It tells the story of adaptation and survival.

Women have always been the ones who nurture us through difficult times, through bad dreams and storms. Women are the ones revitalizing the language and culture through education, resuming child and family jurisdiction and winning legal battles. These are women like Cindy Blackstock, Patricia Bernard and Lisa Perley-Dutcher. Women are the ones leading us through decolonization and reparation. They are whom I want to honour today, and they are whom this bill lifts up and seeks to celebrate by encouraging understanding and collective action.

● (1805)

On November 30, 2021, Senator McCallum delivered a powerful speech in the Senate regarding Bill S-219. She thanked Chief George Cote of the Cote First Nation in Saskatchewan, as well as Isabella and her family. Senator McCallum read a letter written to her by the chief describing what the bill means to the community. The letter states:

On behalf of Cote First Nation, we are honored to have January 4th as National Ribbon Skirt Day across our great Nation. Bella Kulak has demonstrated the importance of sharing our culture to other nations. Our First Nations, Metis, Inuit women are a symbol of life givers and their resilience in looking after the home fires is our strength to move forward. We thank Senator McCallum for bringing forward such a recognition and encourage all Parliamentarians to offer their support for this bill in the year of Truth and Reconciliation. Meegwetch from the Sauleaux First Nations of Treaty 4 Territory.

In the words of Senator McCallum:

[T]his bill aims to provide social justice for Bella and other young Indigenous youth who must struggle against racism, colonialism and gender violence in their day-to-day lives. By keeping this request for a national day of recognition situated within a framework generated from and led by the Cote reserve, it ensures that the families' and communities' tradition and intergenerational knowledge is secure while they're navigating modern Indigenous struggles. This also helps to resist the colonial images of Indigenous women, girls and transgender peoples.

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She went on to say:

[A]cts of resistance inform the Indigenous struggle for self-determination. Although Bella might have been unaware of her activism, she has already committed to actions that were anticolonial and focused on the goals of transformation and liberation—free to express her cultural heritage and make people worldwide aware that she's helping to transform the colonial picture of Indigenous youth....

Her act of resistance and education is medicine for her and other youth, and allows them to practise from a safe space.

Isabella's parents also wrote to Senator McCallum to express what this bill and the discussion around it means to them. They said:

Our hope in all of this is that all Canadians see the relevance of what has occurred, and that this forever define what is truly unacceptable in our public institutions and our society as a whole. We as a family feel a great sense of responsibility to all Canadians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to create a safe space and a dialogue that will continue on in a mutual respect between nations that lasts for generations. The creation and discussion around Bill S-219 has brought hope that these discussions lead to a greater sense of pride for all our country's Indigenous peoples, and foremost a greater sense of urgency as it pertains to the reconciliation process and the decolonization of Canada.

It should come as no surprise that Christopher and Lana Kulak refer to their daughter Bella as “Bella the Brave”.

To all the children out there like Isabella who might ever have been made to feel less than or unappreciated, I want them to feel respected, seen and loved by Canada on January 4 or any other day of the year and for ribbon skirts to be recognized and acknowledged for the symbol of power that they are. This bill would give us an opportunity to celebrate and stand with indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people and their beautiful ribbon skirts. Every child deserves joy. Every child matters.

I invite all members to support Isabella and all the little ones with this initiative, so that we encourage them to grow up and be their true selves and happy and proud of who they are. We still have a lot of work to do to fight against these injustices and the many impacts of our systems that were built on racism and bias. Today, I invite hon. colleagues to take another meaningful step toward building a future where all nations across Canada are celebrated.

● (1810)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, Cote First Nation is in my riding and it means a great deal to me to be able to support this today. Isabella is a beautiful young woman and her parents are amazing.

As a matter of fact, Chief George and I have talked often about the things they are doing within their first nation and the work that is moving forward to make their place one that is welcoming and safe. I really respect the work they are doing, even the tiny homes that a number of them are working together to build. Those opportunities to build something give them a chance to see what they can become, a plumber, an electrician or whatever. They are engaged significantly.

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I want to mention Yorkton Tribal Council, Chief O'Soup, Chief George and those involved in the riding. What I hear over and over again is, "We are excited to work together to see us move forward with reconciliation." The efforts that went into dealing with the circumstances around what Isabella faced were significant. I am excited to say, "Well done, Isabella."

We look forward to this bill going forward.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, it is amazing to make those personal connections in each of our ridings across this country. It speaks to the work of reconciliation. It is complicated and far-reaching. It is going to take more than the federal government, our provincial and territorial governments. It is going to take every one of us to do the work that needs to be done on an individual basis. What I wanted to address as well is that responsibility.

Sometimes when we hear these stories, those painful stories of a little girl being ashamed to be who she is, we do feel that guilt, but again I want to impress upon my colleagues it is about action. We should turn that feeling into action and know we have that agency and will to make a difference in our home communities.

[Translation]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech about the much-talked-about national ribbon skirt day.

I hope that, above all, this day will be a time of reflection that will prompt us to take action. My colleague talked about the report on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. I hope that this day will give us an opportunity to think about what measures should be put in place to help and honour these women.

[English]

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women is another example of our very complicated history, of the multi-faceted nature of reconciliation, and that is why I feel this bill is so important. It holds up indigenous women, girls and two-spirited peoples in such a positive way. It is about celebration, and that has its own role in addressing the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women.

I have been a bit frustrated by the pace we are taking as far as addressing these injustices is concerned, but again it goes back to our individual ridings. I have seen incredible support by local communities. Fredericton had an incredible funding opportunity with our local friendship centre. Monoqonuwick is going to be a new space for women to feel safe and to receive programming on intimate partner violence. There is also social enterprise there and there will be housing options.

Again, these types of projects are going to have far-reaching impacts that will also help to deal with missing and murdered indigenous women, but I want to see that task force get to the real work as well.

• (1815)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I want to thank the member for sponsoring this bill. I have every respect for it, but unfortunately, it excludes Inuit cultural practices. I wonder if the

member would be willing to see amendments to make sure all indigenous cultural practices are reflected in this bill.

Mrs. Jenica Atwin: Madam Speaker, I enjoy so much working with my hon. colleague from Nunavut on the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

Representation is critical. It is also important to recognize the diversity that exists across the nation. There is often a pan-indigenization that happens with a lot of legislation that comes through this House. I would certainly be open to having those discussions and ensuring it is adequately representing the Inuit community and culture as well. It is certainly something we will look to when the bill comes to committee.

ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mend s): I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

October 18, 2022

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Mary May Simon, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bills listed in the schedule to this letter on the 18th day of October, 2022, at 4:56 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Ian McCowan

Secretary to the Governor General and Herald Chancellor

The schedule indicates the bills assented to were Bill S-206, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (disclosure of information by jurors)—Chapter 12, and Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (temporary enhancement to the Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax credit)—Chapter 13.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL RIBBON SKIRT DAY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-219, An Act respecting a National Ribbon Skirt Day, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Maril ne Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, first, I would like to say that I am honoured to be able to speak today about national ribbon skirt day. I am honoured because I represent the people in my riding, but I also hope to lend my voice to other indigenous nations in Quebec. I am honoured because, today, I am wearing a ribbon skirt. I will come back to that later.

My riding includes two nations, the Innu and Naskapi nations, and I am proud to be their spokesperson and their MP and to be able to wear these colours as I present these ideas this evening. I salute them.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of this bill. We have always sought to promote these relationships. In concrete terms, we have always taken action to be able to discuss and maintain a dialogue nation to nation. For us, it makes sense to showcase these symbols that are so precious and important to their traditions. We talked about it a bit earlier. The skirt itself is a statement on its own. I will come back to that later.

I would also like to thank Élise Vollant, a proud Innu woman from Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam, an Innu community on the north shore or Nitassinan. Ms. Vollant made the skirt I am wearing today, a skirt that is very special to the Innu nation and particularly the community of Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam. It is a gift from the Innu nation, since it is a symbol that they want to see represented in all the traditional ceremonies and rituals, as it is usually done. For me, being white, it is truly a sign of trust and, at the same time, a request for me to walk with them. When wearing a garment like this, every step we take is for these people, these communities, these women, and it is their history that we think about.

I say *tshinashkumitin* to Élise Vollant and the entire community of Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam for allowing us to think of them today and walk alongside them in a symbolic way in the House. I believe it is an important moment for the nation.

As I said earlier, the garment is a statement. We described it in several ways. These are fabrics, bright colours that have been transformed and evolved over decades or even centuries as contacts were made. It is truly the product of the relationships between the nations themselves and of their own history. The statement is transformed. We see in the garment itself all that history that the women want to pass on through tradition, language and culture. It is also a way of taking action.

Today, I am wearing a red dress. It is a colour that is particularly favoured among indigenous nations, and also among the Innu people. It has several symbolic meanings relating to the spiritual world and life. Again, the ribbons chosen by the Innu nation are orange, red and purple. Undoubtedly many people already see the strong symbolism of this skirt, in the orange that refers to the survivors of residential schools, to a painful history. At the same time, we want to move forward, heal and find the truth.

● (1820)

Through this skirt, the Innu nation reminds us that it is important for them to highlight this element. Again, there is a call for us to take action. That was for the colour orange.

There is also red, representing the missing and murdered women and girls. It is the famous red dress we have seen represented in recent years and that has also become a symbol. The skirt has therefore two symbols.

Finally, there is purple, representing Joyce Echaquan. I believe people are familiar with the story of Ms. Echaquan, who, because

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of horrendous racism, experienced horrors that no human being should endure. Ms. Echaquan's story is remembered on this skirt.

For me, it is also a symbol of the fraternity between all communities. Ms. Echaquan was an Atikamekw woman and the Innu people represent her on their skirt. It is a symbol of the entire issue of the equity of fundamental human rights, the right to security and the right to life. This memory must be eternal. When we talk about truth, we also care about memory, because memory should help us avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

All these colours are symbolized in an image that I will quickly describe. We see a woman wearing the red skirt, eyes blindfolded, holding the scale, the symbol of justice. We also see purple. All the colours are there and they truly show the desire of the Innu nation, particularly the Innu of Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam, to move forward and to always remember the survivors of the residential schools, the murdered or missing women and girls and the story of Ms. Echaquan, to finally achieve reconciliation.

Wearing a garment such as this is not about the fabric, the ribbons or the colours. It really sends a message. We are in a position where we can be interpreted and, at the same time, we can remember everything I have just said and remember that the nations are proud.

For me and for others, wearing this skirt makes sense. Despite that, some have noted that, for many people, it is not easy to wear the skirt in public. In fact, children, particularly in Saskatchewan, have received racist criticism and comments because they were wearing this garment. For me and the members of first nations, it is also an affirmation, a recognition of the past and of the people who came before them. It really makes a statement.

In short, I believe that we could talk about it for really long time, but it is more than just the garment. It is what I would like us to remember and I think and hope that the entire House will agree to make January 4 national ribbon skirt day, so we can remember our obligations and commitments to first nations and truly listen to what they have to tell us.

These garments show that members of first nations are strong and proud, and also that Canadians, and we, the elected members, have much work to do to perhaps be worthy of wearing a ribbon skirt. I am very proud to do so, but it also gives me a sense of duty that is humbling.

● (1825)

[English]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill S-219, an act respecting a national ribbon skirt day. This bill aims to further educate Canadians about the role of indigenous women and indigenous culture and heritage, and to celebrate those contributions. The ribbon skirt is a symbol of womanhood, identity, adaptation and survival. It is a way for indigenous women to honour themselves and their culture.

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While national ribbon skirt day is an opportunity to celebrate indigenous women and their fortitude in the face of paternalism and colonialism, we can and must do more. The Indian Act perpetuates racism and sexism, and we must address this archaic and broken piece of legislation if we truly want to see all indigenous women and girls realize their vision of freedom, their vision of independence and their vision of honour.

The Indian Act was created by the federal government in 1876, a very different time with very different thoughts on the role of women and girls in society. The 1876 Indian Act explicitly stipulated that any first nations woman who married anyone other than an “Indian” or “non-treaty Indian” would themselves cease to be “Indian” under the meaning of the act. It adopted many of the concepts of its precursor legislation, including the ideas of assimilation and enfranchisement and the changing definition of “Indian”.

The 1951 Indian Act continued in this vein, introducing several sex-based rules governing entitlement to status, including the “double mother rule”, which revoked the status of individuals at the age of 21 in instances of two consecutive generations of mothers who were not born with entitlement to status; the “illegitimate female child rule”, which permitted the male children of status men born out of wedlock to register, but which did not entitle their female children to status; “the marry-out rule”, which caused first nations women to lose their status upon marrying a non-status person, but which permitted first nations men to extend status to their non-status wives; and involuntary enfranchisement, which revoked the status of first nations women and their children when their husbands became enfranchised.

Often led by the legal challenges of indigenous women, it was not until 1985, under then Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney, that discriminatory parts of the Indian Act began to change. Thankfully, we have matured as a nation since then and we recognize and respect the power and potential in women and girls. However, many aspects of the Indian Act still perpetuate its 1876 paternalistic vision of indigenous women and girls.

The Indian Act denied women the right to possess land and marital property. Only widows could possess land under the reserve system. However, a widow could not inherit her husband’s personal property upon his death. Everything, including the family house, legally went to his children. Previous governments, including the previous Conservative government, have made amendments to update the act to eliminate sex-based inequalities. I would be remiss if I did not also recognize the work of the Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations and the Minister of Indigenous Services, who continue this important work, most recently on enfranchisement, deregistration and natal band membership.

In my previous roles as the critic for families, children and social development and the critic for indigenous services, and in my two previous stints, and now my current stint, as the critic for Crown-indigenous relations, I have met with hundreds of stakeholders, women’s issues advocates and indigenous leaders over the years. On the Indian Act, the message, sadly, is always clear: The act is outdated, broken and paternalistic and it must go.

The government, the opposition, advocates and indigenous people all agree, so one question remains: What is next? How do we

get to where we all want to be? As my colleagues in this place all know, that is never an easy answer. Indeed, there are many different approaches we could take: complete abolishment, a new act or a transitional approach. There are many options, and many people have their own ideas.

• (1830)

However, all hope is not lost. We know a few important things. We know where we all want to be. We all know what we are willing to do and what needs to be done to get there. On this side of the House, the Conservatives support reconciliation and we support a proactive, inclusive process that puts a clear plan in place to achieve the results everyone wants.

While I know my colleagues across the way support reconciliation, and they have said so many times, there appears to be more reaction than planning from the government. As I have heard many times from community leaders, their faith in reconciliation with the government is sadly waning. One does not have to look far.

For example, in the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, we are currently examining Bill C-29, an act to provide for the establishment of a national council for reconciliation, a piece of legislation that has ignored the voices of indigenous women and girls.

Yesterday, the Native Women's Association of Canada president, Carol McBride, told the committee that she was disheartened to see that indigenous women were not included in Bill C-29. In fact, that bill only guarantees the seats of the AFN, ITK and MNC. Indigenous women literally do not have a seat at the table.

The Native Women's Association of Canada plays a unique role and could provide invaluable insight to the national council by providing culturally relevant, gender-based analysis; the lens of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls; and specific expertise related to the concerns of indigenous women and girls.

Establishing a national council on reconciliation without the voices of indigenous women and girls is an oversight. It is an oversight Conservatives will correct and we will be putting forward amendments to ensure indigenous women and girls and their voices are heard on the council.

It has been three years since the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls report and the Liberal government has made little progress in the past year on its plan to end violence against indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people.

While there have been funding commitments, there has been little action. For example, the CEO of the Native Women's Association of Canada said this about the Liberal government's record: "The National Action Plan, as it was drafted, was actually a recipe for inaction, and the people represented by our organization are paying the price."

A poll conducted by Nanos Research last June found that Canadians are three times more likely to say the government has done a poor job addressing the MMIWG than a good job.

Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, chair of the National Family and Survivors Circle, lamented, "Without the political will to create transformative change, this genocide will continue."

The continuous blunders and inaction are undermining indigenous faith in the Crown. Therefore, in the spirit of Bill S-219 and what it proposes, Conservatives will work very hard to put a plan in place.

On day one of forming a new Conservative government, we will hit the ground running. We will achieve this by listening and planning with indigenous leaders, national organizations and grassroots community members on what they need to achieve true reconciliation.

We will not confine ourselves to one aspect of reconciliation or another. Instead, we will take a holistic approach to reconciliation, one that recognizes the importance of economic reconciliation and what it has on restoring the honour, self-dignity and power to indigenous people.

We will facilitate a plan that empowers indigenous people to not only make their own decisions on water treatment, child services, public safety and entrepreneurship, just to name just a few, but also provide the economic power to achieve those objectives themselves.

We will, once and for all, eliminate the Ottawa-knows-best approach to indigenous relations, and we will do so with the principle that indigenous decisions need to be made by indigenous communities. We will ensure that those decisions include the voices of indigenous women and girls.

• (1835)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, I welcome members back from break week. I had the wonderful privilege of going home to Iqaluit and then on to two of my communities, Taloyoak and Kugaaruk.

Bill S-219, an act respecting a national ribbon skirt day, is about preserving a cultural world view and the importance of ribbon skirts. It provides an opportunity for us to recognize indigenous cultures and the prominence of indigenous women. By passing the bill, we would increase opportunities to discuss the realities of indigenous women in Canada. New Democrats support the bill and will be suggesting some amendments.

All indigenous cultures since time immemorial have valued women the same way that we do men, children and elders. Through Christian and government colonization, indigenous women have become especially oppressed and subjected to atrocities. This has

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led to the ongoing genocide of all indigenous peoples, which must be redressed.

First nations, Métis and Inuit have different ways of showing respect in their communities to indigenous women. Inuit in Canada and internationally symbolize the strength of women through tattoos, a practice I am proud to see resurging after having been banned by the Catholic and Anglican churches.

In Taloyoak, I had such a wonderful visit with a beautiful Inuk women named Elizabeth Lyall. I thank her for feeding us delicious Inuit food during our visit. She talked about how important it is to have dreams. I honour her for having met each of her dreams and for still looking to make new dreams to help her family, friends and community. She truly inspired me, and I thank her.

I value the role given to me as critic for indigenous issues shortly after I was elected as a New Democrat. Before this time, I had limited exposure to first nations and Métis cultures. Since taking on this important role, I have felt privileged to learn much more about Métis and first nations. This morning, for example, I agreed to be a witness in the Moose Hide Campaign, which is a grassroots approach to addressing the violence against indigenous women by creating opportunities for men, and everyone, to appreciate the indigenous women in their lives.

Through the bill before us, I have learned about the importance of ribbon skirts, and I thank the sponsor of the bill.

Ribbon skirts have an important meaning for first nations and Métis women. The skirt is a symbol of strength, pride and hope. First nations and Métis women make their ribbon skirts to represent a direct connection to Mother Earth and her sacred medicines. I have learned that ribbon skirts in recent years have represented causes, including missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. For many first nations and Métis, wearing a ribbon skirt shows the strength of the lived experience of indigenous peoples here in Canada.

In addition to the cultural significance, this is also a matter of respecting indigenous rights, especially when so much has been done to indigenous peoples. Too many of us lost our identity, dignity and right to self-determination. It is important that action continues to be taken for indigenous peoples to be supported in regaining our strength for the indigenous peoples we are.

Article 15 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states, "Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information."

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Education is critical for Canadians to learn about the realities of how indigenous peoples were and continue to be treated. Systemic racism still exists. Indigenous peoples are subjected to discrimination and chronic underfunding, and they are still forced to live under colonial laws that ignore their inherent rights to govern and manage their own lands and laws.

• (1840)

Canadians need to learn more about indigenous heritage and culture to gain understanding of the lived experience of many indigenous women across Canada. In the 2015 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, data showed indigenous women are four times more likely to be murdered or kidnapped than any other Canadian.

The National Family Advisory Circle, Grandmother Circle, and Walking With Our Sisters are examples of inspirational indigenous groups that are fighting for justice for indigenous women across the country. Education is power. Too many indigenous women and girls have gone missing or have been murdered. Canadian law enforcement needs to take stronger action to protect indigenous girls and women.

We demand justice for indigenous women across the country who have gone missing or have lost their lives to violence. While this bill could have a positive impact on educating Canadians, there are a few areas where the bill could be improved.

First, all indigenous women must not be put into one generalized group. First nations, Métis and Inuit have different ways of affirming each other's strengths. The use of the ribbon skirt is but one of the many beautiful ways to acknowledge them. Second, this bill needs to include indigenous persons whose identities are outside the gender binary and who choose to symbolize the importance of wearing the ribbon skirts. Inclusion and creating a safe space for gender discussions for indigenous peoples must be a priority.

Women like Savanna Pikuyak have a right to feel safe in her home. Women like Joyce Echaquan should never have to face racism while seeking medical help. These stories continue to harm the lives of Inuit, Métis and first nations.

