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# House of Commons Debates

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Tuesday, November 1, 2022

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Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 1, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayer*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

### IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

**Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to subsection 94(1) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2022 annual report to Parliament on immigration.

Pursuant to Standing Order 32(5), the report is deemed referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

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### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2021 annual report on the RCMP's use of the law enforcement justification provisions.

This report addresses the RCMP's use of specific provisions within the law enforcement justification regime, which is set out in sections 25.1 to 25.4 of the Criminal Code. The report also documents the nature of the investigations in which these provisions were used.

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### OFFICE OF THE CORRECTIONAL INVESTIGATOR

**Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the 2021-22 annual report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator, as required under section 192 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

### ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ACT

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-303, An Act to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, allow me to briefly explain the why, what and how of this bill.

We have all seen the allegations of political interference with regard to the RCMP. I think a big reason for that is the way the RCMP Act is currently written. Currently, subsection 5(1) of the RCMP Act provides for the appointment of a commissioner “who, under the direction of the Minister, has the control and management of the Force”. This archaic provision has been and continues to be a recipe for lack of clarity and controversy.

The bill I am introducing today would amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act to clarify the scope of the directions that the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Emergency Preparedness can issue to the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Specifically, the minister shall not issue direction in respect to the following: any operational decisions, any matters respecting law enforcement decisions in a specific case, such as those relating to investigations, arrests and prosecutions, and any matter that would interfere with the commissioner's powers or authority. It would also require that all directions be issued in writing, tabled in Parliament and published in the Canada Gazette.

I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Hamilton Centre, for seconding this bill. I urge all parliamentarians to support this legislative initiative so that we have clarity of direction for the RCMP.

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

\* \* \*

### PETITIONS

#### GUARANTEED LIVABLE INCOME

**Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present a petition forwarded to me from the residents of Toronto—St. Paul's, the riding neighbouring Don Valley West.

*Business of Supply*

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to begin immediate negotiations with the Government of P.E.I. for the development and implementation of a guaranteed livable income project for Prince Edward Island. I have heard from many residents of Don Valley West about affordability, and this petition highlights the importance of continued support for Canadians during our post-COVID economic recovery.

• (1005)

FALUN GONG

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to present a petition, like so many others who have stood before the House, asking the government to establish a resolution to stop the Chinese communist regime from systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, to amend Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting and to publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

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**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. Alexandra Mendès):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—ARRIVECAN APPLICATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC)** moved:

That, given that,

- (i) the cost of government is driving up the cost of living,
- (ii) the Parliamentary Budget Officer states that 40% of new spending is not related to COVID-19,
- (iii) Canadians are now paying higher prices and higher interest rates as a result,
- (iv) it is more important than ever for the government to respect taxpayer dollars and eliminate wasteful spending,

the House call on the Auditor General of Canada to conduct a performance audit, including the payments, contracts and sub-contracts for all aspects of the ArriveCAN app, and to prioritize this investigation.

He said: Madam Speaker, I will begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

I am rising today in the House of Commons at a time in history where more Canadians than ever are saying that they are worse off financially than they were last year. In one month, 1.5 million Canadians had to use a food bank, and 20% of Canadians polled said that they had to skip meals because of the cost of groceries. To top it all off, the Jane and Finch food bank was forced to relocate

because the landlord raised the rent. More Canadians are using food banks because of inflation, which is affecting food prices, and food banks have to relocate because of inflation, which is affecting the cost of rent. What is causing this phenomenon? Obviously the cost of government is increasing the cost of living. A \$500-billion inflationary deficit is driving up the cost of the goods we purchase and the interest we pay.

Inflationary taxes further increase the cost of production of goods and services for our businesses, farmers and workers. That is “justinflation”. The government says that it was impossible to avoid this spending, which was entirely related to COVID-19. However, the Parliamentary Budget Officer told us that almost 40% of the spending announced since 2020 had nothing to do with COVID-19. Rather, it was related to discretionary decisions made by the government to spend more money.

Even some of the COVID-related spending was wasteful. The government continued to pay benefits to keep people off work, despite the fact that there were almost a million vacant positions. It also sent cheques to inmates and to public servants who were already employed but were still receiving the benefit. Lastly, there was the wastefulness of ArriveCAN, which we are discussing today.