Without change in our laws and working towards reconciliation, nothing will get better. The journey to reconciliation is a long one, one that must be led by Inuit, first nations and Métis. This is one law that could lead to all Canadians joining in the journey to reconciliation.

• (1845)

Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe people to speak in support of Bill S-219, an act respecting a national ribbon skirt day.

I am grateful to my colleague, the member for Fredericton, for bringing this forward. I want to acknowledge the significant work and leadership of Senator McCallum on this important piece of legislation and the contributions of Chief George Cote of the Cote First Nation.

Each and every opportunity we have, that all of us have, to engage with and learn from indigenous culture is one that we should

take and cherish. The bill before us represents an opportunity for Canadians of all backgrounds to learn about a unique and beautiful part of indigenous culture, the ribbon skirt.

The ribbon skirt is a deeply symbolic garment used in indigenous tradition and ceremony. Each one holds a very personal significance. They represent the sacredness of women in indigenous culture. They show pride in one's culture, heritage, resilience and identity. They are symbols of womanhood, survival and strength. They call to our attention injustice, including injustice for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

I want to encourage all of my colleagues and Canadians to listen to Senator McCallum's remarks at second reading. She recounts the story of Isabella Kulak, a 10-year-old student from Saskatchewan who proudly wore her ribbon skirt to school and was shamed by an educational assistant who said that her ribbon skirt was not the right choice for formal day. She went home and took off her ribbon skirt that day. However, her story soon spread far and away, and a multitude of support came in for Isabella from around the world.

On her first day back to school after she was belittled for wearing her ribbon skirt, there was a march held to walk her to class. Women wore ribbon skirts and men wore their ribbon shirts. Chiefs from surrounding first nations also attended. It was a triumphant affirmation of one girl's choice to celebrate and showcase her indigenous culture and to take pride in who she is. What a message to send and what a message we can help send by recognizing January 4 as national ribbon skirt day in Canada.

I will admit that I have personally been fascinated with ribbon skirts, their beauty, importance and symbolism. As a member of Parliament, my days are often booked morning to night, but I have taken a lot of time over the last number of months to do more research on ribbon skirts. There is something so empowering about donning such a visible symbol of one's heritage, of facing the world and of confidence in who one is and where one comes from, especially in the current moment of all those around the world who do not have the freedom to do so, or who are pushed to assimilate themselves or stifle and hide their identity.

All of us here know the long and shameful history of attempted erasure of our indigenous brothers and sisters. It is part of why I have been so interested in deepening my understanding of the role of ribbon skirts in indigenous culture.

On Canada Day, amidst the hassle of so many community events, I made a point to stop by the Mawio'mi being held on the Halifax Common. There was so much indigenous food, culture and crafts on display that day, and when I spotted The Sewing Guild fabric store's table, I was immediately struck by the beautiful fabric they had for sale.

I was not immediately sure what to do with the gorgeous black fabric I picked out, but the colourful dream catcher pattern on it called back to my mind many of the ribbon skirts that I had seen at powwows and indigenous events over the years.

From there I did a lot of research and I reached out to Elder Debbie Eisen, a pillar of the M'ikmaw community in Kijipuktuk. I am so grateful for everything she had to teach me about ribbon skirts, from how they are made to what they mean. With her guidance and skill, I set about crafting my own skirt. Together, we made a beautiful purple and black ribbon skirt with eight coloured ribbons. Every choice had significance and, as Deb explained, all of them speak to the character of the wearer in some way.

● (1850)

As Deb shared with me, the skirt is worn to honour our mothers, aunts and grandmothers, and to honour Mother Earth's soul. The long length of it connects the wearer to Mother Earth. When its length hits the foliage, Mother Earth knows a woman is walking upon her.

The ribbons call back to the 18th century when silk ribbons were an item of trade between settlers and indigenous communities. Each ribbon had its meaning and I selected eight of them. Red represents missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Green represents the foliage and Mother Earth. Blue represents the sky. Orange represents the survivors of residential schools. Yellow represents the east and Kijipuktuk. Pink is a feminine touch that accentuates the dream catchers in the design. The colour purple symbolizes womankind.

To me personally, the dream catcher pattern on the black fabric, with its multitude of colours, calls back to the idea of diversity and how we contain so much difference as people, yet we all come together as one. I was really struck by the statement it made when it all came together, and I was so honoured to have Deb and everyone at the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre join me in the project.

I am a proud Lebanese Canadian woman. I do not have an indigenous background, but I do have a deep respect for those who cared for this land long before the arrival of settlers and newcomers to Turtle Island. On this, Deb's words humbled me. She said, "The reasons behind your wanting to wear this ribbon skirt, and not only that but to make it yourself, show me that we are headed in a good direction."

She shared with me an Algonquin prophecy of the seventh fire, of a time when people will be brought together by the talents they have and not the colour of their skin. She told me that every time she sees people who truly from their hearts want to respect indigenous culture, spirituality and ways, it solidifies for her that we are headed in the right direction. She continued, "We will hit brick walls along the way, but even brick walls crumble." Deb lives in hope that will happen, and I share her belief in our collective ability to reconcile and move forward in respect and understanding together.

Today, indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people are wearing their ribbon skirts more often as a way to express pride and confidence in their indigenous identity and heritage. It is truly sparking something of a cultural revival, and I can think of a fantas-

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tic example from my province. Jahay's Quilting, a fabric store in Eskasoni, was started by Veronica Denny in her basement just over a year ago. Now she sells hundreds of ribbon skirt kits each season to customers all across my province, empowering them to honour their own culture and clan, while inspiring her granddaughter Jahay to make a skirt of her own one day. That is a beautiful thing to behold.

In closing, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill to formalize what communities have already unofficially deemed national ribbon skirt day. This is one more step ahead for us all in our journey of reconciliation and one that I hope we can take unanimously. Let us vote to establish January 4 as a federal day of recognition, education and awareness of the ribbon skirt and of all indigenous regalia, cultures, traditions and heritage. Let us ensure every little girl can burst with pride about who she is, where she comes from and what she stands for.

Wela'lin. Meegwetch. Shukran.

● (1855)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès): The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

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[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS NO. 20—PROCEEDINGS ON BILL C-31

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a little earlier today, I used four minutes of my time before I was interrupted to go to Private Members' Business. I will now speak for my remaining six minutes while being mindful of the time allocated to me.

[*English*]

I talked about the reasoning behind supporting Bill C-31, which is really to make sure that we are not denying access to dental care, as well as not pricing people out in rental costs. It is about affordability.

Many of the things our government has been doing are to support Canadians because we realize affordability is a key issue. One-third of Canadians do not have access to dental care. What this bill proposes to do, over a two-year period, is to provide up to \$1,300 for eligible children 12 years and under. The families will have to make less than \$90,000.

I want to read a quote from the Canadian Labour Congress. It says, "Canada's unions welcome [the government's] investment in dental care that will give coverage to millions of Canadians - because everyone deserves a healthy smile".

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On the housing benefit, this will help two million Canadians and the support will be for those Canadians families making \$35,000 or less, or for individuals making \$20,000 or less, and paying more than 30% of their income on rental costs. This is in addition to the \$4 billion we have put forward to help Canadians through rental support, cost-shared with the provinces and territories.

We are also helping with affordability, which is key here, because of the challenges that Canadians are facing financially today. Last week, we passed the doubling of the GST rebate for a six-month period. That was unanimous. Every member of the House voted in favour of that, and I want to thank them all because it will help 11 million individuals who file their income tax.

On affordability, the government also has the CCB, where we see nine out of 10 families receiving support. In my riding alone, it is over \$5.5 million a month. That is over \$70 million a year in my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook. I know it is a special riding, but every riding across the country, all 338 ridings, are receiving those types of supports. That is what is important.

Finally, on affordability, we are bringing in child care this year, which will lower the cost of child care by 50%. Those are direct supports to individual Canadians and families. It is so crucial.

Why and how can we do that? We are in a very good fiscal position. Let us not forget that just before the pandemic, we had the lowest debt-to-GDP in the G7. Since the pandemic, we have increased that margin, which is very important. We still hold a AAA credit rating. That is very important.

Let us look at our economy. Canadians know that throughout the pandemic, we were there and we had the backs of Canadians. We were able to support Canadians through this global pandemic. We, the federal government, put in eight dollars for every \$10 in support given to Canadians and businesses across the country. That is what we were able to do because our government was in a good fiscal position. We could bear the challenge of financing, compared to individuals and families, who would have been in a much more difficult situation.

Look where we are today. Over 21,000 jobs were created in the month of September. Today, we hold the lowest unemployment rate ever recorded at 5.2%. We have recaptured 113% of all the jobs that were lost. Those are big numbers. They are a strong reason why the government can move forward on topping up renters with \$500 and bringing forward dental care to children under the age of 12.

Those are the types of decisions we need to continue to make to ensure all Canadians will benefit. That is the type of government we committed to being in 2015, in 2019 and in 2021. We intend to do more for all Canadians as we move forward.

● (1900)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, to finish his speech, the member was talking a lot about day care, so I have a question from a constituent of mine. Her kids do not fit into the description of what the government has because they are no longer in the zero-to-five category. It is the after-school side of it the government is ignoring and lots of people have concerns around that. I am just wondering why it did not do anything to help people in that situation.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I want to remind my colleague that this is a partnership and we are working with the provinces. I would suggest that he speak with his province and talk to the provincial government to see how it can work with the federal government to bring forward those types of supports. That could be an added piece.

It is a good suggestion and we will take it under review.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ): Madam Speaker, I must admit that I am happy that my colleague finished his speech, because he was starting to get carried away. I was getting concerned. I like him a lot and want him to stay fit and healthy. That said, I congratulate him for his speech and I would like to ask him a question.

I know the intention is good, because, obviously, no one is against virtue or against good intentions. However, I wonder why the federal government insists on implementing programs that it has to manage, when programs already exist in the provinces. As everyone knows, this is the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

Why not just make things easier and give the money to the provinces so Quebec and the provinces can manage their own health system, their own dental care?

It would be much simpler. Quebec and New Brunswick, for example, already have dental care programs for children. They could have managed it themselves. The other provinces could do the same.

Would it not be easier to make transfers, like the premiers of Quebec and all the provinces are calling for?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very important question.

I just want to remind him that only 4% of residents of the provinces receive the support they should be getting in terms of dental care. The federal government plays a supporting role, as it does with the health agreement. We are working together.

Yes, health is a provincial jurisdiction, but that does not mean that we will not ensure that Canadians in Newfoundland, Quebec and western Canada benefit from the same health care standards and the same support.

We want to ensure that that support is available to all children aged 12 and under, both in Quebec and across Canada.

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[English]

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague because the Liberal government is finally getting on board with the NDP and beginning to put in place a dental care plan. I know he spoke a lot about people struggling across the country, and I would agree with him. Winnipeg Centre, the riding I represent, competes to be the second- or third-poorest riding at any given moment.

One of the things we are having a crisis with is, of course, accessible and affordable housing with rent geared to income. Although the rent top-up, thanks to the NDP, is coming as an urgent response, I am wondering when his government will seriously address this human rights matter and ensure that everybody in Canada has access to affordable housing with rent geared to income, not this notion of affordable that is truly not affordable for most people in my riding who are living under the poverty line.

● (1905)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Madam Speaker, we realize that housing is very important, but we did not just realize it today. We realized it back in 2016, because we brought in the first-ever national housing strategy in the country. That was a big step. Now we are bringing in other pieces that are very important. We are bringing the rent-to-own piece. We have added the accelerated program so that we can take some of the older buildings in the communities and improve on them and build more housing for Canadians, affordable housing. We will continue to work together to make sure that all Canadians have access.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this House to speak to this important piece of legislation on behalf of the citizens of Vancouver Granville. This piece of legislation, which deals directly with measures related to dental care and housing, is going to provide immediate support to families across the country.

We have all talked about the fact that the global economy is facing serious challenges, which are causing real impacts here at home and around the world. Whether or not members want to believe it, inflation is in fact a global phenomenon. It has been caused by COVID-19, Putin's illegal and unjustifiable war on Ukraine and a variety of other factors. Life is getting more expensive and all of our constituents are hurting. Families are feeling the effects when they go to buy groceries and other staples.

In my riding of Vancouver Granville, affordability and the rising cost of living are top of mind. That is why the crucial supports needed in Bill C-31 will provide much-needed relief to Canadians now and will help ensure a healthy future for tomorrow.

Our government has put forward a concrete plan to make life more affordable and help my community and communities like it across the country get through these tough times. This bill, as we know, establishes two cost of living relief measures and provides crucial assistance to those who need it the most: first, through the creation of a new Canada dental benefit, and second, by providing a direct federal Canada housing benefit top-up payment of \$500 to eligible renters who are struggling with the cost of housing.

We know that oral health is an important marker of overall health and that access to good dental care is essential, but one-third of Canadians do not have dental insurance, unlike everyone in this room, and one in five Canadians reported avoiding dental care because of the cost. When we talk about meaningfully addressing affordability, ensuring accessibility to quality dental care is important. It is important not just because of the long-term benefit to our health care system, but because poor oral health in kids has an impact on their future. I became a dad recently, so for me, children's health, and in particular dental care, is top of mind.

Here are some facts that we do not often want to talk about. Children with poor oral health are three times more likely to miss school as a result of dental pain. Absences caused by pain were associated with poorer school performance, but absences for routine care were not.

This has longer-term impacts on children, and here is some very boring scientific information. Sometimes we need to hear the facts behind why some things matter, and here are some of those facts. Bacteria that is trapped by plaque travels to major organs like the brain. Rather than focusing on growth and development, kids who do not have access to good dental care end up having consequences when the brain is battling inflammation. Oral health has an indirect impact on kids' cardiovascular health. Kids with poor dental care who participate in sports and other activities will likely also suffer poor performance in sports. We also know that high levels of disease-causing bacteria in the mouth put children at a higher risk of clogging of the arterial wall and higher blood pressure.

That is a lot of information about dental care, something we probably do not talk a lot about in this House, but if we actually care about children, and the facts and the consequences, these should be reasons enough. No price should be too high to protect a child's health and development.

The Canada dental benefit would provide dental care for families without insurance and an annual income of less than \$90,000, starting with children under 12 this year. That means up to \$650 per child under 12 tax-free. That is immediate financial relief to low- and middle-income families right now. Through this benefit, parents would be able to make sure their kids can see a dentist, prevent oral health problems from developing and address dental care needs sooner rather than later. This is another necessary step toward establishing a robust, sustainable long-term dental care program for all.

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What I fail to understand is why anyone in the House would not support this measure. We all have the data that shows that dental care is critical to long-term health, preventing everything from heart disease to cancer and from dementia to kidney disease. If the Conservatives care about the fiscal bottom line, if not the health of Canadians, then this should appeal to them because good dental care in kids saves money for the health care system in the long term.

The Conservatives often tell us that this would be bad for the economy, but this morning the CEO of the Pacific Blue Cross, one of the biggest insurers in British Columbia, was in my office. He was unequivocal in his support for dental care for kids because he knows that it makes good economic sense. Preventative care saves money in the long term and it makes for healthier citizens. At a time when we all acknowledge that we must safeguard the resilience of our health care system, we must also realize that dental care will help support the long term viability of our health care system and, indeed, the health care indicators of all Canadians.

I want to turn to the second crucial component of this legislation, the housing top-up. Housing is where we continue the traditions of our past and plan our futures. Everyone deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. That is why we have made and continue to make historic investments to rapidly create more affordable housing. Our \$72-billion national housing strategy, launched in 2017, and the \$1.4-billion investment in housing in budget 2022 will go a long way to addressing some of the obstacles faced on the path to home ownership. This is a long-term strategy for the future.

● (1910)

However, at the same time, renters are facing increasing challenges today. From finding a safe place to call home to the high cost of living, affordable housing is becoming less and less attainable, and we need to step up now.

We know that those struggling with the cost of rent need targeted action immediately, and through this bill we are doing just that. By investing \$1.2 billion to provide a direct federal Canada housing benefit top-up payment of \$500, 1.8 million renters struggling with housing costs will receive assistance. This support is in addition to the \$4 billion already invested to provide an average of \$2,500 in direct financial assistance with the cost of rent through the existing Canada housing benefit. Crucially, this one-time top-up will not reduce other federal income-tested benefits, such as the Canada child benefit, the GST credit and the guaranteed income supplement.

Other key components of our plan to make housing more affordable include measures to double housing construction over the next decade, helping people save for and buy their first home and banning foreign ownership.

These are challenging times for everyone, but our actions now will undoubtedly define what our future looks like. By working together to make life more affordable for families and make sure kids get the dental care they need and by alleviating the cost of living, we are taking the steps necessary to be there for Canadians when they need the support most.

These are important priorities for our government, and I want to take this moment to acknowledge the hard work done by the mem-

ber for Vancouver Kingsway in his advocacy on dental care for many years. Perhaps this could be the time that all of us in this House come together and vote to give Canadians the supports they need.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have asked a question a couple of times today, and I still have not gotten a satisfactory answer, so my question for the member who was just on his feet is this: Has he consulted with the B.C. health minister? The health minister would not answer this question, but has anyone in his party talked to any provincial health minister in the country who has said that this \$10-billion program is at the top of their wish list? We all know health is provincial jurisdiction. I would like an answer from someone on that side about whether they consulted with the provincial health ministers about this program before they brought it to the floor of the House of Commons.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, one of the things that I think health ministers across the country would say is that the government has done a tremendous job of consulting with them on a variety of health care matters, and has done far less damage, I would argue, to the health care system than the previous government did when it chose to gut transfer payments to the provinces for health care.

One of the most important things about the bill is that it helps the provinces support many of the plans they have, and where provinces do not have coverage for kids, it is something they could actually benefit from. Frankly, the benefit to provincial health care systems from kids with good oral health is not just a today thing. It is an outcome that delivers value today and in the future.

● (1915)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I just heard the question from the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan about whether dental care was a priority for provincial governments, so I guess my question for the member for Vancouver Granville is whether he has found the same thing that I found in my riding: that dental care is definitely a priority for seniors and definitely a priority for families, and that any money we spend on this program, despite those partial provincial programs that do exist, would save provincial governments money. For those people who are asking for dental care, we are beginning with families with kids under 12 and then are extending it to people with disabilities, and eventually seniors and everybody who earns less than \$90,000. That is where the demand is coming from. It is from constituents in my riding.

I want to know if the member for Vancouver Granville shares that experience.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, the member's reflections on what he is hearing in his riding are exactly what I am hearing in mine.

I have families that are struggling. I have seniors and young families that would benefit from the support. I also have a large number of people who work in health care, particularly doctors and nurses. They have all said that dental care would improve the long-term health care indicators of Canadians, and would reduce the burden on the health care system long term.

These are investments that help provincial health care systems save money in the long term. We can make all the decisions we want for the short term, but they provide long-term benefits for a sustainable health care system for the future. That is what we need to be doing together.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I also heard the question from my other colleague.

As I already said today, this bill was announced on the same day that seniors' groups were addressing Government of Quebec health care officials, demanding assistance with dental care. We know that children aged 10 and under are already covered in Quebec.

When the Government of Canada announced this bill, the seniors' groups said that it was not the right place. They wanted to speak to the Government of Quebec, which is responsible for dental care.

What seniors in my riding want is for the federal government to increase health transfers to cover 35% of costs so that Quebec's department of health can take care of them and make decisions about dental care.

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments and her question.

We need to pay attention to our seniors. We will work together to improve oral health for all Canadians, particularly youth and seniors.

If we continue to work together, and if, as I hope, all members of the House of Commons here today support the bill, we will also be able to work on other elements.

[*English*]

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, let me begin by saying that I will be splitting my time with the member for Peace River—Westlock.

This motion and the underlying Bill C-31 are effectively an admission of failure by the Liberal government when it comes to the economy and fighting inflation. To be very clear, Bill C-31 is setting up a national dental care program focused on children; it also provides for 500 dollars' worth of rent relief, which does not go very far nowadays in most of our cities. That is what this does.

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I want to focus on the term "relief". Why is relief even required in the first place? Something went wrong in the economy, so that the government decided, "Listen, we are going to have to borrow more money and send out cheques, because Canadians are suffering and falling behind."

Why are they falling behind? There is a very clear reason. Inflation is rampant. The government did not get hold of the problem of inflation in a timely way.

I will be the first to recognize that there are different things that have affected the inflationary pressures within Canada. We know the global community has suffered from a COVID pandemic, which has disrupted everything in our lives. Our lives have been changed, actually, forever by the COVID pandemic. A pandemic had not been experienced for over 100 years, and suddenly it was at our doorstep.

Sure, that contributes to inflationary factors. Supply chain disruptions that occurred, the war in Ukraine and weather-related challenges, whether they are drought and famine, storms and hurricanes, or heat domes in British Columbia, all contribute to inflation.