We know that this was a huge waste of our money. The government spent \$54 million on an app that could have been developed over a single weekend for \$250,000. Moreover, we know that the app was unnecessary. Canadians have been able to cross the border without it for decades, and even centuries. Why did this app suddenly become necessary?

According to some, it was needed to show people’s vaccination status. Personally, I was against that requirement. However, even if I believed in the requirement, it was not necessary to develop an app. There were other ways of providing that information. In short, it was not necessary, it did not work, and it could have been developed at a cost of \$250,000 instead of \$54 million.

Also, we do not know where the money went. We asked that question here in the House of Commons, and the government tabled documents with a list of companies that received contracts, including ThinkOn, which was purportedly given \$1.2 million. The problem is that, a few days later, the company said that it never received the money. Ernst & Young was supposedly paid \$120,000, but, there again, the company said that it never worked on ArriveCAN.

A few weeks later, the government said that it was a mistake, that it thought it had paid these companies, but it was other companies instead who received that payment. There is obviously something fishy going on. The government does not want Canadians to know the truth. That is why the Conservative Party is introducing a motion in the House of Commons that calls on the Auditor General of Canada to investigate so that Canadians can know the truth.

*Business of Supply*

• (1010)

We will find out the truth. The government will have to answer to Canadians. In fact, at a time when Canadians are unable to pay their bills, it is an outrage to force them to pay \$54 million for such a useless waste of money.

[*English*]

As I stand in the House today, 20% of Canadians are skipping meals because they cannot afford the cost of food and 1.5 million of them are going to food banks in a single month. Speaking of food banks, one food bank at Jane and Finch was forced to move because the rent doubled. Food price inflation is driving people to the food bank and rent price inflation is driving food banks out of the neighbourhood. Meanwhile, Canadians tell pollsters that they are in their worst financial situation ever.

How did we get here? The cost of government is driving up the cost of living. A half-trillion dollars of inflationary deficits have bid up the cost of the goods we buy and the interest we pay. Inflationary taxes have increased the costs for businesses to produce those goods and services. The more they spend, the more things cost. It is just inflation.

The government said it had no choice but to add this half-trillion dollars to it. It had no choice but to double the debt or add more debt than all other governments in Canadian history combined. However, we know that is not true because the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that 40% of new spending announced in the last two years alone had nothing to do with COVID. It was discretionary spending.

On top of that, the money that was linked to COVID was often wasted. The government paid CERB benefits to people, even when there were a half-million vacant jobs and the economies had been totally reopened by provincial governments. It paid CERB cheques to prisoners. Even federal public servants who were employed managed to get their hands on CERB cheques at the same time.

We also know that the government tried to give half a billion dollars to the WE Charity, only to be caught by Conservatives who held it to account. Now we learn that it spent \$54 million on an app that we did not need, that did not work and that could have been designed for \$250,000.

We looked into this. We wanted to know where the money went and who got rich. The government tabled documents in the House that showed us that among the contracted companies, one was ThinkOn, which was paid \$1.2 million for QR code experimentation. The only problem was that the company, ThinkOn, said the government should dream on as it did not get the money. It said, "We have received no money from the CBSA". The government has since put out a correction saying it thought it gave ThinkOn \$1.2 million, but it turns out it did not.

It is a strange mistake to make. It is kind of hard to envision it happening. Did the government put a cheque in the mail and send it to the wrong address? Did it get an invoice from the company asking for reimbursement for costs and accidentally wrote the wrong name on the invoice? These are curiosities.

• (1015)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Conspiracies, not curiosities.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, no, they are not, but they may well be. In fairness, Napoleon said to never ascribe to malice that which can be explained by incompetence. That is a plausible theory for the government. At the same time, we need to know the truth.

When \$54 million goes out the door and government officials cannot get their stories straight about where it went, the least we can do is to have an audit. Put the Auditor General in charge. Look into these costs. Find out who got the money, who got rich and why we spent \$54 million on an app that could have been designed for a quarter of a million dollars.

Why did we waste this money when Canadians are paying so much? How could the government be so out of touch? We need answers. We need the truth. Support this motion and let us get to that truth.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition raised a very acute and real reality that many Canadians are facing right now. They are facing extreme hardships as a result of global inflation and as a result of what is going on throughout the world right now.

I will put to him the question that he has been asked several times in the House by the Prime Minister: Why did the Conservatives choose not to vote in favour of Bill C-31? That is the bill to give important relief to Canadians, in particular Canadians who needed it the most, Canadians he referenced in his speech.