However, there is one big factor that is very clearly in the control of the Liberal government, and that is its spending and its borrowing.

Here is a factoid that a lot of Canadians are not aware of. Are members aware that over the last seven short years, the Liberal government has spent more money than all previous governments in Canadian history combined? That's going back from 1867 all the way to 2015. The Liberal government, in the subsequent seven years, has spent more money than all of those governments combined. Now we know there is a problem.

Some of that money was required to support Canadians in their time of need during the COVID pandemic. That was a crisis that required a government response, but much of that spending was not actually COVID-related. We know that because the Parliamentary Budget Officer said so.

The spending this government did has now accumulated a national debt somewhere in the order of \$1.5 trillion. If the spending that has brought us to that point, much of which was not COVID-related, was effectively money that was pumped into the economy, then more dollars are chasing the same number of goods and services, and that drives inflation. Every credible economist will tell us that. If a nation's productivity is not improving, which in Canada it is not, but it is pumping more liquidity into the marketplace, that is going to drive inflation.

I challenge the government to show me the steps it has taken to discipline and to restrain spending, and the borrowing that was required to sustain that spending, much of which was not COVID-related.

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● (1920)

That is the first challenge I throw out to my Liberal friends. I ask them to explain to me where the plan is to control spending, that reckless spending that has taken place. Also, by the way, where is the plan to return to balanced budgets? Where is the plan to start repaying that massive debt that we have accumulated over the last few Liberal years? I ask them to explain to me how they justify to future generations of Canadians this massive debt, in an environment of increasing taxes and increasing interest rates, that their children and grandchildren are going to have to repay. I cannot defend that to my children. I cannot.

What is even worse is that much of this COVID spending, the amount that was invested in relief and support programs, came through programs like CERB. They were poorly designed, so yes, fraud took place, much more fraud than should have taken place. The programs were designed in such a way that people who did not need the support got the support. I can speak from personal experience. I have had constituents come into my office to tell me they applied for some of the benefits, such as that loan program of \$60,000 that they did not actually need, and that now they have to pay only \$40,000 back, because \$20,000 is forgiven. They asked why they would not apply for it if they qualified.

Why did Canadian businesses and individuals who actually did not need them receive benefits during the COVID pandemic? During the COVID pandemic, because people had to stay at home, some businesses catered specifically to that kind of situation and made a ton of money. They had never made profits like that before, yet they applied for these benefits and received them from the Liberal government. That is a failure.

Then there is a question that has to be asked about a government that cannot fix its passport system, a government that cannot deliver passports on time, a government that botches the ArriveCAN app and pays \$54 million for that app when the private sector says it should not have cost more than \$1.5 million or \$2 million, and a government that came up with the failed Canada Infrastructure Bank and the CERB program. I could go on and on about these programs that were absolute failures and that the government could not deliver in an efficient and accountable manner. How is it that the government now expects to roll out a \$10-billion national dental care program? Nobody in this country trusts the government to manage that, to do it in a coherent and accountable way.

Bill C-31 is effectively a band-aid solution to an underlying problem that is much more significant, which is a failure of the Liberal government to address the underlying causes of inflation. Effectively, Bill C-31 camouflages the real problem, which is incompetence on the part of the government on the economic file, its inability to understand that it needs to control its wild borrowing and spending because that is what is driving inflation, at least in part.

I will be fair, as I said at the beginning. Some of the influences on inflation are not within Canada's control, but a very significant component is, which is its spending. My challenge to the Liberal government is to get its borrowing and spending under control. Then it might gain some credibility with Canadians when it rolls out these expensive programs, multi-billion dollar programs that

are going to saddle future generations with permanent obligations. It should not do that to future generations. Canadians expect better.

● (1925)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's speech was very entertaining, but Bill C-31 is a measure that is based in positive health outcomes for Canadians. Even when universal health care was first being discussed in this country, there were people like this member who did not want to see Canadians have positive health outcomes and benefits.

Fast-forward to today, and I do not think there is anything we are more proud of as Canadians than our ability to provide everyone in this country with health care if one is Canadian or a permanent resident. We have had challenges with health care, but I do not think the solution anyone would propose on any side of the House would be to do away with our universal health care system. It would be to invest more to make sure we have the doctors needed. Dental is a part of that type of system.

I have heard from many small business owners who have said that they would not have survived if it were not for the benefits this government provided, which the members opposite supported, for the economy and those businesses to survive. Does the member not have any businesses in his riding that benefited positively from the benefits that were provided?

● (1930)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is that there absolutely were many businesses in my riding that benefited from the government's support programs. My focus was on the design of those programs, where there were also many businesses that did not need that support and some businesses that actually abused the programs because of their poor design.

The suggestion that somehow we as Conservatives do not want positive health outcomes is beneath a member of the House. We are all members of Parliament who represent our communities. The member suggests we somehow do not support positive health outcomes for Canadians. We have done this regularly to support Canadians in their time of need.

On the suggestion that the universality of our health care is somehow at stake, and we are challenging the universality of our health care system, show me evidence that we are doing that. Show me evidence. You have none.

The Speaker: I would like to remind hon. members, and I realize it is late and we are tired, to speak through the Chair and not directly to each other, unless of course they want the Speaker's opinion. However, nobody wants to hear that. They want to hear each other's opinions.

We will continue with questions and comments. The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

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[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment through you. I know that the parties are usually in caucus on Wednesday morning, tomorrow. I have a bit of a special request for the Conservative Party. Since we are talking about economic issues, for the mental health and well-being of the rest of the House, I would ask that the Conservatives stop saying “triple, triple, triple the tax”. It may have been funny the first 350 times, but now it is just “annoying, annoying, annoying”.

That said, I have a question for my colleague. Our colleague made a comment a few months ago suggesting that some of the ideas proposed by his future leader, particularly related to Bitcoin or firing the top executives at the central bank, were absurd, to say the least. We know that the fight against inflation is important to him.

What does he think of his leader's suggestions now?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, what our leader, the Leader of the Opposition, has been speaking about is inflation. He has been speaking about taxes. He has been speaking about the cost of living and affordability of housing, all of the things that matter to Canadians. That is what he has been speaking to in the House, and I have been here for every single meeting.

The biggest challenge facing Canada today is the affordability crisis, where Canadians are having to make the choice between groceries and putting fuel in their cars or between sending their kids to ballet lessons and paying for rent. Those are decisions we should never have to foist on Canadians, yet it is the Liberal government's irresponsible approach to borrowing and spending that has brought us to this point. As I mentioned earlier, we can do better.

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to join the debate on Bill C-31. I have a few comments to put on the record.

Throughout the debate today, I asked some questions of some of my Liberal colleagues, and they have not really come up with an answer, so I am going delve a bit deeper into the question on the consultations that were done with the provincial health ministers before this piece of legislation was brought to the floor of the House of Commons.

I also heard a comment from the Liberal member for Vancouver Granville about how the government has done some of the best consultations with health ministers ever of any government, which from my standpoint, is a bit of a stretch.

Before I had the honour of being a member of Parliament, I was also a member of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. I still have some friends and good colleagues there, one of whom happens to be the current health minister, Minister Paul Merriman, of Saskatchewan. During the debate today, I took the time to send Minister Merriman a text asking him how much consultation had been done with provincial health ministers regarding the dental program we are discussing on the floor of the House of Commons today. He stated that they have had zero discussions at his level with

the feds and there was nothing with his officials that he know of either. It has not been on the agenda at any FPT meetings.

Therefore, when some of my colleagues and hon. friends from the other side of the House talk about consultations, I would like them to make sure that what they are saying is factual and that they have had the proper consultations, because I think that is an important part of this bill and something that should have been done before we talked about a \$10-billion program. This is not a one-time program, but an ongoing operational program worth \$10 billion a year from here on out.

As we know, with inflation running rampant right now, one of the big things we hear from non-partisan economists is that the Canadian government has to get spending under control. We are sitting here discussing a \$10-billion program, when this should be a discussion with the provinces because health care is a provincial jurisdiction.

We know that we send transfer payments to the provinces, but when I asked what the priorities for health care were, a member of the NDP talked about it as being one of the priorities. I asked what the top priorities in health care would be for provinces, and he also tried to put different words in my mouth. What I had asked was this: If there were a wish list for health ministers across this country, would a federal dental program be at the top of that wish list if the government was going to spend \$10 billion? With a \$10-billion price tag, is a dental program what they would have asked for? I asked this question because 70% of Canadians have dental coverage.

• (1935)

Mr. Kody Blois: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, which is more of a courtesy. The ParlVu shot for the member for Regina—Lewvan was being impeded by the gentleman, our colleague, who was standing beside you. I just wanted to make sure that it was brought to your attention so the member's clip was not impacted as a result.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for pointing that out. I will let the hon. member for Regina—Lewvan continue, and we will try not to impede him. I am sure everybody wants to see him while we hear him.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kings—Hants. I appreciate it. I do have a better side, so hopefully that is caught with the camera angle this time.

I was saying that 70% of Canadians do have dental coverage. There are two jurisdictions in the country that do not have it right now for low-income people, and they are Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. These are instances where I would ask if the consultations were done. I want to put that on the record because I think it is very important.

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When we are talking about programs, one of the things that could have been on the table, if the proper consultation had been done, could have been to help top up the provincial programs instead of recreating a federal program. If there were consultations with provincial ministers, that could have part of the discussions on the table, and the price tag of this program could have been substantially less if that consultation would have been done because it could have helped with the provincial programs.

Another thing that could have been talked about is what the provincial programs would look like going forward and where they needed the most help. From my point of view, \$10 billion is still a lot of money.

In Saskatchewan, some of the struggles we are having in health care are in the recruitment and retention of doctors and nurses. They are a very important part of our health care. One of the things our provincial government is focused on is recruiting 1,000 more health care workers because that is where they see a need. That is where consultations become a very important part of the discussion about this program.

Another thing I find interesting, and the hon. member for Abbotsford brought this up, is that we are talking about a government that had trouble running a \$54-million ArriveCAN app and it now wants to try and run a \$10-billion dental program. We are talking about a government that had a tough time running passport offices. We are talking about a government that had a difficult time trying to make sure that the proper funding was going out during COVID-19 with the CERB and CEBA cheques.

I realize why they want this federal program rolled out. We have a Prime Minister who has a perpetual white knight syndrome. He always has to come in and be the hero of the story. There could be other options out there with provincial colleagues trying to make sure that we bring forward a program that our provinces and federal government agreed on together, but that would mean that our Prime Minister would not be able to take all the credit.

Sometimes it is not about doing the right thing, but it is about being recognized as a hero and that is one of the problems our Prime Minister has. He always wants to play the hero. Halloween is coming up. We saw him dress up as Superman. It is something that strikes a chord. I do not think that was an outfit. I think that was a career choice.

One of the problems is I believe that if there is too much consultation with our provincial colleagues and we just had the money go into a more provincially dominated program, the feds would not get the credit. I hope that is not the case because we should all be here to do the right thing for the people of our country and the citizens who need help the most.

I want to talk about something my colleague from Abbotsford said. He is a very wise and experienced colleague. Everyone in the House, I believe, wants to have better health care outcomes. I do not think there is a person in the chamber who does not want to make sure that Canadians are getting the health care they deserve. We are having this conversation, and kids, the most vulnerable, are getting all of proper health care they deserve, which will help them have healthier lives. They will, therefore, be better off in the future.

Right now, we are discussing if we are doing the proper consultations. I think that is an important question we need answered by the federal government, the health minister and people speaking tonight. If this were such an important program, why was this not brought up at the federal-provincial-territorial meetings? Why were the provincial health ministers not consulted?

• (1940)

One thing I will put on the table and let sit there for a few minutes is that when this backroom deal, this costly coalition, was signed, members on this side asked how much this deal was going to cost the Liberal government to make sure that it has the NDP support until 2025. What is the final bill for the taxpayers of Canada?

This is just a start. This is a \$10-billion down payment on making sure that the Liberals are in government until 2025 with the support of the NDP. The problem I see is that there is another two years, and I do not know how much more debt is going to be compiled.

Canadians do not believe it, but this government has wracked up more debt than all other governments in Canadian history. I do not know how much more it is going to cost to keep this Liberal government in power until 2025. This is only the tip of the iceberg in making sure that the costly coalition is in power until 2025. Canadians cannot afford it. One thing I understand is that the more this government spends, the more the Canadian taxpayer has to pay.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was in the Northwest Territories legislature last week, and it operates on the basis of a consensus government. I really enjoyed the decorum, and so I will ask my question trying to keep in the spirit of the decorum that I saw in the Northwest Territories.

The member talked about deficits and spending. I want to remind my hon. colleague that right now the government is in a surplus position. The government is being mindful about how it brings forward spending measures. We were there for Canadians. He talked about the debt that was taken on. It was really important during the pandemic.

I also want to talk about the program specifically, because, yes, this is one initiative. We on this side of the House and indeed the NDP, and perhaps the Bloc as well, support providing dental care for those vulnerable Canadians.

On the broader question of health, does the member think that this is just a money issue? Given his experience in the legislature in Saskatchewan, is there work that provinces and territories need to do to reform their system given that, of the OECD countries, Canada is one of the highest in terms of spending per capita on health? What else can be done by provincial legislatures to make changes beyond just monetary spending?

• (1945)

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I will keep with the decorum mentioned by the member for Kings—Hants. I appreciate working with him on the agriculture committee.

In the crux of my speech, the point I was trying to make is that the consultation was not had with provincial health ministers. I will give the member a direct answer. I think that the federal government could have helped top up some of the provincial programs and even help my friend from Manitoba. It should have been a provincial program through the provincial health ministers and not done through a federal minister in rolling out another \$10-billion federal program. That would have been a really good start.

I would be very interested to know if my colleague from Kings—Hants could reach out to the health minister in Nova Scotia and ask if he or she had been consulted about this program, and if the \$10 billion could have been used for something other than this in the province of Nova Scotia.

[Translation]

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the first half of the 1990s, provincial health care systems have been sabotaged, particularly in Quebec. They were sabotaged from the moment the transfers stopped.

Since then, while the provinces have to hire staff, doctors, nurses and orderlies, the money stays in Ottawa. Is that acceptable?

Is it acceptable that, after having sucked the lifeblood out of provincial health care systems and Quebec's health care system, Ottawa wants to use that money to create a pan-Canadian dental care system?

There is nothing wrong with helping those who need it. However, since Quebec understands social programs and is going to do a better job than Ottawa, it would probably be much more acceptable if Quebec had the right to opt out with full financial compensation.

My question is this. Is it acceptable, this vampiric system that encroaches on and invades Quebec's jurisdiction, or should Quebec simply get the hell out of this country?

[English]

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I note my colleague's passion.

My answer would be that I think the federal government should respect provincial jurisdiction. That was the point in the argument I was making when I was talking about whether or not the federal government is respecting jurisdictions at all any more.

The federal government is getting into all of the provincial jurisdictions, whether it be health care or the environment, and it is trying to actually bully provinces into doing things its way. Do I think there should be a new federal program worth \$10 billion? No. Do I think the provinces could roll out this program and better spend \$10 billion when it comes to health care? Yes, and I think that is something we should all think about before we vote on the bill.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member for Regina—Lewvan. He said that this was at the top of no one's priority list and that no one really wanted a dental care program. His evidence is that he talked to lots of provincial politicians and ministers.

Has he actually talked to constituents in his riding with kids or to working families? The Conservatives say that they do not want

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people to make hard choices. Well, there are working families who are making hard choices every day due to not being able to provide dental care. Has he talked to people with disabilities and seniors about the need for dental care?

I think what he will find is that the \$10-billion program is a down payment on good health for Canadians.

Mr. Warren Steinley: Mr. Speaker, I will take no lessons from members of the NDP, who have left behind working people all across the country. That party is going to get decimated in the next federal election.

I will talk to federal ministers because they are the people who should actually run health care programs. I will talk to federal ministers because they are the people who actually should be in charge of the environment. If the NDP members were to respect provincial jurisdiction, maybe they would not get wiped out in the next federal election because, as I said before, they are about as relevant as a Blockbuster video store right now. That is to their peril, because they have left all the hard-working Canadians behind and they really support no one anymore.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is such a pleasure to rise and talk about a really important issue, an issue that affects children in every region of our country. It is interesting that during this debate, the Conservative Party is trying to give a false impression. If we listened to the Conservatives, we would think there is no need for the program, that in most of the provinces, there is not a problem for children under the age of 12, that we should not worry because programs are in place. Nothing could be further from the truth. At the end of the day, there are children in every region of our country who will benefit from Bill C-31.

I understand Bloc members at times are a little confused and it seems they do not support the motion we are debating now, but I think they are going to support the legislation. The Conservatives, on the other hand, do not support the motion and do not support the legislation. There is a big difference. If we did not bring forward this motion, the bill would not pass in a timely fashion. As my colleague mentioned, if we left it up to the Conservative Party, the 11-year-olds and 12-year-olds today would have no chance to put in a claim.

The Conservative Party understands how important it is, from its perspective, to filibuster to prevent legislation from passing. What we are debating now is not Bill C-31. We are debating the process that we have to put into place to allow Bill C-31 to see the light of day, to allow it to get to committee. That is what this resolution is all about.

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Earlier this morning when the House started, we saw the types of tactics the Conservative Party used. It moved concurrence in a committee report in order to kill three hours of government business time so that we would not be talking about the environment, because the Conservatives do not care about the environment. That is the reality. The Conservatives do not want to debate Bill S-5 and now they have come up with a way to prevent it from happening.

The motion we brought forward is supported by the New Democratic Party for good reason. Because of this motion, Canadians from coast to coast to coast can be assured there eventually will be a dental plan, but first the bill has to get through committee, report stage, third reading and through the Senate. However, at the very least, we are seeing some forward movement on the legislation, which I believe is a very strong, positive thing.

The member for Abbotsford talked about health outcomes. This legislation is about health outcomes. Whether people are from British Columbia, as the member for Abbotsford is, P.E.I. or Manitoba and every other jurisdiction in Canada, there are children in need of the type of dental program that this legislation would provide. By denying them the opportunity to have this kind of benefit, children will not get the dental work that is necessary and, as a direct result, will often be taking up emergency room spots in our hospital facilities.

The member for Regina—Lewvan talked about working with the provinces on health care. I would suggest that the member talk to some of the provinces and look at some of the issues facing health care today. One of those issues is backlogs for surgeries and so forth. He should check out the number of spaces in emergency rooms.

● (1950)

When we talk about healthy outcomes, it is more than just putting smiles on kids who are under 12 and supporting children with a dental program. It is also going to help seniors who need hip replacements and individuals who need to use emergency services, in particular our children's services, such as the children's hospital at the Health Sciences Centre. These are the types of things that, when we look at Bill C-31 and we want to talk about health outcomes, have to be factored in.

The member for Abbotsford talked about how we should put the legislation to the side for now because of the issue with inflation, or there was talk about other programs. That is what the member for Abbotsford said. We need to read what it is he said. At the end of the day, he did not believe we could bring forward this program. He wants to show that we are treating the issue of inflation in an appropriate fashion.

Need I remind the former critic for finance, the member for Abbotsford, to compare Canada's inflation rate to other countries around the world? At the end of the day, what we will find, whether it is the United States, England or most European Union countries, is that Canada's inflation rate is lower.

When the member talks about dealing with inflation, we are dealing with inflation in other legislation. On one of the pieces of legislation, Bill C-30, the member for Abbotsford actually voted in favour. That is dealing with inflation. We are saying we are going

to increase the rebate for the GST. That would put cash in 11 million Canadians' pockets. That would put money in our communities, whether it is Abbotsford or Winnipeg North. That would help Canadians in a real and tangible way.

I have to be honest here. To the Conservatives' credit, they did flip-flop. Originally they opposed it, but they did come and support the bill and I am grateful to the Conservative Party for realizing that.

I say that because people could be somewhat encouraged by it. I would like to suggest to the Conservative Party that it do likewise for this bill. If I was to request hands up on the Conservative benches from those MPs who believe that not one of their constituents would benefit from the dental plan and not one of their constituents would benefit from the rent subsidy, they could show me a hand or stand up on a point of order and make that statement, but not one of them will raise a hand.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: What member is that? Does anyone know what riding she represents?

● (1955)

The Speaker: Order. I just want to remind the hon. members of the rules. When someone is speaking, we respectfully listen and the question and comment period comes after, for both sides.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised. The member for Yorkton—Melville actually raised her hand.

I challenge any other member. Are there any other members, outside of the member for Yorkton—Melville, who really believe that there are no benefits for their constituents if this legislation passes? I can understand why that particular member will, in fact, vote against the legislation then.

If Conservatives believe that this is legislation that is going to help their constituents, I would suggest to them that they might want to do what they did on Bill C-30. There is no shame, and I will minimize the mocking.

There is no shame in recognizing, as they did with the GST rebate, that this is a good way to provide support for Canadians from coast to coast, including the residents of Yorkton—Melville. I would include them. I would not write them off as quickly as their local member of Parliament has done on this legislation. Again, this legislation is providing financial support at a time when it is needed, and that is why the Conservatives should revisit their position on it.

We had a member stand up, one who spoke prior to me, and he asked about working with the provinces. What provinces have agreed?

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There was a time, and this is hard to believe, in which I was a member of the Manitoba legislature for about 20 years and, for a part of that, I was the health care critic. I can honestly say that, if we were to canvass the provinces, over the last 30-plus years, the one demand they have always had is to give more money. They have always asked for that. There is no change in that.

If the Government of Canada did not take upon itself the responsibility of listening to what Canadians wanted to see, our health care system would be very different. This government has put so much emphasis on mental health, as an example. We just finished going through a pandemic and every member of the Liberal caucus will say that long-term health care conditions are of great concern to all of us, at least to those on this side of the House.

Mr. Adam Chambers: Where are the mental health dollars that have disappeared?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member asks about mental health dollars. I can tell the House that there have been hundreds of millions of dollars that have come from this government into mental health. That is in comparison to Stephen Harper, from whom there was virtually zero.

For the first time, we have a real, active, lively debate in regard to long-term care. We have a Minister of Seniors who is taking the issues of seniors and bringing them to the floor of the House. How many times have we heard her stand up in question period and talk about all of those wonderful things that we are doing for seniors? She talks about the increases to the GIS, the increases to the OAS for those 75 and above of 10%. All of these measures are helping our seniors.

Conservatives say, “Who is paying for it?” If they do not understand who is paying for it, they need to revisit the role that governments play in society. At the end of the day, I guess I would suggest to members opposite—

● (2000)

The Speaker: I am just going to interrupt for a moment. Some people have the ability to engage others so passionately. I just want to remind everyone that there is one person speaking and yelling at each other does not really help things.

His own people are backing him up, so I am not pointing to one side or the other. It is just a certain talent that the hon. member has, and I want everyone to be conscious of that talent.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate your defending my right to be heard inside the chamber. I know that, at times, it can be somewhat of a challenge.

I recognize that we are getting close to having a vote on this and then we are going to start the debate on Bill C-31, which I am hoping to be able to share some comments on in a little bit more detail.

Suffice it to say, it is really important we brought in this motion. This is a good way for me to conclude this. For those people who are watching the debate on Bill C-31 or this particular motion, or those individuals who genuinely care about ensuring that we have a national dental program, something good is happening this evening.

It is not about limiting debate. It is about responding to the needs of Canadians. It is about affording the opportunity for us to advance this to the committee stage, where there will be a great deal more discussion and witnesses and so forth.

With that, my final appeal to my Conservative friends and, to a certain degree, my Bloc friends, is that, because we are going to have a vote on this, I would suggest we all vote in favour of it.

The Speaker: It being 8:04 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forth with every question necessary to dispose of Government Business No. 20 now before the House.

The question is on the motion.

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

● (2005)

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, we would request a recorded division.

The Speaker: Call in the members.

● (2050)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 193*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Ali	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Atwin
Bachrach	Badawey
Bains	Baker
Barron	Battiste
Beech	Bendayan
Bibeau	Bittle
Blaikie	Blaney
Blois	Boulerice
Bradford	Brière
Cannings	Casey
Chagger	Chahal
Champagne	Chatel
Chen	Chiang
Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)	Collins (Victoria)
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Damoff
Desjarlais	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Diab
Dong	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Fergus	Fillmore
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos
Fraser	Freeland
Fry	Gaheer
Garneau	Garrison
Gazan	Gerretsen

Government Orders

Gould	Green	Dancho	Davidson
Guilbeault	Hajdu	DeBellefeuille	Deltell
Hanley	Hardie	d'Entremont	Desbiens
Hepfner	Holland	Desilets	Dowdall
Housefather	Hughes	Dreeshen	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Hussen	Hutchings	Ellis	Epp
Iacono	Idlout	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)	Falk (Provencher)
Ien	Jaczek	Fast	Ferreri
Johns	Joly	Findlay	Fortin
Jones	Jowhari	Gallant	Gaudreau
Julian	Kayabaga	Généreux	Genuis
Kelloway	Khalid	Gill	Gladu
Khera	Koutrakis	Godin	Goodridge
Kusmierczyk	Kwan	Gourde	Hallan
Lalonde	Lambropoulos	Hoback	Jeneroux
Lametti	Lamoureux	Kelly	Kitchen
Lapointe	Lattanzio	Kmiec	Kram
Lauzon	LeBlanc	Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Lebouthillier	Lightbound	Kusie	Lake
Long	Longfield	Lantsman	Lawrence
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacAulay (Cardigan)	Lehoux	Lemire
MacDonald (Malpeque)	MacGregor	Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Liepert	Lloyd
Martinez Ferrada	Masse	Lobb	MacKenzie
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Maguire	Martel
McDonald (Avalon)	McKay	May (Saarnich—Gulf Islands)	Mazier
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McLean
McPherson	Mendès	Melillo	Michaud
Mendicino	Miao	Moore	Morrison
Miller	Morrice	Motz	Muys
Morrissey	Murray	Nater	Normandin
Naqvi	Ng	Patzer	Paul-Hus
Noormohamed	O'Connell	Pauzé	Perkins
Oliphant	O'Regan	Perron	Plamondon
Petitpas Taylor	Powlowski	Poilievre	Rayes
Qualtrough	Robillard	Redekopp	Rempel Garner
Rogers	Romanado	Richards	Roberts
Sahota	Sajjan	Rood	Ruff
Saks	Samson	Savard-Tremblay	Scheer
Sarai	Scarpaleggia	Schmale	Seeback
Schiefke	Serré	Shields	Shiplely
Sgro	Shanahan	Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Sheehan	Sidhu (Brampton East)	Small	Soroka
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Singh	Steinley	Ste-Marie
St-Onge	Sudds	Strahl	Stubbs
Tassi	Taylor Roy	Thériault	Therrien
Thompson	Trudeau	Thomas	Tochor
Turnbull	Valdez	Tolmie	Trudel
Van Bynen	van Koeverden	Uppal	Van Popta
Vandal	Vandenbeld	Vecchio	Vidal
Virani	Weiler	Vien	Viersen
Wilkinson	Yip	Vignola	Villemure
Zahid	Zarrillo	Vis	Vuong
Zuberi — 175		Wagantall	Warkentin
		Waugh	Webber
		Williams	Williamson
		Zimmer — 143	

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif	Aitchison
Albas	Allison
Arnold	Baldinelli
Barlow	Barrett
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bérubé
Bezan	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Block
Bragdon	Brassard
Brunelle-Duceppe	Calkins
Caputo	Carrie
Chabot	Chambers
Champoux	Chong
Cooper	Dalton

PAIRED

Members

Bergeron	Boissonnault
Gray	Sorbara — 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Pursuant to an order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the consideration of Bill C-31 at the second reading stage.

COST OF LIVING RELIEF ACT, NO. 2

The House resumed from October 7 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, and of the amendment.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured to be standing here to speak to this bill. Lots of people are still in the House and I know they are all excited about my speaking to this bill as well.

I want to start off with a quote. What I have been hearing for the last number of weeks is that we do not care about children. I want to read from something that I received this morning. It was sent to every member of Parliament. I really hope that government members are listening and reading their emails. This is a letter from Children First Canada which states, “Once ranked 10th amongst the OECD for the well-being of children, Canada has fallen sharply to 30th place. Children First Canada’s latest raised-in-Canada research suggests Canada has reached a critical tipping point. Many children do not make it to their 18th birthday. The infant mortality rate in Canada is higher than in most wealthy countries and the leading cause of childhood deaths include preventable injuries, suicide and homicide. Those that do not survive are not thriving. One-half of kids experience poor mental health in the form of depression, one-third experience bullying, one-quarter experience sexual harassment or assault in school before reaching grade 7 and a fifth grow up in poverty.”

I wanted to read that into the record because we are talking about a program that was introduced earlier this year which I believe has not had the appropriate consultation, especially with the provinces. I would like to ask the government what consultation it did with the provinces. The consultation with the Canadian Dental Association makes it very clear that it is not pleased with this decision.

When I read something like this from the OECD stating that there is an astounding negative impact on our children under the government with its leadership, yet the government is telling us that we do not care about our children, perhaps it should look in the mirror and tell us how we went from 10th to 30th place. That is something really important that we should be looking at. I hope that members are reflecting on that as we have this discussion.

I am coming to this discussion on Bill C-31, the dental and rental bill as it has been called, by looking specifically at the dental aspect. I have applied my education in dental health from 1993 when I graduated and then worked in the field for a number of years, and then once I had children, my understanding of the field as well. I come to this with an understanding of how these programs work, what it looks like as a dental assistant, or a dental hygienist, or working and teaching people how to brush their teeth. I have had the opportunity to work very closely with many dentists, specifically Dr. Charlin Lin in the city of London, where I have seen the importance of dental health.

When we talk about dental health, I would have to say it is one of my top three priorities, absolutely one of the key priorities when we are looking at health care. Dental health falls there, but what we are talking about is a program that we want to have nationally. This is where I applaud the government for understanding that dental

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health is very important, which it is, but come on. The government is providing a program that is so not beneficial to Canadian families. That is what I want to reflect on in this speech today.

Over 70% of Canadians are already covered under some programs. We know that children, specifically here in Ontario, are covered under a program called healthy smiles. Back when I graduated, it was called children in need of treatment. If anyone wants to debate it with me, they should go for it. I dare them. The fact is that children in need of treatment was an excellent program and was a very important program for low-income people.

I listened earlier to the Prime Minister talk about targeted funding. If we want to talk about targeted funding, the government should do what the provinces have asked for. The provinces have asked the government to expand the already existing programs.

That is why I say that the government has come up with a program that fills this little minute void and looks really great on paper. Meanwhile, it is sitting on \$4.5 billion that was announced in last year’s budget for mental health and the OECD has said that the well-being of our children has dropped from 10 down to 30 in its rankings. The government is putting forward a program that looks great on paper, but if it were to ask anything about the administrative costs, it would find out that those administrative costs are not going down to our children.

Once again, the government is wasting taxpayers’ money. That is why I challenge the government to take a step back, take a look at this program, and start talking to the Canadian Dental Association and the Ontario Dental Association. I have read their reports. I have spoken to dentists and they are not in support of this program.

● (2055)

I will read from the newsletter of an organization, Atlas Dental. It states:

The federal government’s plan for now is both ambitious, ambiguous, and perhaps a little misguided. There are many questions that are yet to be answered before such a universal dental care program comes into effect. Such as exactly how much dental care coverage is each Canadian eligible for? What kind of dental services are covered? Will it be available under public health unit dentists or will it be open to private practice dentists as well?

Some answers are coming out, but at the same time, it does not answer the need.

It goes on to state:

During the 2021 Canadian federal election, the CDA recommended that Parliament conduct a detailed study on improving dental coverage for Canadians, within the first 12 months following the election. In the interim, the CDA recommended an investment of \$600 million over the next five years to maintain and expand existing dental care programs delivered by provincial and territorial governments, particularly those targeting vulnerable populations.

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The reason it is very important for me to put on the record is I do not know where the support for this program is, with the exception of the government bench. When we talk to dentists, the dental health associations and the public health associations about their needs and what they have asked for, the government is delivering something totally different. and I ask why. Why is the government putting forward a program when people have said this is not the way to do it?

When we look at dental programs, we should look at the schedules. This is getting into the weeds. A schedule is the lab work, the five-digit code that a dentist has to put in and say what it costs. For those working in programs like children in need of treatment or the healthy smiles program, there is a special code. People can go to their dentists, have work performed and there is a smaller cost associated with that.

Many of those programs are covered by Ontario Works, ODSP and an assortment of other programs. We are now going to be putting money into Canadians' bank accounts without actually doing the follow-up investigations that will be needed. If they are following the same schedules, because the government is saying it is going to be public and universal and it is going to be legal to have different schedule fees, what we will find is that they will be paying for a pantograph that will now be two or three times what the cost would have been under the child in need of treatment program. The filling that would have cost maybe \$90 is now going to cost \$345. It is a program that provides the services that Canadians need and that children across this country have received. Yes, there are gaps, but it would be replaced with a very ill-thought-out program. That is why I am very concerned.

I am going to talk about the rental benefit. I am very proud of my son, who finally moved into an apartment of his own. The cost is \$1,400. What a great cost, because it is one of the most affordable apartments that he could find. The average rental cost in my community is over \$2,000 and \$500 does not even pay for a week's rent in the city of London. This would be a band-aid approach. Meanwhile, we see the housing markets skyrocket.

If we want to look at why apartment rents are so costly, it is because of where the houses are. If we want to compare the facts from 2018 to 2022 and look at what the market range is for real estate, we are going to find in some of our communities that there are differences of \$250,000 to \$300,000. This is really important to know because for someone trying to rent an apartment whose base cost was originally \$345,000 and that person buys a home for \$650,000, we all know that rental cost is going to go up. Then we have to add the interest rates that we are going to continue to see.

As members of the Conservative Party have been bringing forward time and time again, we see inflation and more spending by the government. We ask the government to please put a cap on it and to get something done right. It should fix our health care system with good programs and stay away from dental programs until the government gets it right. This is a failure. I hope the government can do better.

● (2100)

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think all of us in this House can agree that we want to see good

health outcomes for our children. The member mentioned how Canada needs to do better when it comes to our children. This is one step in which Canada can provide dental benefits to children under the age of 12. I would also like to say this is the first step toward getting it right and having a more comprehensive approach in the coming years.

I would like to also inform this House and the members opposite that, on average, in Ontario alone, every nine minutes somebody walks into an ER with dental pain. In 2014, 61,000 people entered ER rooms for dental health issues. We are really going to be cleaning up our ERs by putting this program in place and we are going to help other Canadians get the services they actually need. The average cost of a Canadian going into an ER room is about \$513. That does not even include complete procedures or hospitalization if that happens.

Would the member not say this is a great preventative measure and a great first step?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the member and all I can say is I am really sorry that she is so off base on this one. I look at the fact that when we are talking about this program, we already have first steps in place.

If we really want to talk about prevention, put that education in the public schools; put that education into parents' homes. That is where it is missing. We do not have the educational programs across our provinces like we once did in the 1970s and 1980s. We have seen some of that being retracted. If we want to teach education, teach prevention, and dental health is part of that.

If we want to talk about first steps, work with our partners. That is our first step. When the CDA says it wants one program and when the provincial governments are saying the same thing, listen. That is where we can do well with these dental programs.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

We learn something new every day and I just learned that she used to be a dental hygienist. She knows what she is talking about.

I have a more specific question for her. Since she was a practitioner and professional in the field, she knows that implementing a universal dental care program takes a lot of time, including to negotiate with the provinces. We know that reaching an agreement with the various professional associations in the provinces is complicated.

In light of this, can my colleague explain to me why the government and the opposition party supporting it are in such a rush to bring in this program when they know full well that it will likely make more people unhappy than happy?

• (2105)

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, it looks really good in the headlines and it looks really good when we get the government to tell us that we do not care about children's teeth. No, we care about a program that works. We care about the economy. We care about the next generation. When we talk about spending money right, let us talk about the \$4.5 billion that has been sitting in the coffers for the last year under the government when we know we are in a mental health crisis.

Earlier today, I heard that one person each week in the city of London is dying of an overdose. That is one person a week. In 2015, I was hearing that about Vancouver, but this has gone across our country. We are talking about dental care when we should really be talking about the opioid crisis.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during her speech, my hon. friend asked: Where is the support? I can say in all honesty to her that I have never had a more generous outpouring of support and total glee at the announcement of a program than I have had with this one. For the constituents of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, the status quo is not working.

With respect to my Conservative colleagues, I think they are mixing up Bill C-31 with what will eventually be the program. It is important to emphasize that Bill C-31 is an interim dental benefit until the fully functioning program can come online. It is important to make that distinction and I think it is important to understand that there is room from improvement and consultations.

Right now for the people in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, the status quo is not working for them. Their children need help and they are incredibly happy that I am delivering for them on this promise.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I know my husband is watching, so to my chicken farmer friend over there, I would like to say to him that we already know that during the federal election, the Canadian Dental Association asked for interim money to put money into a program through the provinces and territories that already existed. That was asked for by the provinces and territories. It was asked for by the CDA.

Yes, people are excited about the headlines, but it is the guts of this bill that is a real mess. Unfortunately, the headline is great, but the guts suck.

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I know you have had a busy day. It is an honour to have you with us this evening and to see you in the chair until perhaps late into the night.

I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-31. As everyone knows, this bill will make a benefit available to certain families with children, depending on their income, to pay for dental care services. It will also make a \$500 lump sum housing benefit available to families who spend more than 30% of their income on rent.

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I am not going to do a deep dive into this bill's strengths and weaknesses because I think the members for Mirabel and Berthier—Maskinongé have eloquently made its flaws and weaknesses clear to us all.

I want to talk about my experience as a health care professional, my knowledge of the Quebec health care system, its strengths and the improvements that could be made in the area of oral health. Beyond dental care, it is about the importance of oral health. It is about providing this care to as many people as possible who need it, especially to those who have limited resources and cannot afford the rather high costs involved in going to the dentist.

In my profession, when investments are made in a program or measure, it is important to immediately consider how the results will be evaluated. It is important to look at how continuous improvement is being measured. Is there any evidence that the money invested is achieving the desired goals?

Mr. Speaker, could those gentlemen speak more—

• (2110)

[English]

The Speaker: I just want to remind hon. members that a speech is being given. If they want to talk to each other, maybe they can get a little closer and not talk as loud.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Salaberry—Suroît may continue her speech.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, maybe it is because I am speaking in French that those who speak only in English are less interested. I wonder.

The idea is that we have to wonder about the money that will be spent when we propose a measure that is fundamentally good. Will the money meet our public health objectives?

In Quebec, we already have a body with the expertise to measure outcomes, and that is Quebec public health. There are researchers and scientists whose jobs it is to do this. I agree that there are dental care needs, but I am not sure that Bill C-31 will achieve the hoped-for objectives. This came about quickly without any real exploration of the idea and without any way to measure the outcomes.

From what I understand, people will have to file an application, register with the Canada Revenue Agency and submit a receipt that could potentially get lost. Some people will not have access to the Internet. As a member of Parliament, I expect to receive phone calls in my riding. I expect to be told that a claim was filed but the cheque never came, that the receipt was lost, or that an overpayment was made and now needs to be paid back.

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If the Minister of Health's objective truly is for children to have access to dental care, why did he not hand over the money set aside for Quebec so that Quebec could improve its own program? In Quebec, children under 10 years of age who are having problems with their teeth can simply use their health insurance card. They go to the dentist, show their card, and the costs are automatically covered. With this measure, we are introducing a more complex administrative process to allow parents to claim the costs for their children. It is not clear how many services will be covered and how this will be measured.

I have many questions, which is why I am not so thrilled about this gag order. We all have a lot of questions, and normally these things are debated in committee and we can look into each aspect of a bill more thoroughly.

When I was young, dental hygienists would come to my elementary school and show us how to brush our teeth. We know that oral hygiene is also a lifelong habit. The idea is to also invest in prevention. Our Quebec system is stretched to the limit. Since arriving here, the Bloc Québécois has kept repeating in the House that Quebec needs health transfers to improve all its health and social services programs as well as the safety net for its entire population.

On another note, now that we have raised the issue of dental care, I am wondering about how quickly this is happening. Usually, consultations are held. When a measure is proposed, criteria are identified to assess whether the objectives are being met. Experts are consulted. At this point, I have the feeling that this step was skipped, and that the government only wanted to quickly seal the deal with the NDP so it could say that it fulfilled its commitment. We have until 2025, here is the cheque and that is done. I feel that this is a botched bill and that we did not have the time required to consult with civil society, scientists and experts.

Regarding part 2 of the bill, which deals with housing, we cannot object to the most disadvantaged people receiving a \$500 cheque. I would like to point out that in Quebec, we have had a great program since the 1990s called Allocation-Logement that provides a monthly benefit. For example, a single low-income person over the age of 50 who earns less than \$20,800 can receive up to \$170 per month to help with their housing costs. This is a significant program that enables low-income, disadvantaged or vulnerable people to make a budget. They know they will not receive a one-time single cheque, but they will get a certain amount each month to help them cover their rent.

• (2115)

I am a health care professional, even though I am on unpaid leave while I do my job here in Parliament. I think it really would have been better for the government to transfer the money to Quebec's Allocation-logement program to enhance and improve it, rather than writing cheques to people who apply for this benefit. It would have been easier for those this measure is intended to help.