Would the member be willing to share with the House now why Conservatives voted against that very important measure?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, we have since learned that measure would largely be gobbled up by administrative costs. As with so many Liberal initiatives throughout this pandemic, they have cost too much and delivered too little.

Insiders, bureaucracies and special interest groups have become fabulously wealthy over the last seven years and, in particular, the last two years. We know the WE Charity is one example. We know Frank Baylis, a former Liberal MP, got a special contract. We know that the SNC-Lavalin company, a favourite of the Prime Minister, got contracts to produce field hospitals that were never used.

There are countless examples of insiders getting rich while Canadians get poor. Conservatives will never vote for that.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, it feels a little like Groundhog Day. The Conservative Party opposition days keep coming and they are always the same. Today, they moved a motion that is essentially the same as the ones from last week and the week before that. They talk about inflation each and every time. It is not difficult to grasp the Conservatives' rhetoric: fewer taxes and more oil. However, that approach does not work.

A Radio-Canada article this morning reported that Canada ranks second in the G20 when it comes to public investments in oil and has invested \$8.5 billion U.S. over the past few years. Canada approved the Bay du Nord project, bought a pipeline, and is investing \$11 billion a year in oil. The Liberals are ahead of the Conservatives when it comes to oil. The Conservatives should stop complaining.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, I did not hear a question, I only heard a complaint that the Conservative Party was talking too much about inflation.

Is the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois talking to real Quebecers? When we speak with Mr. and Mrs. Tremblay, they talk about inflation. That is the reality. They are not talking about sovereignty or the king or queen, they are talking about their ability to buy bread and butter. That is the Conservative Party's priority.

• (1020)

[English]

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, despite the 2006 legislation brought forward by the now Conservative leader that he claimed would protect whistle-blowers, Canada's whistle-blower regime has been cited as being among the worst in the world.

Can the member explain why the Conservative government was not able to adequately protect whistle-blowers who raised questions about initiatives like ArriveCAN?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre:** Madam Speaker, we did introduce the Federal Accountability Act, which cracked down on corruption after 10 years of sponsorship scandals, billion-dollar boondoggles and other Liberal corruption.

[Translation]

That was dirty, illegal Liberal money.

[English]

The NDP was actually forced to support our Federal Accountability Act measures.

We will always work to make the law more strict. That is why we caught the Liberals with SNC-Lavalin, the WE Charity scandal and the Aga Khan island, on which the Prime Minister illegally vacationed. All of those scandals were exposed as a result of the Federal Accountability Act, which I was proud to shepherd through this House.

The real question is why the NDP continues to support Liberal scandal and Liberal waste today. Why does the member not start working for the people of Hamilton instead of working for the

Prime Minister? We on this side work for our constituents. We work for the common people.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Madam Speaker, from scandals to failed programs, spending Canadians' money is a favourite pastime for this costly coalition. In the lead-up to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Liberals had already added an additional \$110 billion to Canada's debt. That alone should have raised the alarm for any reasonable members across the aisle, but obviously it did not.

Instead, the money printers kept rolling to the tune of half a trillion dollars of new debt during the last two years, over half of which was not even COVID-related spending. In the last five years, overall government spending has increased by 44% while the size of an already inflated bureaucracy has just kept growing.

The Liberals dragged out their measures longer than any of our other allies when it came to COVID restrictions, using political science instead of real science. Countries with lower vaccination rates reopened faster and they removed barriers to business and tourism. Those countries did not persecute their citizens for making personal choices. Meanwhile, in Canada, we remained restricted to much of the world as the Liberals continued spending on random testing, forcing Canadians into quarantine and keeping loved ones apart.

ArriveCAN is exhibit A of the government's failed drawn-out COVID policies. At \$54 million, one would expect an app that could not only do what it was promised to do but that would prevent disruptions to people's lives by making it easier to travel. What taxpayers got instead was an app that failed at nearly every turn. ArriveCAN turned out to be arrive scam.

Because of one glitch, over 10,000 healthy, fully vaccinated people were forced into government-mandated quarantine. Those who did not comply received threatening emails, phone calls and even visits from law enforcement. Travellers entering Canada were even fined because of the app. Seniors were threatened with \$5,000 fines if they did not have the app, even when they did not own a phone.