In order to get the \$500 provided for in Bill C-31, people need to apply for it. They also need to prove that they are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. That is a lot of work for the person applying and for those who have to review their application. We know that the federal government's services to the public are a real mess right now. I am not criticizing public servants; they are

overworked. There is a labour shortage and the system is not working right now. The government wants to add to that, and I am worried that the people who need this \$500 will not get it.

I think that, if we really want to change things and make people's lives better in terms of things like dental care or housing, we need ongoing core measures, measures that will be around for a long time. People need to be able to understand that there is a beginning and that they can count on government help every month. In essence, the government's job is to create wealth and better redistribute it to the people who need it most.

I feel that we could have used more time to debate this bill. Its substance is good, but the execution is flawed. Unfortunately, I am afraid it was not created for the right reasons. I believe this bill has a partisan, ideological purpose, one that is not necessarily intended to serve the community.

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her speech.

I certainly do not agree with her conclusion that our reasons for creating this bill were unethical. I think it is very important that we help people. I am sure that my hon. colleague will agree with me that it is important to help Canadian and Quebec families who are in an unenviable situation, who are less well off and whose children need dental care.

I imagine we can at least agree on the importance of ensuring that these individuals can provide dental care for their children under the age of 12.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

He is right when he says that we both agree that these needs exist. We agree that children throughout Quebec and the other provinces need dental care. We agree that people who are more disadvantaged, less fortunate, those who have a harder life, need support for housing.

However, we disagree on the means being used. We do not think it is a good idea to pass such a significant bill that addresses such an important need so quickly. We think it is a bad idea not to take the time to first consult the provinces, since this falls under their jurisdiction, not to mention the experts, associations and dentists before passing this bill. It would have been better to hold consultations with the aim of achieving the desired result, which is to improve the oral health of children under the age of 12.

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• (2120)

[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): [*Member spoke in Inuktitut*]

[English]

I wanted to start by speaking in Inuktitut because I was quite offended by the member's comment that when she is speaking in French, she might not be heard. She has an interpreter. I was able to understand her because there are interpretation services.

I want to ask her about the dental care program in Nunavik for Inuit in northern Quebec. What are the conditions of the dental care program? Would there be improvements from this bill?

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille: Mr. Speaker, I apologize if I offended my colleague. I hope it was clear that, physically, I was not talking about her, but about other members who were speaking very loudly in the House. I found their lack of respect very disturbing and insulting.

I certainly was not talking about her. I know that she is a conscientious member, that she listens to me and is interested in what I have to say. In answer to her question, I just want to tell her that I think every province and territory, including Nunavut, should describe its needs, set up its system and demand the federal funding it needs to make sure all the children who live there get the services they need.

We really think the solution is federal transfers to the provinces and territories so each community can make decisions based on its own needs and its own priorities.

I think that if Nunavut had the resources, it could set up everything it needs. What Nunavut needs is the financial resources to do it. I hope the federal government will give Nunavut what it needs.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, here we are debating Bill C-31, and I believe that there is a great deal of interest in what is taking place this evening. There is an expectation now, because of the motion we just passed in the House, that Bill C-31 will in fact be advancing and go to committee, where it will be heard.

We hear a lot about the dental care program, and I am going to talk about that, but first I would like to draw some focus to the other issue within the legislation, which is the issue of housing.

We often hear the Conservative Party in particular talk about the issue of affordability in housing, asking and challenging the Government of Canada to do more on the issue of housing. I find it somewhat interesting that the opportunity is there in a very real and tangible way for the Conservative Party to support positive action in regard to housing affordability in Canada, and in this case the Canada rent subsidy. The Conservatives have an opportunity to support that, and they can vote yes on this legislation.

Earlier, I made reference to the dental program, and I asked members on the Conservative side if they did not recognize the true

value of this program and the number of Canadians who will benefit by it, and we are talking about kids. When we think of the housing program, we are talking about hundreds of millions, just over \$1.2 billion, that would go to support almost two million Canadians in every region of our country to give them some assistance when there is a need for that help.

The Conservatives will talk about inflation and challenge the government to take action to support Canadians, but when we bring forward legislation such as this, which in part is assisting Canadians in dealing with inflation, not only are they voting against the legislation, but they still feel they should be able to filibuster and prevent the legislation from seeing the light of day.

The government is very much focused on the housing issue in all regions of our country. We understand the importance of housing. For the first time in generations, we have seen an actual housing strategy for Canada brought in by the government, and we are talking about billions of dollars over a number of years.

We have seen the enhancement of housing support programs that will provide opportunities, for example, for first time homebuyers. In recent budgets, we have seen an opportunity to be able to expand into housing co-ops, which is a viable alternative to owning a home. In a housing co-op, one is not a tenant, as in an apartment, but rather a resident in the home in which one lives. Literally hundreds of millions are being invested into non-profit housing, which is based on annual income. Depending on the province, I believe it is around 30% or 32% of a household's annual income. These are the types of actions that the Government of Canada has taken with budgets, to ensure that foreign investors are not successful in driving up the cost of housing.

Every one of those measures that I referenced, the official opposition voted against, yet its members will stand up and say we are not doing enough in regard to the housing file.

• (2125)

On the issue of housing, we need to see the different levels of government working together. The national government, on a number of budgetary policy decisions and legislative provisions, has demonstrated leadership in ensuring that there is a strong, healthy role for the Government of Canada.

Really, this is, again, the first time we have seen this in many years, as Stephen Harper never did anything dealing with national housing.

We recognize that there is a need. I have had discussions about how we can actually make new homes more affordable, and those discussions generate ideas on how Ottawa might be able to continue to make a difference, through the Minister of Housing, who has opened his doors, inviting those ideas. The legislation we are voting on tonight, or whenever it comes to a vote, is something that is going to help people, both in the short term and the long term.

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That is something I wanted to highlight before I got into what I believe is the core of the legislation, the reason I would challenge each and every member to reflect on the needs of their constituents.

As has been pointed out, what we are really talking about is a dental benefit program for children under the age of 12. In many of the discussions and debates that I have seen on it to date, the Conservatives have said that, well, these provinces have it, this province has it, that province has it, and so they do not need it, and so forth. We even had one Conservative MP who said that her riding does not need it.

At the end of the day, I believe that every riding, all 338 constituencies, will benefit either directly or indirectly through this dental benefit program that is being put forward.

I think it is noteworthy to recognize that this is the very first time we are getting a national program dealing with health care. This has been a government that has focused a great deal of effort, much like we have done in housing, on the file of health care.

I can talk about the discussions that have taken place that Stephen Harper refused to have, in which we saw a health care accord being achieved and in which every province came on side, signing an agreement with Ottawa on health care funding. The amount of health care equalization payments that are going to our provinces is at historic levels. Never before have we seen as much investment in health care.

Never before have we seen a national government that has recognized the importance of mental health or of long-term care. Through this legislation, for the very first time, the national government is saying that if one is a child under the age of 12 whose guardian or parents are having some financial issues and are not able to afford the dental service that is so badly needed, being provided that service in many ways will prevent that child from having to go into a hospital situation.

Whether it is overnight for surgeries or whether it is occupying an emergency space, these are all things on which we can have a positive impact by voting for this legislation. I believe the Conservative Party is being very short-sighted by not recognizing the true value of both the housing supplement program that is in here and the dental benefit program. I would suggest to them that it will come back to haunt them if they do not support this legislation.

• (2130)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for my colleague. As someone pointed out, I think he is on his fourth speech of the day. I want to commend him for all of the energy and passion he still has at this rather late hour.

I know that he is a diligent, hard-working MP who loves his community and who believes in its vitality.

Does he not truly believe that it would have been better for the federal government to hold a round of negotiations with his province so that it could be heard and so that the government could establish a program that they both agreed on, rather than imposing a

measure that the provinces and some professional associations do not really support?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, one of the things we demonstrated, whether it is the health care accord or the first-ever child care accord with the different provinces and territories, is that at times there is an absolute need for the government to work with the provinces to implement a program. In this particular situation, it is very much a patchwork. We heard that during the debate, where some provinces are doing better than other provinces.

For the first time, for individuals who are financially challenged or at that lower income, their children who are under the age 12 are going to be receiving a benefit. That benefit is going to prevent many of those children from ever having to go into a hospital situation because they could not afford to get dental work done. It is more important to recognize that fact and implement the program, and I suspect there will be an ongoing dialogue to look at ways in which we can expand the dental care program and benefits.

• (2135)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, we listen to many of the member's speeches in the House, and I appreciate his tenacity and always making sure his voice is heard. I hope he welcomes some of his backbenchers to join the club.

First of all, I want to thank him for his passion around dental care. I know I talk to many people in my riding who share a lot of really sad stories about their children not being able to access dental care, and about taking small children into the hospital and having a lot of teeth pulled instead of cared for in a proper way. These are realities. I am wondering if the member can explain to me and perhaps to the House why in the last Parliament he voted against this program.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, timing is something that has to be taken into consideration. For me, personally, I look at the pharmacare program and I believe it would be nice for us to continue to work toward having a national pharmacare program. It was a couple of years ago, I think in September of 2020 or it might have been 2021, I am not 100% sure, when the federal government in the throne speech said we are looking for willing provincial partners to talk about a national pharmacare program. That is one of the reasons, in recognizing the importance of this dental program, we need to be prepared at times to move forward. That is what we are seeing today. Timing is very important. I look forward to how we might be able to continue to expand this particular program.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I do support this bill. I would like to share with the hon. member what I hear when I ask constituents what their top-of-mind issues are. Health care is right up there. I have never heard them say dental.

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If this bill were calling for every family to get access to a family doctor and every community to have ambulances and emergency care, I would not care how many closure motions were used. I would vote for it. However, I cannot support closure motions on principle, and on this one, why this priority now? The wheels are falling off the bus of health care in this country, and I am desperate to see a federal-provincial health accord that makes the difference so that Canadians have the health care we have come to expect—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We are running out of time. There are 18 seconds left, but I will let the hon. member respond with a brief answer.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, a health care accord has been achieved with this government and other provincial jurisdictions, and it is something that continues to be ongoing.

In regard to the dental program, this is a first step. It is recognized that as a result of this particular program we will likely be seeing far fewer children going into our hospitals and using up some of those beds and emergency services, which will alleviate the load and the costs of other health care services. Therefore, it makes sense in many ways.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are broke. That is the state of this country. We are \$1.3 trillion in debt and we are having trouble keeping the lights on, so to speak.

Now is not the time for expensive new government programs, particularly when we have a government that is negligent on all of the other things that it is in charge of. I do not have to point very far. Have members had constituents trying to get a passport lately? Folks are waiting months for a passport. That is a basic role of the Canadian government.

The federal government does not have too many jobs. It has to manage the military. It has to manage our border security. It has to manage our justice system. Those would be top priorities for the government. In all three of those cases, it is failing dramatically, never mind coming up with or running new programs.

Here we are, the government has run our credit cards up to the max, and now it is going out and talking about buying a new Rolls Royce, while Canadians are out there trying to figure out how they are going to keep their older car on the road. Buying a new car has become unaffordable for many Canadians, and new cars are hard to come by. Therefore, Canadians are looking at Kijiji and Facebook Marketplace for a used car, and finding out the used car they bought maybe six or seven years ago is still worth the same amount of money they bought it for. These are the challenges.

The member for Winnipeg North just spoke before me, and we heard over and over again about supporting Canadians. There is a difference between when Conservatives say supporting Canadians and when the Liberals say supporting Canadians. When the Liberals say it, they generally mean getting out the chequebook and writing a cheque. When the Conservatives say supporting Canadians, they mean making sure that the systems of government work to ensure that Canadians can thrive.

I reference this more like a tree. If Canada were an apple tree in an orchard of which we got to enjoy the fruit, Conservatives would

be concerned about the soil and making sure that the tree got enough water, that the roots were well tended for, that the tree grew and flourished, maybe pruning the tree where it was needed, and therefore watching, expecting and hoping for a harvest of apples. Liberals do not want to worry about all of those kinds of things, they just want to make sure that they can polish the couple of apples that are there to make them really shiny and show them off, while perhaps the tree is dying, there is not enough attention or water coming to the tree, the soil has eroded or the tree has not been pruned in a very long time.

That is where I feel the difference is between the Conservatives and the Liberals. The Liberals want to emphasize the fruit without being concerned about the tree the fruit is growing on, the systems that are in place to ensure that Canadians thrive. When Conservatives say they will support Canadians, they mean making sure that our systems in this country operate in a manner so that Canadians can continue to thrive.

We have seen that in the past when Conservative governments were in power. We saw things like crime rates going down, our dollar improving in value, the average working wages of Canadians going up and housing remaining affordable.

We warned the government that, when it did not run balanced budgets, eventually inflation would come into play, and when it was printing money like it was going out of style, eventually inflation would catch on. Here we are in a world of out-of-control inflation, where the cost of living has gone up and where housing is completely unaffordable. Now the government, after causing that problem, is coming in and saying that it will write a cheque to ensure it can eliminate some of the pain we are feeling, and it will come up with a new program.

Going back to my tree analogy, now the tree is half-dead and we have to resuscitate it. We have to go build an irrigation system. We should have been concerned about that a long time ago.

Again, another case in point around this is LNG in this country. When I first got elected back in 2015, there were 15 LNG projects on the books. Companies were knocking on Canada's door, saying that they would like to start an LNG project here in Canada. Today, seven years later, not one of those projects has been built. Again that is one of those cases where there was a lack of tending to the roots and tending to the soil, tending to the things that make our country survive.

● (2140)

Canadians are suffering today. I do not know if members know of something called “stumpot”. It is a good Dutch meal. It is potatoes and carrots or potatoes and kale mixed together. It is kind of like mashed potatoes, but it is all mixed together and typically they put a good bratwurst or sausage on top of it. I hear from people who say they cannot afford the sausage anymore. They are having to go with hot dogs on the top. That is the thing. Canadians are supplementing their diets with inferior products because they cannot afford the food that they are used to eating. That is a real challenge for them.

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Now the government is concerned about dental and rental. That is what the Liberals are calling this bill. We see the government once again get out the chequebook of Canada and pull out the credit card of Canada and say that there is not a problem that they cannot solve without spending some more money.

One of the things that we could have in this country is water on reserves. I do not know if members know this, but they put fluoride in most public water systems in this country to prevent dental issues. It helps dental health dramatically to have fluoride in the water. The government, back in 2015, promised that it would have drinking water on reserves. One of the consequences of having water on reserves would be improved dental health.

However, we have seen that this has been a total failure of the current government. The Liberals promised back in 2015 that by 2019 the government would have the water on reserves fixed. Here we are, seven years later, and it still continues to be a problem. That is another example of where the government has failed. Here it is now with a shiny object, a “polishing the fruit” exercise, writing cheques to individual Canadians and trying to solve the problems that it was negligent on or created in the past. That is generally a major problem.

We are seeing in these systems of Canada and in the way that Canada works, that generally these are indications of the health of the society and the health of the system. We generally have conversations about competing systems from one country to another.

The Government of Canada, the Liberal government, brought in a MAID regime that is now being used as an alleviation to poverty. We see that people in countries around the world are writing in horror in their own media. There was a headline just the other day out of the U.K. saying, “Why is Canada euthanising the poor?” That is a headline coming out of the U.K. Not only has the Liberal government made life unaffordable for Canadians, but it has made a euthanasia regime that is so wide open with holes, that the poor are accessing MAID instead of being able to live in dignity right here in Canada. We see all of those issues going on.

I see this as being nothing more than a vote-buying exercise and a major distraction as Canadians suffer under the weight of this Liberal-made inflation. Now the Liberals come out with a payment scheme that goes directly to members of the public to alleviate some of these problems. I do not deny that \$500 would be a dramatic improvement for many people's lives. Nonetheless, going back to my tree analogy, it does not go to feeding the roots, pruning the tree or maybe throwing some fertilizer into the system to ensure that we can enjoy the fruit of the fruit tree by ensuring that our systems operate, by ensuring that we can have clean water on reserves, by ensuring that our justice system works properly so that we do not have to live in a world of crime, by ensuring that we can get a passport and by ensuring that our border is secure.

Therefore, I will not be supporting the bill because I do not think that it tackles the fundamental issues here in Canada.

• (2145)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have been listening attentively to this debate throughout the day. The Conservative

members, one after another, get up and talk about how they are going to leave behind 30% of the population, as 30% of their constituents do not deserve dental care. This is their statistic. I do not necessarily agree with it, but 30% of their constituents deserve to be in pain and do not deserve to smile.

I wonder what the hon. member is going to say to his constituents about that, those three in 10, when he gets publicly funded dental care and they do not deserve it.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I want to inform the hon. member, who is not from Alberta, which I will forgive him for, that we have a great system for ensuring that everybody who needs dental care gets dental care. I think that is a fact across the country. Many provinces have in place a system to ensure that the people who need dental care get dental care. That is a fact. If there is concern around the funding of dental care, as the Bloc has pointed out, why is the government duplicating some of these systems and not just transferring the money to the provinces?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Earlier, I heard a Conservative colleague say in the House that the government needs to stop spending when she was talking about housing in relation to Bill C-31. If the government stops spending, how will it solve the problem?

Recently, I was speaking with an economist from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation who was saying that, if nothing is done in the next 10 years in Quebec, 500,000 housing units will be built. However, to address the affordability and accessibility crisis in Quebec alone, an additional 600,000 units need to be built. This is not a problem that is going to solve itself. The government is going to have to invest in housing somewhere along the way.

What does my colleague think about that?

• (2150)

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, one of the interesting things here is that there are many things I think the government can and needs to do, without spending money, to encourage the building of houses. I do not have a really clear grasp on that, but I would say that when it comes to the border crossing at Roxham Road, to go to an example I know a bit more about, the Liberals have always accused the Conservatives of not spending a lot on border measures. However, when we were in power, Roxham Road was not an issue because we had enforcement at the border in Canada. There are many things the government can do to encourage these things without spending money.

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Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am a member of Parliament from Alberta. In Alberta there is no dental care program like the one the member just mentioned. I want to clarify the record there.

However, there are 500,000 Canadian children without dental care right now. It may feel convenient that members of the House, and of course those on the Conservative bench in particular, have these benefits. They have dental care for themselves. They have dental care for their children. Who is paying for it? It is the taxpayer. All we are doing is making sure that these 500,000 Canadian children have the same access.

They deserve dental care. Would the member agree?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, just to dispute the facts, Alberta Health Services has a dental program for those in financial need. I do not know what else the member is referring to. It is available for everybody who needs dental care in Alberta.

While I am talking about folks in Alberta, what they really need is the economy to be thriving. What they need is pipelines to be built so that we all have good jobs and we can all afford dental care. We do not need a government program to provide it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, you are looking sharp this evening. I am sure it will improve the quality of the debate.

I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-31. Perhaps I should start by reviewing the principle.

I identify as a progressive. If I were asked whether I would support a dental care program, I am inclined to say yes, as a progressive. I believe that what most progressives want, in practice, is to support people who have a little less social capital than perhaps some other folks, and this is expressed through social policies that tend to be more generous.

This is indeed the case when we think of family policies in Quebec. This is also the case when we think of access to education. Looking at the principle, then, I do think that having a dental care program is a good idea. However, I must qualify that with a very significant “but”.

To explain this significant “but”, I would like to examine the intentions and the motivations of our Liberal and NDP colleagues. When speaking of intentions and motivations, I do not wish to ascribe any intentions, I simply want to see what is the reason for this proposal. People who are rather cynical might say that the only motivation is the deal reached by the NDP and the Liberal Party. I am not going to go there.

In my opinion, the NDP and the Liberal Party may have thought about developing a slightly more generous policy. I am prepared to give them that. However, there is a major problem with jurisdiction. What the Liberal government, supported by the NDP, is proposing does not fall within the authority of the House of Commons.

I will explain the NDP's motivation by referring to a study conducted a few years ago that really struck me. In the early 2000s, there was a pan-Canadian study—

• (2155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Some members are talking loudly.

[*English*]

I would ask members to step out into the lobby to have their conversations and to show respect to those who have the floor. I know they would appreciate that if they were the ones speaking.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Jonquière.

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I do encourage them to leave the chamber, since I am sure their conversations are less interesting than what I am presenting.

I would like to get back to the government's motivations. In the early 2000s, a major study was done in several Canadian universities to define Canadian identity. They wanted to distinguish between the identity of Canadians in North America and the identity of people in the United States. When Quebeckers were asked what made them different from Americans, they immediately talked about their culture and language. When Canadians were asked what made them different from Americans, they immediately talked about the health care system and therefore social policy.

That is significant. It speaks to a certain tendency regarding identity. Canadians identify with social policy and yet, when you look at how the Constitution is laid out, all the social aspects fall under provincial, not federal, jurisdiction.

I have the impression that many people in the Liberal Party and the NDP understand that social policies are a strong political driver, that they help parties build up their political base and win the approval of certain segments of the population. Perhaps this is why they are so motivated to bring in a dental care policy.

I think this is very ill-advised because the Liberal government is currently having trouble with its own services. Look at immigration. It is a disaster. Anyone who watched the news today could see there was discrimination. The government often boasts about fighting racism, but we saw that in its own departments there is a form of racism against African francophone students. Eliminating this racism is a worthy fight; it is work that the Liberal government could try to do. We saw that at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

We also saw terrible delays in passport delivery and not a day goes by without a member of our party rising to ask a question about not only the terrible delays with employment insurance, but also the difficulty accessing employment insurance. If the Liberals are so progressive, then why do they not try to engage in this type of action?

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Coming back to the motivations of the Liberal Party and the NDP, I would say that the main motivation is more likely the deal between the Liberals and the NDP, which was difficult to reach. I would simply remind members that in an interview with *Le Devoir* in August, the Deputy Prime Minister stated that the government must take time before implementing the type of policy proposed by the NDP. She also pointed out in that article that they had a great deal of difficulty reaching a day care agreement with the provinces.

What the Liberal Party is telling us today, backed by the NDP, is that they are going to fast-track this, that there will be no debate about putting dental care in place, that the bill will be immediately referred to a committee, that we will not have time to discuss it here. Will the same thing happen when the government has to negotiate with the provinces? That is a great concern of mine.

I will stop to drink some water because my lips are stuck to my teeth, and that may not be the best thing for my dental health.

I do not understand why the Liberal Party thinks it is so urgent to pass this type of bill under a gag order, especially since, if we look at what is being done in Quebec, we see that Quebec society is probably one of the most progressive. The progressive aspects of the social policies that we have seen over the past 25 years are generally initiatives that came from Quebec. For example, medical assistance in dying and the parental policy are initiatives that came from Quebec.

• (2200)

In my opinion, it is clear that the Government of Quebec does not need federal initiatives to implement social policies that meet the needs of its population because it has proven itself capable of doing so in the past.

There is one question that needs answering, though. Why is the Government of Quebec not currently implementing its own dental care policy? The answer is quite simple. The Quebec government is not doing so because it is having a hard time meeting its health care obligations with what it receives from the federal government.

I would like to talk about something relatively simple, and that is how the Canadian federation has been undermining politics for decades. I am talking about the fiscal imbalance. This is not something that a Bloc Québécois MP made up. It is something that was carefully studied by a federalist. The Séguin report unequivocally shows that the federal government is underfunding public services without every paying the political price.

My fear is that this dental program will meet the same fate as health care services. The federal government will set up a program, but it will eventually become underfunded. The provinces will have to manage the program, and they will pay the political price. Meanwhile, the federal government will wash its hands of this program in a few years and will have set another precedent that puts pressure on provincial policies.

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed the member for Jonquière's speech. He made some strong, well-researched arguments that I think make sense.

I would like him to explain to me in different words why he thinks that the Liberals, with the help of the NDP, had to impose a major gag order and fast-track the passage of this bill when we know that more time was needed to properly research it, listen to experts and, most importantly, consult the provinces.

Mr. Mario Simard: Mr. Speaker, I thank my whip for that great question.

I truly believe that the motives of the Liberal government and the NDP leave much to be desired. Obviously, more investments in health would have been good. If we look closely at the bill that is before us, we quickly see that a health care program could be a possibility a few years down the road in a different context. At the stage we are at now, what would be good is if the government would properly fund health care again.

If the government does not want to talk about that, draw things out and give us the opportunity to point out all the weaknesses in its arguments, then the best thing for it to do is impose a gag order. That is what we are seeing today. That is what the government is doing. The explanation is rather simple. This program does not cut it in the current context. The provinces do not think that this program cuts it, and the only way to get the bill passed as quickly as possible is to impose a gag order.

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what is not acceptable is the Bloc Québécois's schizophrenia with regard to this initiative. First, the Bloc tells us that it is very important to provide dental care and that it is a very praiseworthy objective. Then they tell us that we are moving too quickly. These statements do not jive.

We agree with the Bloc Québécois that it is very important to provide dental care to those who need it and we are taking action.

I would ask my colleague to be more coherent on this issue, if possible. First, the Bloc wants us to take action, but then they do not want us to take action. How is that possible?

• (2205)

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, perhaps my colleague misunderstood what I was saying.

What is really incoherent is forging ahead with a dental care program when home care services for seniors and health care funding are completely inadequate. To me, that is what is incoherent. When my house is on fire, I do not worry about the colour of the curtains. I focus on what needs to be done immediately.

Everyone is in agreement right now, including the provincial premiers. Even all the medical specialist associations and health care stakeholders have gotten involved. Everyone agrees that there is an urgent need to reinvest in health care.

The Liberal government, with help from the NDP, is trying to do something nice as we come out of a crisis by offering a political program that may be necessary, but not right now. That would be coherent. Realizing that health care is underfunded and trying to address that problem would be more coherent than adding a new program.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the conversation being held here tonight because we are aware that, even in Veterans Affairs, the government is great at announcing the money but not at getting it out the door.

There are programs already in place, as the member mentioned, in his province, as there are in ours. Does he see this as recreating something that already exists that the government simply needs to support?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Simard: Madam Speaker, I do not feel that the government is recreating something that already exists. It seems to me that it is interfering in something that is none of its business.

It is up to the provinces to develop a health care system. If they want to do it, they will do it. The federal government should do what it has the power to do, which is transfer money to improve health care funding.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank all my colleagues participating in this debate tonight. I really think that this is an important debate for which Canadians deserve to have true facts.

It is no secret that the pandemic has hurt many Canadians, especially those Canadians who have lost their jobs and Canadians who were unable to maintain their benefits. Unfortunately, their children are now paying that cost. It is no secret that, in addition to that, there are nearly 500,000 children in Canada without that care.

We know that we need to have a responsible plan that actually tackles health care and the crisis that we are in. All members of the House need to understand that, when we are talking about health care, we are talking about dental care. We can, in fact, have both.

We can, in fact, work toward a better, stronger, publicly delivered and publicly accessible health care system in Canada, while also delivering a publicly accessible and publicly administered dental care program. We can ensure that Canadians have that possibility. We can also ensure that our workforce in the health care system keeps up by making sure that we make the necessary investments.

This should never be a discussion about either health care or dental care. It can be both. We are the party that commits to both.

To hear members from the Conservative bench talk about how there are already programs in Alberta is a falsehood. It is not true. We know this, for example, from physicians in Alberta.

There is a physician by the name of Dr. Frank Neves out of St. Albert who said that, during the direct loss of employees at certain companies across the province, they had seen an increase in families unable to pay for their kids' dental care, meaning that they are

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paying out of pocket. He predicted that three out of every 10 clients in St. Albert, Alberta, were paying out of pocket and were unable to keep up. He also cited that children, in many cases, had to find alternative care.

Additionally, we see low-income Canadians, Canadians who are really struggling right now, having to enter emergency rooms because of infections in their mouths.

Samantha Lowe is from the Mustard Seed, an organization that has great credibility in my community and, I am sure, in many other communities across the country represented by members of the House, including Conservative members who want to see this bill die. She said, "Dental care should be part of primary care".

When we are talking about primary care, we are talking about the lives of Canadians.

Their lives are important, and this is something they have paid into. They have paid their taxes. They have paid through labour. They have paid so much into the creation and prosperity of Canada, and now is the time. We have to do this. The Liberals have promised this for decades. Now we have forced them to do the right thing and finally deliver.

I also want to talk about some additional facts. Métis people across Canada do not have access to non-insured health benefits that are covered by the first nations and Inuit health branch. They do not have the access, whether they are in rural or even urban centres. Métis people have been historically left out and neglected for generations.

I want to talk about, specifically, my own experience being a Métis child in Alberta. I did not have dental care. I could not have gotten access to it. My parents were unable to secure benefits working in job after job. My dad was a carpenter. When a house was built, it was done, and he had to find another contract. My mom bounced from job to job trying to find security in her work, but was unable to do so. Many Métis Canadians know how hard it is to find employment in rural settings.

My parents did everything they could to make sure I had a good life. Many Canadians right now are doing the very same thing, but just like many parents, they had to make a choice. Was it going to be food or was it going to be dental care? My teeth suffered.

Being a member of Parliament today, I have that privilege. I am immensely privileged to stand here in the House to talk about dental care, knowing that I have dental care provided by the taxpayer, by Canadians.

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We see that same privilege has been extended to every single member of the House, and has been for some Conservatives for over 20 years. Now, when 500,000 indigenous and non-indigenous low-income Canadians need this support, we are hearing them say no.

• (2210)

What if we said no to their benefits? We would certainly hear from the Conservative bench about how deplorable it would be for them not to get their benefits, but when it comes to giving that benefit to Canadians, to 500,000 children, we hear them deny them. We must not trivialize the reality of good dental care. It provides an immense relief to parents like mine, who cannot give that to their children.

I know what this is going to mean for the families in Edmonton Griesbach. I know what this is going to mean for the families who are struggling right now and the dignity that they want to be able to give their children. There was a saying when I went to high school that if we started our first job interview with a beautiful smile, we would get to the last question. That is true. People in Canada, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, a G7 country, deserve to know that their dental care needs are met. Dental care is health care. It needs to be treated like that.

Tonight I have heard the Conservatives and the Bloc talk numerous times about how great their provinces' programs are. That is all fine and great. Good job, Quebec, but Nunavut does not have that benefit. People in Alberta do not have that benefit. That is the reality facing Canadians right now. We need this House to be united and know that Canadians from coast to coast to coast, no matter what jurisdiction they are in, can actually benefit from a dental care program. That is what it means to bring unity to this House, to do things on behalf of regular working Canadians.

When I was elected in my seat of Edmonton Griesbach, I promised my constituents that I would deliver; I would get results. I am certain that every member in this House wants to do the same for their constituents. This bill is one of those bills that directly help regular working Canadians. It is not rocket science. We are making sure there is a national dental care program by 2025 that makes sure every Canadian has access to dental care in Canada. That is a dream New Democrats have been fighting for, for a long time, and we are finally going to see it.

Many folks have tried before, and I want to thank all the past members of Parliament, but especially the Canadians who keep fighting every day to make sure they have the basic necessities for their health care, like dental care. I do not want to see any more stories from surgeons at the Stollery hospital for children, who tell us their number one surgeries are to help children who have infections in their mouths. That is Canada right now. That is downtown Toronto.

We are talking about a very basic level of human dignity that all children should have, that I should have had as a child, and that many children right now deserve to have. We cannot neglect the fact that people in Canada need this benefit. We need this now, and these children need to know we are there for them.

If we do not pass this benefit, we are going to see thousands of children continue to live without that care, resulting in costs down the road. When we are talking about costs down the road, we are talking about a hospital bed, \$3,000 a day, when we could have solved that with a cleaning, with cavities being filled, with a visit to the dentist. These are cost-saving measures. These are important measures for our economy.

I want to make certain that Canadians know that New Democrats have their back and are not going to end this fight. We are going to make sure we end the block put by the Conservative Party on this bill. We are going to get this to committee, and we are going to make sure we get this benefit into the hands of Canadians. That is why I am here, and that is why New Democrats are here.

• (2215)

Mr. Chris Bittle (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member this. We have heard from a lot of Conservative MPs who are more than willing to say that three out of 10 of their constituents do not deserve to be covered by dental care, which the hon. member rightly pointed out is a part of health care.

The hon. member for Peace River—Westlock claimed that all of his constituents received coverage through their program in Alberta. I was wondering if the hon. member could speak as a member from Alberta about that program. Perhaps it is real; perhaps it is not. Could he talk about that and maybe speak to the fact that the Conservatives are more than willing to let 30% of their constituents suffer without dental care, even though they get publicly funded dental care themselves?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that question, because it is a matter of truth in this place.

When we are talking about the benefits that Canadians, in particular Albertans, have, dental care is one that they do not have. There is, of course, a program for low-income Albertans in my province. However, one has to pay the copays. That is not free and it is not accessible. One has to make sure one meets the qualifiable income threshold, which also is not accessible. The fact is, there is not a program like this, which is why we need this program now to make sure no child is left behind.

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, what assurances does the member have from provincial governments or health ministers in the various provinces that once this program is fully implemented, the provinces are not actually going to eliminate their program, since the federal government is going to have something in place? What assurances did the New Democrats get to make sure that does not happen?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I want to encourage the hon. member to read the bill. It is a national dental care program that is going to be administered and publicly accessible, which means negotiations with the provinces, in this case, will not have to apply.

However, I want to make sure Canadians understand the nature of the question. The member just said that the provinces could take that money and put it their own pockets. The question I have is this: What assurance does the member have from his province, Saskatchewan, that it will continue to provide the care for children that they deserve?

• (2220)

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague said earlier that there have been a number of references to the fact that certain provinces already have dental care programs, which may provide partial coverage, and other provinces do not.

However, the government in Ottawa should not be proposing this type of program. If my colleague is interested in social policy programs, my advice is that he run for provincial office. Then he can take his ideas to the right chamber. This is not the federal government's role.

The federal government had a role to play, namely, in providing drinking water to all indigenous communities. I think it is far more urgent to provide water to all indigenous communities than to throw crumbs at a program that will not serve much purpose at the end of the day because the provinces were not at the table.

[English]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his advice to seek provincial office. I would encourage the member to do the same. It is no secret that the Bloc Québécois's interests are narrow and for the purpose of Quebec only.

I will address the question fully and invite the member to read the national health care act. We have passed it in the House, and we are going to do it again.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about how dental care is health care. I think that too often during this debate we have set up this false dichotomy. Dental care is health care, and that has to be established. It is ridiculous that public coverage ends at one's tonsils and does not go to one's teeth. I wonder if my hon. colleague could quickly expand on that point and add any final thoughts he might have.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his hard work on this file, and particularly on making sure we get this passed.

I want to make a quick mention about what health care is and what it should be in Canada.

Right now, health care stops at one's tonsils, as the member mentioned, and it also stops at one's eyelids. We still have work to do to make sure we have a universally accessible, universally administered public health care system in Canada. We are not there yet, but we are going to keep fighting to make sure that happens.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to talk about our government's

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plan to improve Canadians' access to oral health care by introducing Bill C-31.

Budget 2022 allocated \$5.3 billion over five years to Health Canada to provide dental care to Canadians whose family income is less than \$90,000. Bill C-31 authorizes the government to start putting some of that money into Canadians' pockets, starting with children under the age of 12, while simultaneously setting up a longer-term system.

Oral health is part of overall health, well-being and quality of life, but we know that going to a dental care professional is out of reach for far too many people in this country. No one should have to choose between meeting their children's dental needs and putting food on the table. We know how heartbreaking it is for parents to see their children suffer, miss school and be embarrassed about the condition of their mouths without being able to give them the help they need.

Many Canadians have dental coverage through private insurance plans provided by their employer, and some families receive support through existing government programs, like all of us here in the House of Commons. However, a large portion of the cost of dental care in Canada comes directly from the pockets of Canadians. Of the \$16.4 billion spent on oral health care in 2019, 55% was covered by private insurance plans, 6% was publicly funded through various federal, provincial and territorial programs, and 39% was billed directly to patients.

Roughly one-third of Canadians have no form of dental coverage, and 22% of Canadians say they avoid, or will avoid, seeing a dental professional because of the exorbitant costs involved. These Canadians who do not have access to dental care too often end up needing emergency dental surgery when their oral health condition worsens. Children from low-income families are twice as likely to require dental surgery under anaesthesia. These surgeries are painful for children and their families. They carry risks that are largely avoidable when ongoing oral health services are available. Emergency surgeries are also more expensive for the public health care system.

Our government is working on designing and implementing a new national dental care plan that will enable more Canadians to get the dental care they need. In order to ensure that this plan is robust and fair and that it reflects current needs and realities, the government will continue to collaborate with stakeholders, first nations partners, and the provinces and territories in order to create a plan that meets the needs of Canadians. We have established and leveraged strong relationships with dental professionals, academics, researchers, leaders in the field, and other stakeholders to ensure that we understand the complex national landscape of dental care.

Government Orders

Canadians deserve a plan that works for them. The government is taking the time to get this right. However, we cannot ignore the fact that while we are working hard on creating a long-term plan, Canadian children are currently suffering from the effects of childhood oral disease, with repercussions that could follow them their entire lives. The burden of poor oral health does not affect everyone equally. We know that the children of low-income families are the most affected. That is why we are introducing this bill: to start to break the cycle of poor oral health among the youngest Canadians as soon as possible.

Our objective is to ensure that children under 12 without dental insurance can access the Canada dental benefit before the end of 2022. The target implementation date for the Canada dental benefit is December 1, 2022, pending parliamentary approval and royal assent for the bill, and the program would cover expenses retroactive to October 1, 2022.

• (2225)

To access the benefit, parents or guardians of eligible children would need to apply through the Canada Revenue Agency. In addition, they would need to attest that their child does not have access to private dental care coverage and that they will have out-of-pocket dental care expenses for which they will use the benefit and for which they have not been and will not be fully reimbursed under another government plan. They must also attest that they understand they will need to provide documentation to verify that that out-of-pocket expenses occurred during the period of the benefit. This may include showing receipts to the CRA.

At the same time, our government will continue to work on supporting the oral health of the middle class and those working hard to join it. We will continue to work with our partners and stakeholders to provide dental health care and make life more affordable. Our government will continue to fulfill its role by offering dental coverage to many Canadians.

Through the non-insured health benefits program, the federal government provides dental coverage to recognized first nations and Inuit individuals. The children's oral health initiative provides preventive oral health services to first nations and Inuit children on reserve and in remote communities. The government provides limited dental coverage to people incarcerated in federal correctional facilities and to some newcomers through the interim federal health program. It also makes employer-sponsored dental insurance available to all federal public servants and retirees, members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, members of the Canadian Armed Forces and veterans.

Supporting oral health is a complex goal. There is no simple solution that will remove all barriers to accessing oral health care services overnight. The government will rely on collaboration with the provinces and territories as well as indigenous partners and other stakeholders as we strive to get this right for Canadians.

Some people might be concerned about the cost of this dental benefit and wonder how Canadians can afford it. My question to them is, how can children in Canada afford to miss two million days of school because of oral health issues? How can their parents afford to miss days of work when their kids cannot go to school because of dental issues?

The best time to solve a problem is before it starts. We know that oral diseases often start in the preschool years. What we are doing is prevention. The preschool years are also an important time for establishing good lifestyle habits by making sure families have the means to give their children the preventive oral health care they need. Canadians will experience less pain and distress and reduce their health care costs over the course of their lifetime. When we as adults have a toothache, we go see a dentist right away because we are in pain. Kids under the age of 12 should also go see a dentist when they are in pain.

By supporting this bill, members will make it possible for hundreds of thousands of Canadian parents to seek dental care for their children. The Canada dental benefit will give children a chance to get an existing problem fixed or receive much-needed preventive care, thereby contributing directly to reducing pain, creating more smiles and improving the health of children across Canada.

In closing, we know parents want to do what is best for their children's health. This bill will help them do that. I ask all my colleagues to join me in voting to pass this bill so we can make affordable dental care available to Canada's most vulnerable children, giving all children a fair shot at a better quality of life.

• (2230)

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member talk about this program. He indicated how it would roll out and the different parts to it. However, having been a businesswoman in the past, what I see if we go ahead with this is we would be creating a structure that already exists across our nation within our provinces.

I would like to know from him, since he is aware of how this will work, what costs are involved for the Government of Canada in implementing and rolling out this program. There are provinces and territories, our whole country, that are ready to put these programs into place and to broaden it out to make sure dental care is in place across our nation for children, as well as adults who are already being taken care of across our country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, of course we are working with the provinces and territories. How can they say that the system is working when almost 40% of young people are currently not receiving services? They have to pay for services, so they go without. I am from a rural riding. There are a number of rural ridings where many small businesses do not cover dental care. This bill will make things more equitable. We want equitable treatment in terms of oral health care for young people in every province.

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[English]

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, according to Statistics Canada, in 2018, 6.8 million people avoided visiting a dental professional because of the expense. That was three years ago. It has taken the Liberals this long to create this bill.

I wonder if the member could describe why at this point they have decided finally to implement this national program.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, in politics, there is a time for everything. We campaign, we set goals. We have focused on seniors and the middle class. We wanted to take money away from the rich and redistribute it. We focused on indigenous communities. Together with the NDP, we have reached out, and it is time we worked together to provide dental care across Canada, without neglecting any province, including the territories.

• (2235)

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, Bill C-31 talks about housing. In Quebec, 87,000 people are currently living in social housing with incomes under \$20,000, or \$35,000 for families. These folks will not have access to the \$500 because they pay less than 30% of their income for housing, thanks to the programs that Quebec created because of the federal government's withdrawal from social housing funding 30 years ago.

Does my colleague not agree with many people in Quebec that, instead of investing \$500 and sending it to people, we would be better off investing in structural, long-term and sustainable programs to truly house those with inadequate housing in Quebec and in the rest of Canada?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon: Madam Speaker, we are working together with all the provinces and territories to ensure that all children in Canada can have the same plan.

We are also working with Quebec, which is a model for all of Canada. We are lucky that Quebec's dental plan already covers children 12 and under to a certain extent. Let us follow Quebec's lead.

However, is there any difference between a child from Quebec and a child from Calgary or Prince Edward Island? To me, a 12-year-old child who needs dental care, whether they are from one end of the country or the other, deserves to have the same service.

[English]

Mr. Eric Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Madam Speaker, we know the expression “read the fine print”, and I say that tonight to start my comments off on this particular piece of legislation because it is something that I find very applicable in a lot of the Liberals' initiatives and attempts over the past few months or so.

I want to give an example. Going all the way back to April, something the Liberal-NDP group has been doing the last several months to try to paint a brighter picture than what they truly have in this country, there was a headline from the industry minister that read, “Government of Canada announces affordable high-speed Internet to help connect low-income families and seniors.”

For \$20 a month people could sign up, no problem. The details and the fine print were the important part. After clicking through the link two or three times to get to the details that matter, we found that only a fraction of the demographic who needs support, help or affordability even qualified for the program. It was only for those who receive the maximum GIS or the maximum child tax benefit. There were hundreds of thousands who read a headline thinking that the Liberal government was solving problem x, but the reality is that the impact is far less substantial than it wanted people to believe.

I give that example tonight in the chamber to fast forward to the bill we are dealing with. There is a measure specifically in it, and we have heard in question period, in questions and comments or in the Liberals' speeches tonight that it is going to help alleviate the housing crunch and the rental crunch that Canadians are facing. The fine print is important and the context is key, too.

The average rent per month in this country is \$2,000. We are in the midst of a rental crisis, on the pricing and supply, and we are seeing little in the forecasts showing that anything the Liberal government is doing would change that in the short, medium or long term. It is simply an attempt for the Liberals to say, “We are helping alleviate rental housing prices.” They cite it as an attempt of arguing what they are trying to do.

Let us do the math. The average rent is \$2,000. Let us not get started about Toronto or Vancouver or larger urban centres. The one-time top-up payment of \$500 is what the Liberals are offering. I had a resident in Cornwall say two things to me when they learned of the amount. First, that literally, on average, equals one week of rent. What are they going to do for the other 51 weeks of the year to help with this crisis? Second, they were further upset and disappointed when they read the fine print and realized that six in 10 renters in this country are not even going to qualify for it. Read the fine print with the Liberal government is a key theme that we could echo here in the House over and over again.

We talk about the rental housing crisis in every part of this country. We should have a bill specifically dealing with getting more supply built, a federal jurisdiction that could make a meaningful difference. For example, I want to give credit to my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka for fighting in committee to look at exactly this. Back in my municipal days, we had to work to end exclusionary zoning policies. We could show national leadership on this and get that done.

Government Orders

I always laugh when I am reminded of my time in municipal politics about the three bad acronyms that we have in this country that need to stop if we are going to get serious about real, meaningful affordable housing being built in a decent time frame, if at all. We know the acronym NIMBY, not in my backyard, but there are two others that Canadians need to know and that need to end. They are CAVE, citizens against virtually everything, and BANANA, build absolutely nothing anywhere near anyone.

We have gatekeepers in Ottawa who are refusing to show leadership to end exclusionary zoning, to end the crisis of building supply, and instead the Liberals and the NDP are going back to their communities saying, “We are not addressing any of that and we do not want to talk about it. Here is a payment that will help for one week of rent, on average, but for the other 51 weeks of the year, we are not sure what will happen.”

• (2240)

We can and we must do better on this. Look at the new dental plan. Actually, it is not a dental plan in the one sense. It is a typical failed bureaucratic Ottawa-knows-best program created in massive haste. I kind of laugh at this. The reason this program was created and this bill is in effect is that the Liberals promised this to the NDP in the deal they signed. I have to be careful the way I word it because I will trigger some people with the words I use to describe the relationship between the Liberals and the NDP, so I will be cautious on that.

I laugh because the New Democrats were stunned when news came out this summer that the Liberals were going to break their promise and could not create this program like they said. Here we are with this piece of legislation, Ottawa-knows-best legislation, that literally creates a duplicate layer of bureaucracy in Ottawa to manage programs, add bureaucracy and everything else when provincial governments already have these programs in nearly every part of the country.

In my home province of Ontario, there is the healthy smiles program for children and in recent years, under a Conservative government, there was the creation of the Ontario seniors dental care program. What we have with this bill to try to satisfy the partnership between the Liberals and NDP is millions and millions of dollars in bureaucracy in an Ottawa structure to administer a whole other program on top of the provincial ones that already exist. I do not mean to be harsh, but my confidence is very low in the government's ability to create a program.

Has anybody tried to get a passport lately? People have not been able to get one. It is taking three to four months to offer a basic service six months after the government said it was going to fix the mess. I can confirm through my constituency office that it is just as bad and chaotic as it was six months ago. Canadians have little faith when they hear Liberals say they have the solution of creating a brand new federal bureaucracy to administer a brand new program on top of the provincial ones that already exist. It is an absolute waste of administration and spending by Ottawa.

What is not addressed in the bills that the Liberals present is what provinces are asking for. Provinces did not ask for Ottawa to create this program and bureaucracy. There are not the promised funds they had on mental health. There are not the promised in-

creases that they asked for and are begging for when it comes to our health care system and Canada health transfers. Long-term care is feeling left behind as well. There is little in the record of the Liberal government to make anybody have confidence in a new program being created.

I will use the last portion of my time in the chamber tonight to reiterate what the Conservative cost-of-living relief plan is. There is an absolute clear contrast with the Liberals and the NDP, who have caused this, through debt, deficit and increased spending. Eight years of that track record and they want to double down on that same approach again.

We have seen great momentum for the Conservative Party and the new leader because we have been talking with a very clear message these past few weeks. There is 40-year high inflation, a problem driven by Liberal and NDP overspending, debt and deficits. I will point out that in this legislation, every single dollar of new spending is not paid for. It is added debt and deficit in new money printing. However, Conservatives have a plan and a contrast that goes the other way.

The carbon tax is scheduled to increase again. It is scheduled to triple. It is scheduled to take more money out of people's pockets on April 1 next year. Our Conservative plan talks about exempting taxes on home heating this winter as people are facing 100% increases in their energy bills. We are asking for the government to show some compassion and not increase taxes on an already burdened Canadian economy and middle class in this country.

The contrast is clear on what we could do for cost-of-living relief in this country. We could allow people to keep more of their hard-earned money to pay for things like groceries, the cost of living, rentals and so forth, or we could double down on the failed approach that has given us 40-year high inflation. We have no confidence in the government's ability to create and manage effectively any new Ottawa program. We could help small businesses. We could help families. We could help control inflation and finally get this economy and cost of living crisis under control.

• (2245)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about passport delivery. Being that his is a neighbouring riding to mine, I would encourage him to tell his constituents that they can travel a much shorter distance than they would otherwise have to in order to get the 10-day turnaround on passports if they come to Kingston. The Service Canada office there offers the 10-day turnaround, and I can guarantee that his constituents will have their passports within 10 days or less.

Government Orders

More important, the member talked about the healthy smiles program that exists in Ontario, as though that is some kind of substitute for what we are talking about today. It is not. In order to qualify for healthy smiles in Ontario, people have to be on ODSP, on the Ontario works program or on another social assistance program. It is not equivalent to what is being proposed here. Ontario Conservative after Ontario Conservative has stood up and tried to equate the two. They are not the same. This member knows this. He knows better and he should not be suggesting that.

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, my constituents in Cornwall, Morrisburg and Crysler thank the Liberal member for advising them to drive to Kingston or Ottawa or Montreal to get their passports. It is taking three months for people to get their passports. My point is that the Liberal government has zero ability to effectively manage programs. If it cannot get a passport right, I do not think it is going to have any competence or any ability to administer a whole new layer.

What I will say about the Ontario program, for the member, is a chance for me to reiterate the point I just made. When there is a system in place provincially to administer, instead of partnering with provinces on anything, including increased health transfers, mental health funding and long-term care, the Liberals are spending tens of millions of dollars on a double new bureaucracy in Ottawa and not actually working with provinces and using existing programs and structures.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, let me get this straight. The Conservative position on this argument is that the taxpayer-funded dental care benefits that they enjoy as members of Parliament are okay, but when we are fighting to extend the same service to their constituents, that is not okay. That is what the Conservatives are saying publicly, just so we are clear.

We have millions of Canadians who are not covered by provincial programs. That is a fact. The Conservatives like talking about the term “gatekeepers”. Why are Conservatives being gatekeepers against kids under 12 getting the dental care that they enjoy?

● (2250)

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, people on Vancouver Island do not want to see the carbon tax triple in terms of what we are having over the course of the next little while.

What I will say about this is that we are in this cost of living crisis, in the name of that bill, because of the spending habits of the Liberals and New Democrats for the past seven and eight years and it is only going to get worse. We are in this crisis and we are in this problem because we have two parties working together that do not care about balancing a budget or our economy or managing it. They are printing new money. They are adding debt and deficit, and they are leaving it to future people to actually pay the bill. Every single dollar of this program is going on a credit card. It is driving inflation and it is driving the very problem we are facing in this House of 40-year-high inflation and no date and no timeline to ever balance the budget again. The Liberals will just leave that for people in a good strong Conservative government to finally fix when we get around to it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think that my colleague believes that it is important for children under 12 to have dental care.

However, on the issue of priorities in health and social services, can he tell us who he thinks is best placed to determine, in each province, the health care and social services that need to be offered to the least fortunate populations and the population as a whole? What jurisdiction should deal with and handle this issue?

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Duncan: Madam Speaker, I want the House to remain calm as I make this statement, which I do not say too often. The comments made tonight from the Bloc Québécois are exactly the argument that we are making as well, which is that a double layer of bureaucracy and an Ottawa-knows-best approach will not work.

When it comes to the dental programs, we do not need to create another layer of bureaucracy when it comes to health spending. We can allow provinces, provide proper transfers, reduce red tape, reduce bureaucracy and have more government-efficient spending, including allowing the Province of Quebec to run its own health care programs. That is not unreasonable. I think most Canadians agree.

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise tonight on the subject of Bill C-31, which is meant to help address the affordability of day-to-day life for Canadians. I want to start with what I often do in speeches like this, which is what I appreciate about what is in this bill.

We see the beginnings of a dental care program in the bill. When I knock on doors in my community, as I have for the last four years, and I ask my neighbours what is most important to them, so often I hear some variation of an interest in truly universal health care from mental health to eye care and dental care as well.

In this bill, there is a proposal for an interim dental benefit for children under the age of 12, for those without dental coverage already and with an income of less than \$90,000 in their household, providing their parents or guardians with upfront, tax-free funds to cover dental expenses eligible back to October 1 of this year. If this House passes Bill C-31, it would provide payments of up to \$650 per child. This is an important, necessary measure and it is being proposed because it has been prioritized by this House, specifically in the supply and confidence agreement between the governing party and the NDP.

Government Orders

That being said, it is unfortunate that there are some items, like funding the Canada disability benefit, that are not there and are not being similarly prioritized. There are also other items in this same agreement that are not being followed all together, like addressing the climate crisis through early moves to phase out fossil fuel subsidies through public financing.

What we are actually seeing in this year's budget is a new fossil fuel subsidy being introduced. It is a tax credit for an unproven technology called carbon capture and storage to the tune of \$8.6 billion a year. What is encouraging and what I am glad to see in this bill is parliamentarians working together for what is in the best interests of Canadians across the country, and dental care is a critical part of that.

The second part of this bill is, in my view, a missed opportunity. There is a \$500 rental housing benefit proposed in the bill. As is the case in many communities across the country, in Kitchener, the average rent is around \$1,725 a month. This benefit is a drop in the bucket in the midst of a crisis. More importantly, it does not address the root cause of this crisis.

I would like to suggest that we start by naming and being clear that this is a housing crisis that we are in across the country. As I do that, I also want to help my colleagues understand what that looks like in my community specifically.

There are a lot of parliamentarians in this place who like talking about things that have tripled. It is a dubious claim, but this one is actually quite accurate. The homeless population in Waterloo region has tripled from just over 300 to over 1,000 people who are living unsheltered. Those are members of my community who we are collectively letting down.

Homes continue to become increasingly unaffordable. As I mentioned rent earlier, we can talk about house prices also. Since 2005, house prices have gone up 275%, when wages have increased a meagre 42%.

What does that mean? It means that back then, house prices were three times more than the average annual income. Today, they are eight times more than the average annual income. That means, for a young person in my community, buying a home is not even an option and, increasingly, renting one is not either. For those who are on the wait-list for an affordable one-bedroom unit, that wait-list is almost eight years.

It is obvious that all levels of government, the federal government included, need to meaningfully address this crisis. The federal government, in my view, has two ways of doing this. One is recognizing that the federal government has the largest budget of any level.

It is why I am glad in this year's budget we did see \$1.5 billion in the rapid housing initiative and another \$1.5 billion for co-op housing. This is getting us closer to the level co-op housing used to be funded at. I would encourage the governing party to ensure that this money is spent and that in future budgets we get closer to where those funding levels were.

• (2255)

The federal government, of course, also sets the market conditions, and this is where we have the conversation about it being only supply and demand. Well, that is not totally true. It is supply and demand within the conditions the government sets. Homes should be places where people live and not commodities for investors to trade. If some corporate investor wants to make a bunch of money, I would encourage them to invest in the stock market and not do it on the backs of young people and other low-income folks in my community.

The governing party could fix this by removing incentives for corporate landlords to treat our housing market like the stock market. I will give an example. I was speaking with Omar in my community last week. He is lucky that his rent is a fairly reasonable amount. The institutional investor who owns the apartment building he is in recently painted the exterior of the building, and then Omar saw the rental notices coming in slowly, with increase after increase beyond the Ontario guideline. They demanded that he pay for these increases with interest on top.

Omar is lucky in that he knows this is not appropriate. He knows that this is a bullying tactic by his landlord. All the same, there is a level of anxiety when he gets a notice in the mail saying there is interest due on top. However, he knows what the landlord is really doing: trying to bully him to leave so that when he does, they jack up the rent. This is what we are seeing in communities across the country, and in this place we have a role to play to address it.

One example of these institutional landlords is real estate investment trusts, which have grown their ownership portfolios. In 1996, they did not own any rental suites across the country. Today, they own nearly 200,000. In fact, institutional investors across the country today own between 20% and 30% of our country's purpose-built rental housing stock. We do not know exactly how much, because another issue is that we do not have proper disclosures from these corporate investors in our real estate market and in our homes. However, we do know that they are in housing not for what they can contribute, but for what they can take out of it, which is the largest return possible.

This is the reason I introduced Motion No. 71 on the floor of the House. It calls for simply taxing real estate investment trusts, one type of corporate investor, at the regular corporate tax rate, without the exemption they currently enjoy and that currently tilts the market in their favour. If we did that, it would be a new revenue that we could use to invest in the affordable housing that I am pretty sure almost every parliamentarian in this place wants to see built.

Government Orders

One way to build more of it is to ensure that large corporate investors are paying their fair share and that we use the revenues to build that housing. It was a Conservative finance minister back in 2006 who began to remove some of these tax exemptions for various income trusts. I would encourage the governing party to simply take the text of this motion and put it in the fall economic statement and budget 2023. In fact, it could announce this tomorrow, if it likes, to ensure that we address the fact that homes should be places for people to live and not commodities for investors to trade.

We will often hear that we need to do more studies. Well, the good news is that the studies have already been done. The Shift Directives have called for the removal of a tax exemption for real estate investment trusts. The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate has called for the same, in a study written by a researcher from the University of Waterloo, Martine August, as has the Social Development Centre Waterloo Region in my community. From local groups to national groups, there is a unified voice saying this is a reasonable measure that will meaningfully begin to address the commodification of housing.

In conclusion, as is the case for my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, I will be proudly supporting this legislation since it includes important measures that go in the right direction. However, if the governing party is serious about addressing the housing crisis, I would encourage it to demonstrate that through more meaningful legislative action.

● (2300)

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, that was a very important intervention at a time when the cost of living issue is so critical for Canadians. I just want to give a word of advice, or make a comment, related to the fact that we can do multiple things at once.

The member speaks about the need to make sure we tackle the real estate investment trusts that are ravaging low-income communities, including my own in Edmonton Griesbach, but I want to mention dental care and getting support to young Canadians, 500,000 of them. Would the member please elaborate on the fact that this benefit is going to be of such immense benefit to the people in his community and to children in particular? Would he talk about how dental care is going to change the lives of so many children in his riding?

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, absolutely. It is the reason I started my speech with exactly that. I think it is important that we work toward a sense of what is the common ground in this place.

What I appreciate about what is in this bill is that it is moving us toward dental care. I have heard the member for Edmonton Griesbach speak about how important that is for his community, and it is for mine also. It is an important measure that is only happening as a result of collaboration among parliamentarians in this place.

What is also true is that this is a missed opportunity. The \$500 benefit is not going to meaningfully address the housing crisis. There is an opportunity for the governing party to go much further here.

Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with a lot of what my hon. colleague had to say. I will go back to

one of the points where we might disagree, but I will ask the question in a reasonable manner.

He mentioned budget 2022, which included incentives for carbon capture. I know that he and I differ on our ideology and vision about the transition toward a low-carbon economy. I think Canadian oil and gas is still going to play an important role in the days ahead, particularly after the war in Ukraine, which is continuing. We have talked about changing geopolitical patterns from a trade perspective.

Just recently, oil and gas companies announced 25 billion dollars' worth of investments in this. I take notice that it is not the only technology that should be driven forward, but notwithstanding that he may not completely agree with it, does he at least recognize this as an important change from the private sector that the government is helping to enhance, among the other measures we are pursuing?

● (2305)

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I think if we had more questions addressed in the way the member for Kings—Hants just did, this place would be much more productive.

He is right. We do not agree on this, and we have spoken about this in the House before. However, the reason we do not agree is not ideology; it is science. We are in a climate emergency. As a result, it is my view, and that of many advocates across the country, that this is not a time to be giving oil and gas companies more money to invest in unproven technologies. Rather, let us give it to homeowners and workers across the country to invest in the proven solutions that we already know. To put it another way, if the oil and gas industry thinks carbon capture is so great, it can invest in it itself. It should not take \$8.6 billion of taxpayer money to do it.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry—Suroît, BQ): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague's speech. It was rigorous and well researched. We can see that he knows his constituents and his community. It is always moving to see members who have such a good understanding of the needs of their community.

My question is quite simple. The federal government is known to have dabbled in social programs in the past. For example, it funded a program for the homeless for a few years. Then it changed the rules of the game and disengaged.

Who got stuck with the full bill and less funding? It is the provinces.

Is my colleague not concerned that by becoming involved in a major program without the provinces' agreement, the federal government is meeting a need but that the provinces will not be able to cover the cost down the road and will have to pay the political price?

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Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, I will quickly respond to my colleague from Salaberry—Suroît by saying that, in my opinion, it is important that all levels of government work together with all the tools at their disposal.

I believe that the federal government has a role to play in this country with respect to health care. That is why I support this bill.

[*English*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when I was elected in 2015, I committed to the constituents of the riding of Waterloo that I would listen to the diversity of their voices and represent them in this place.

Tonight, we are here until midnight to debate Bill C-31, an act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing, as it became the only way to bring it to a vote. I hear from many constituents, and it is important that I rise and share what this legislation would do.

This legislation would enact the dental benefit act. Dental care is essential to overall health, yet in Canada, one-third of the population cannot afford it. Our support of the development of a national dental care program is part of our government's commitment to improving and strengthening Canada's publicly funded health care system. Also, this legislation would enact the rental housing benefit act, which would provide a one-time \$500 payment to eligible renters. This benefit would provide a one-time Canada housing benefit top-up payment of \$500 to 1.8 million renters who are struggling with the cost of housing.

I will focus my comments on what our government is doing to help Canadians and constituents within the riding of Waterloo. The steps we are taking are in direct response to what we have been hearing from Canadians.

In Waterloo, I hear from constituents who have shared that it is becoming increasingly challenging to find a safe and affordable place to call home. We know that the high cost of living is making affordable housing even less attainable for far too many Canadians, particularly renters in communities across the country, including in the riding of Waterloo.

I hear from constituents who are receiving some much-needed relief through benefits that our government has advanced. I have two examples: first, the tax-free Canada child benefit, which is helping families with children who need it most; second, the Canada housing benefit, which is co-funded between the federal and provincial or territorial governments and is delivered by the provinces and territories. To make this happen, our government worked with provinces and territories to create 13 Canada housing benefit initiatives, one for each jurisdiction, which are based on local needs and priorities.

Our government firmly believes that Canadians deserve a safe and affordable place to call home, and that is why we are making historic investments to rapidly create more affordable housing for communities through our \$72-billion national housing strategy.

The national housing strategy is having a direct benefit in the region of Waterloo. Last year, our government announced an investment of \$8.2 million for the rapid housing initiative. This invest-

ment, and a partnership between the YWCA, the City of Kitchener and the region of Waterloo, is designed to support women experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness. This year, 41 women each got an apartment in this newly built complex home. Listening to local needs, this investment is part of the YWCA's supportive housing program and includes mental health and addiction supports onsite.

This year, our government announced investments of \$7.1 million for two more projects in the region of Waterloo. The first project, managed by the KW Urban Native Wigwam Project, will see 30 units created for indigenous people, and 16 will be for indigenous women and their children. The second building will be administered by OneRoof Youth Services and will see the creation of 44 supportive housing units, including 25 units for homeless people, 15 units for people with mental health or substance use issues and four units for indigenous peoples.

This year, the Government of Canada also announced an investment of \$15 million in an affordable housing project geared towards low-income tenants and other vulnerable residents, including those with mental health challenges or physical disabilities and members of the indigenous communities.

There are many other examples I would like to share, as it is too often that we do not share the benefits and outcomes of the investments that our government is making.

I have met with constituents, and these people have shared what having a safe and affordable place to call home means to them. They shared how having a home allows them to better contribute and live authentic, meaningful lives. They shared that they appreciate the investments that are coming from the Government of Canada, and I admire how they continue to advocate to ensure we build more units. They continue to advocate for our government to do more because we all believe that every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home.

● (2310)

The legislation we are debating today includes a new one-time tax-free \$500 federal benefit for eligible Canadian renters that is 100% federally funded. This one-time top-up would not reduce other federal income-based benefits, including the Canada workers benefit, the tax-free Canada child benefit, the goods and services tax credit and the guaranteed income supplement.

An estimated 1.8 million low-income renters, including students who are struggling with the cost of housing, would be eligible for this new support. This payment would be launched by the end of the year, pending parliamentary approval and royal assent of this legislation, and that is why I call on all colleagues to see swift passage of this legislation.

It is okay for members to disagree. Members of Parliament are elected to represent their constituents, and rest assured, I hear from a diversity of perspectives. I believe we should all stand in our place and vote.

Government Orders

It is clear that I will be supporting this legislation, as a top-up is part of our government's plan to make housing more affordable for Canadians. Our plan also includes measures to put Canada on the path to doubling housing construction over the next decade, to help Canadians save for and buy their first home, and to ban foreign ownership and curb speculation as they both make housing more expensive for Canadians.

We know Canadians are feeling the rising cost of living. We in this House can do something about it. We have been hearing from many people who are participating in this debate. There is definitely at least one party that has a challenge with the government working with other parties to be able to deliver better outcomes for Canadians.

When I was running for office and knocking on doors, Canadians said they expect us in this House to work together to deliver for them. It is not about partisan politics. This is the House of Commons, where we represent the diversity of perspectives we are elected to represent.

There are people in the riding of Waterloo who may choose not to vote for me, but what they have to say matters to me. I, as their member of Parliament, as their elected representative, find it important and necessary to listen to the diversity of their perspectives. That is what debate is all about. My role as a member of Parliament is to represent them here.

I also hear that Canadians want us to work across different levels of government. It is true different levels of government have different jurisdictions and different responsibilities. However, we have demonstrated time and time again that with the federal government being a partner and working with the provinces and territories, we actually can do more to help the constituents we are elected to represent. I will not stop doing that.

This legislation has had a good debate, and it is really clear where all the parties stand. It is important we bring this to a vote. It will go to committee, and hopefully it will come back quickly so we can send it to the Senate for it to do its important work to ensure this benefit gets into the pockets of Canadians who are struggling. We talk about affordability all the time. We in this House can do something about it.

I have appreciated the opportunity to speak to this legislation tonight. It is important we not only talk about what more we need to do but also represent and reflect upon the actions we have taken and their outcomes. When I hear from people who now have a safe and affordable place to call home and I see the satisfaction they are feeling, I want to see more people in that spot. I will do whatever I can to represent their voices and to ensure every Canadian has a safe and affordable place to call home.

• (2315)

Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, this bill is going to spend another \$10 billion. The government's national debt is already over a trillion dollars. The latest update shows consumer debt is at \$2.24 trillion, which is a 16% increase from the prepandemic levels with about a 10% increase year over year from the second quarter of last year.

We are talking about the cost of living relief, but I am wondering how adding another \$10 billion to a program the provincial governments are not necessarily asking for is going to help. They are looking for other health care transfers and spending.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, the member's question clearly shows Canadians the approach of our government under the leadership of the Prime Minister and the approach of the official opposition.

When our government introduced legislation and lowered taxes on middle-class Canadians by increasing them on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians, the Conservatives vote against it. It is very clear who the Conservatives will continue advocating for. What I know is in my community people are looking for a safe and affordable place to call home. People are speaking to me about affordability and the crunch they are facing. People are trying to make ends meet.

We hear the Conservatives talk about it, but they do not want to propose any meaningful solutions. Today we have an opportunity to actually advance another solution. It is not the be-all and end-all, but it is another thing to help Canadians through very tough times. It is unfortunate the Conservatives cannot see that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague talked a lot about housing. She said that it is a challenge for her, that it is a problem in her riding, and that it is an important issue, and she is right about that.

Today, I was talking to someone who is very involved in the fight for new social housing in Quebec. This person is very involved with Quebeckers who are less fortunate and poorly housed. This person was pinning a lot of hope on the NDP-Liberal agreement. They thought that if the NDP had signed an agreement with the Liberals, then it must mean that something was going to be done about housing. They were expecting investments. When I told them about the \$500 under the Canada housing benefit, they were devastated. They said that this was not the right thing to do and that new housing units need to be built. That is \$500 being spent for nothing. Next year, we will have to start over. More housing needs to be built for the future. They were just devastated.

What does my colleague think about that?

[*English*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, it is interesting, because I think there are members within the opposition who are not understanding that this is another investment in Canadians. We have a \$72-billion national housing strategy, which is actually building units in communities across the country.

Government Orders

Often, we hear the Bloc saying that housing should be delivered through the provinces, but it does not want to believe in partnerships. The federal government has actually re-entered the housing space. Part of why we were not able to be proactive with regard to the issues we are facing is that certain people do not believe we can do more and work better together.

The federal government will be a partner with provinces and territories. The federal government will work with regions and municipalities. The federal government will be there to support Canadians, because we believe that every Canadian deserves a safe and affordable place to call home.

● (2320)

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, while the New Democrats welcome this benefit, more short- and long-term solutions are needed to address the housing crisis. I have a constituent in Whale Cove. He is the mayor, Percy Kabloona, who lives in a social housing unit that has not been renovated in five years. His house has split in half, and they use duct tape to keep the wind from coming in. I know that a lot more investments are needed.

Will the government invest in building sufficient units of social or co-op housing, with the necessary subsidies to meet the needs of those in core need?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Madam Speaker, the stories the hon. member is sharing, we are hearing. I will tell her that the federal government is committed to doing whatever it can.

Today, we are able to see this legislation advance because of a partnership between two partners, recognizing that outcomes matter and that we can work better together in this place.

I hope the member recognizes that the federal government is here to work with members of all parties, as long as we deliver better outcomes for Canadians. I will continue fighting for the constituents of the riding of Waterloo. I am confident that the member will—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. We are running out of time.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake.

Mrs. Laila Goodridge (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, what we are here to talk about late into the evening tonight is a huge inflationary bill. It is a bill that is adding tons of government spending, and I have some serious concerns about it.

One of the spaces where I have some real concern is over the fact that the delivery of health care is the purview and the jurisdiction of provinces. I have heard, many times over, members opposite say that the federal government has a space here because it has the power of spending. That is absolutely accurate: The federal government has the power of spending, effectively, in any space it wants, but the question is whether this is the best way to be spending this money.

My space on this is a serious question, and I have not heard answers from the government. Instead of it being the member for Kingston and the Islands getting up and trying to do a “gotcha”

question, I would love to hear answers, perhaps from the Minister of Health, as to what work happened with provincial and territorial governments to see what programs they had in place, so that we looked at best practices and took the best programs that existed in provinces and territories across the country and tried to build on those, rather than create an “Ottawa knows best” scheme. This is all this is.

This is not a dental program. This is not dental insurance. Members from the NDP keep saying that we are voting against this, and that members in the House have dental care. We actually have a dental insurance program, a private insurance program, like many Canadians have. We have a dental insurance program.

This is not a dental insurance program that the government is creating. That would be a dental program. What we would actually be getting is a convoluted program that would deliver money through a CRA application based on income, which would not take into account what I think are important factors, such as how many children are in the family. If we had consulted with provinces and territories, we might have found that provinces and territories take into account some of these things, whether it is a single-parent or a dual-parent family, or how many children there are in the family, some of these pieces. It is critically important.

Dental care does not cost the same in rural Alberta as it costs in downtown Toronto or in rural Nova Scotia. Dental care varies widely even in my own community. If I call dentists, trying to figure out the costs of a dental cleaning, it could vary widely, just in my own community. I think this highlights one of the issues with this program. It puts a lot of weight without actually having the program to support and make sure the children who need this the most are getting it.

We have heard many times over through these debates that 70% of kids across the country have access to some form of dental care through provincial programs that already exist. That means 30% of children do not have access. I am curious as to whether the government did any research to see exactly what that 30% of kids looks like, and how we could support that 30% rather than just make a program that is “one size fits all”, which is the easiest to deliver but does not necessarily put the resources where they are most needed.

Frankly, Canadians are struggling right now: they are struggling to pay their bills at the end of each month; they are struggling to be able to afford to live, and while this would help in the short term, it would not cover the dental costs for a lot of kids who are struggling right now. This might cover a piece or part of the program.

Have we looked into whether provincial governments that currently have programs in place might pull their programs back because the federal government would have this program in place, therefore costing the federal government even more in the long term? This is part of the problem of not working with the provinces and territories and fixing the health transfer.

We have seen all the territorial and provincial leaders sit down and come together to say they want to see higher health transfers. What we have not seen from the Liberal government is meaningful work to get to that solution, meaningful work to build a dental plan. This is a payment scheme at best. This is not actually a dental program.

● (2325)

This is what happens when the members of the NDP-Liberal coalition realize that they effectively have a gun or a guillotine held to their heads so that if they do not deliver on these promises by a certain date, we will be triggered into an election. They came up with a fast solution. I would argue that we need to not be looking at fast solutions. We need to be looking at the best solutions for Canadians. I do not believe that this gets there.

The fact is that this is an omnibus bill. It brings together dental and rental benefits. It is effectively two different departments with two different ministers, the Minister of Housing and the Minister of Health, but it is going to the health committee. This is a health bill, even though it talks about a rental benefit. I am not sure how a rental benefit and housing relate to the portfolio of health, but that was how it was decided. Those are some of the decisions that must be made with an omnibus bill, like which minister takes the lead.

I find it awfully rich. When the Conservatives were in power, the members opposite used to complain about the fact that there were omnibus bills and closure motions, yet the second the government came into power, it had no problem doing the exact same thing. It was a simple thing to complain as the opposition, but it was not an ideological space that they were in where they truly were in disagreement with us. They just did not like it being used against them.

I think it is sad that we are sitting here at 11:30 at night discussing a critically important bill that is going to add \$10 billion of spending at a time when we already have out-of-control inflation. We already have people who are routinely going to food banks to provide food for their children. Not having healthy food has to be a contributing factor to kids' dental health.

I can only imagine that this is a serious problem, but this is something that the government could have worked on. It could have put actual effort in to create a real program, working with provinces and territories to see which jurisdictions do it best and which ones are doing it poorly. I know in my home province of Alberta we have a dental care program that covers kids up to 18, including certain kids up to 19 as long as they are still in high school. I know that the thresholds are a little bit lower, in terms of the income thresholds, but they do have some qualifications in there for when there are multiple children or if it is a single parent. It even goes as far as adding to the income for the threshold based on how many kids over four children meet the age. I think that is an important qualifier.

I am not here to say that Alberta's program is the be-all and end-all. In fact, I do not know what all the programs look like. I know that the member for Kingston and the Islands really has a problem with the Ontario program and does not think it is sufficient.

Government Orders

What I would love to see would be for the health committee to be tasked with studying what the dental programs are across the provinces and territories and where we could find the optimal solution. That is something that I think has been completely missed in this omnibus bill, this bill that has been set with such strict time-lines that we might not even have a real opportunity to have witnesses at committee because of how soon the government is forcing us to go to clause-by-clause.

Frankly, that concerns me. I think that Canadians expect that important pieces of legislation with this level of spending would have extremely high diligence, expertise and hear from witnesses, but not by using stalling techniques or filibustering. Legitimately, we should have more than a few hours to hear from witnesses on a bill that adds \$10 billion of spending. I think that is part of the issue. The government is so quick to ram it down our throats and then say that we are stalling the bill.

The actual fact is that I would love to work with all members of the House. I do not think I am speaking out of turn by saying that most members from the Conservative side would like to work with the government, but what we see is this costly coalition continuously ramming its way through Parliament and disrespecting the fact that it is a minority Parliament.

● (2330)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, this question has been asked of a number of Conservatives this evening, all of whom have conveniently sidestepped it. I would like to ask this member the same question that has been asked and see if she can provide an answer or if she will sidestep it as all the others have done.

Why are Conservatives completely content with members of Parliament receiving dental care—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: They are heckling me. They are heckling me because they know where I am going with this. I would like to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I know the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Cold Lake is able to answer this, as I have just heard her speech. I would ask members to hold on and allow the question to be asked so the hon. member can respond.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, Conservatives know where I am going with this, so they are heckling me to drown me out because they do not want to hear the question.

An hon member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, they are doing it again.

Why is it that members of Parliament should enjoy the luxury of having dental care, while they are not willing to extend the same luxury to some of the most vulnerable people in our communities?

Government Orders

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, that is awfully rich coming from the member opposite, and if he had been here to listen to my speech, and intently listen, he would have heard that I addressed this in my remarks.

Frankly, what members of Parliament receive in terms of dental care is a dental insurance program. This is simply a spending scheme. It is not the same. Please do not misconstrue what this bill would do.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know the Alberta program she is talking about. I have, unfortunately, had to use that program. The Conservatives are upset with the fact that we are going to be delivering care to over 500,000 children.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, they are heckling right now. That is how badly they want to block this legislation and how badly they do not want those children to get that support. The Conservatives do not want that to happen.

I was raised 20 kilometres south of the member's riding. I had to enlist in that program and did not get the care I needed from that program. That is why this program is needed. Why will she not agree?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, again, if the member had listened to the speech that I delivered, I addressed the fact that I was not sure which program across this country was the best at delivering, but I do know that this is not a program to provide dental care. This is a payment scheme. This is not going to solve the problem long term. This is a band-aid.

Frankly, I want support for the 30% of kids in this country who do not have dental care, but this is not going to solve the problem to make sure that the kids who need it the most are getting it. This is only a band-aid solution so the Liberal government can tell its cost-ly coalition it succeeded.

• (2335)

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to the member's speech quite carefully, and I would ask the member if she would care to expand on one of the points she made, which is the cynicism with which this bill came about.

There is this coalition where one coalition partner put a gun to the other coalition partner's head and said it must give it a dental program. The government puts together this short-term payment band-aid, calls it a dental program, and the other coalition partner pretends that it is a dental program and cheers the government on for it.

Would the member care to comment on the cynicism around this bill?

Mrs. Laila Goodridge: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the amazing work he does for the constituents of Calgary Rocky Ridge and all of northwest Calgary. He is one of the hardest-working members of Parliament in northwest Calgary, if not the hardest-working member.

One of the things the member highlights that is critically important is that this is just a spending scheme. This is not a program. This is simply words to check a box. This is not the solution.

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I am proud to speak to the government's plan for making life more affordable for hard-working Canadians through Bill C-31, an act respecting benefits in relation to dental care.

I will begin my remarks by reminding the House why this legislation is necessary. More and more Canadians are feeling the rising costs of living. From food and rent to many other aspects of our daily lives, living standards are becoming more and more challenging to maintain.

While inflation is a global challenge brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and exacerbated by Russia's illegal and criminal invasion of Ukraine, it is critical for our government to help families weather the storm by putting more money back in the pockets of Canadians.

Since 2015, our 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.

Our government is working hard to make Canadian lives more affordable and ensure that they have access to support when they need it most. That is why we are proposing Bill C-31, which would deliver over \$900 million to support oral health through the Canada dental benefit, starting in 2022-23 for children under the age of 12 without dental insurance.

We are introducing this bill because we know the cost of dental care can be difficult for many families. This means parents have to make difficult choices to postpone or forgo important dental care for their children at a time when their teeth are developing.

In my community of Windsor-Essex, one in four residents do not have dental insurance. The results should surprise no one. In a 2018 report by the local health unit, the percentage of children with decay or requiring urgent care increased by 51%.

In each year, there are 1,000 emergency room visits for oral health problems. These preventable emergency room visits cost our community over \$500,000 each year. This dental program will be transformative for my community.

The gap in dental coverage is not just a Windsor—Tecumseh problem. Dental surgery under general anaesthesia is the most common day surgery at most pediatric hospitals in Canada, accounting for one-third of all day surgeries performed on children between the ages of one and five.

About 57% of children aged six to 11 have had a cavity, with an average of 2.5 teeth affected by decay. In more severe cases, tooth decay in young children is an infectious disease that can cause pain, interfere with sleep and growth, and cause lifelong impacts on their general health.

Giving Canadian families the means to improve their children's oral health through the Canada dental benefit will mean those children will have access to the care they need to improve their health and quality of life. It will reduce the need for more invasive and costly treatments later on.

The benefit proposed in this legislation would help break the cycle of poor oral health for the youngest and most vulnerable Canadians by making access to dental care for children more affordable.

The Canada dental benefit would provide direct payments to eligible applicants, totalling up to \$650 per year, and it is estimated that over 500,000 Canadian children could benefit from this targeted investment of over \$900 million.

To access the benefit, parents and guardians of eligible children would need to apply through the Canada Revenue Agency and attest that their child does not have access to private dental care coverage, that they will have out-of-pocket dental care expenses for which they will use the benefit and not be fully reimbursed under another government plan, and that they understand they will need to provide documentation to verify out-of-pocket expenses incurred within the benefit period. This could include providing receipts to the Canada Revenue Agency.

The government will be taking action to ensure that eligible Canadians receive the benefit as quickly as possible, ideally as early as this year if our Conservative colleagues co-operate. I certainly hope they do.

• (2340)

The target implementation date for the Canada dental benefit is December 1, 2022, pending parliamentary approval and the royal assent of enabling legislation. The program would cover expenses retroactive to October 1, 2022, so long as the child remains eligible on December 1.

Making life more affordable is one of our government's primary goals. Looking after the health of Canadians is another top priority. This dental plan addresses both.

In budget 2022, the government committed \$5.3 billion over five years, and \$1.7 billion ongoing, to provide dental care for Canadians who otherwise could not afford it. In addition to the Canada dental benefit, the government is working diligently to design and implement a long-term national dental care program, but this is complex work that will take time. It will take time to get it right.

The government is committed to working with key stakeholders, industry partners, academics, dentistry associations and organizations to help inform decisions on implementing a national dental care program. In the meantime, the proposed Canada dental benefit would provide parents with children under 12 with financial support to help address the dental care needs of their children.

Government Orders

I trust that all members will agree and join us in supporting this bill that will help families in my riding of Windsor—Tecumseh and also across this country. The government understands that parents want to do what is best for their children and that financial barriers should not prevent them from accessing the necessary dental care their children require. Passing this bill would be an important step toward protecting the oral health of children throughout Canada.

Mr. Stephen Ellis (Cumberland—Colchester, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is nice to have the final question of the night, and the final say perhaps.

One of the big things we would like to know on this side is exactly how many provincial ministers of health in the provinces and territories were consulted with respect to this bill.

• (2345)

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk: Madam Speaker, a lot of the members here have been dancing around this issue and providing complicated questions and answers, but the issue to me is quite simple. One in four residents in my community do not have dental insurance. As a result, what we are seeing every year is an increasing severity of oral health deterioration among children. This dental health benefit will address both of those issues. I think this issue is quite simple.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 11:45 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The question is on the amendment.

If a member of a recognized party present in the House wishes to request a recorded division or that the amendment be adopted on division, I would invite them to rise and indicate it to the Chair.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Ellis: Madam Speaker, we request a recorded division.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to an order made earlier today, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 19, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[*Translation*]

It being 11:47 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:47 p.m.)

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