After over 70 updates, the app still failed and never lived up to the tens of millions of taxpayer dollars the Liberals forked over. This is money that, it turns out, cannot even be accounted for. CBSA originally said that ThinkOn received a \$1.2-million contract related to ArriveCAN. That was news to the company, which said it does not provide the mobile QR code scanning and verification services that CBSA said it paid ThinkOn for, and the company never received payment from the Liberals.

*Business of Supply*

Now CBSA is saying that Microsoft received the \$1.2 million. While the government figures out where it was spending all this money, Canadian developers were proving how big of a waste of money arrive scam really was. It took the CEO of a Toronto technology company and his friends a weekend to clone the app and show how fast and cheap it would be to build. In all, it should have taken two days and cost \$250,000 to build the junk the government paid \$54 million to create.

This is a symptom of a more significant problem. It again shows Liberal misspending is costing Canadians. Since taking office, the Prime Minister has had misspend after ethics violation after scandal. All of this was at taxpayers' expense. From vacations on private islands to politically interfering in the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin, resulting in the Prime Minister firing two strong women cabinet ministers, he has proven himself not to be trustworthy. It again showed when he gave the federal contract to the WE Charity to administer the almost billion-dollar Canada student summer grant program.

Liberal misspending also extends beyond arrive scam. My colleague from Calgary Nose Hill recently received a response to her Order Paper question, where we learned that the estimated cost to run the random testing at airports was at least \$411 million. That was half-a-billion dollars spent on random testing in the year they were shutting it down. This spending was on top of the \$150 million the Liberals gave to their old friends at SNC-Lavalin for field hospitals that were not even used. The government gave another \$237 million to a former Liberal MP for ventilators that were not even used.

Even before the pandemic, the Liberals spent \$12 million on new fridges for Loblaws while small businesses received higher carbon and payroll taxes. There is also the \$35 billion the government spent on the Infrastructure Bank, a bank that has done nothing to help build infrastructure in Canada. Instead, this bank spent \$5.7 million in short-term bonuses to 79 employees in the past five years.

- (1025)

There are so many other things that \$35 billion could have been used for, such as addressing the housing supply shortage to prevent home prices from soaring, building energy projects to keep gas and home heating bills down this winter, and finally connecting rural Canadians to the Internet and stable cell service. Instead of showing fiscal restraint, the Prime Minister has spent and spent, and Canadians are the ones who have to pay the price.

The tourism industry, before the pandemic, was valued above \$100 billion and now is down to \$80 billion. After spending \$54 million, we have clogged up airports and delivered a massive hit to one of Canada's largest industries, which has cost us jobs and businesses.

It is not just tourism. The inflationary spending of the government has meant higher prices, while failed policies like the carbon tax and cancelling energy projects mean more dollars chasing fewer goods. That is just inflation.

Our agriculture sector is hurting as farmers, ranchers and other food producers cannot afford to run their equipment, heat their

barns or buy feed for their livestock. The energy sector continues to get squeezed by "leave it in the ground" policies and the tripling of the carbon tax.

What this means for Canadians is less money in their pockets and impossible choices between heating their homes or putting food on the table. Among Canadians, one in five are cutting back on meals or skipping them altogether. In one month alone, 1.5 million people visited a food bank in this country, and one third of them were children.

Home and rent prices are out of reach for too many Canadians and their families. Instead of addressing inflation, the government has forced the Bank of Canada to raise interest rates, making mortgages even more expensive. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister spent \$24,000 in four nights on a hotel in London, the same amount that an average rent of one year costs here in Canada.

The situation is desperate for Canadians, who are doing what they can to save money however they can, yet they look at the government and see wasteful spending and scandals. It truly is more critical than ever for the government to respect taxpayer dollars and eliminate unnecessary spending, such as the arrive scam app.

I rise today to support this motion to have the Auditor General conduct a performance audit on ArriveCAN. It is time that Canadians get to see where the payments really went, who really got the contracts and sub-contracts, and whether, in the end, the Prime Minister was telling the truth.

The arrive scam app is a symptom of the larger problem. Canadians cannot afford any more of the costly coalition. They are out of money, out of patience, and done with this. Liberals need to stop the pain, stop the carbon tax, stop spending and stop raising taxes.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, if we combine the two speeches from the finance critic and the leader of the Conservative Party, we get a message that they have been consistent on for a long time.

*Business of Supply*

First, there is the issue of character assassination. The Conservatives creep under a rock or get in a gutter to attack, whether it is the Prime Minister or any other minister. That is one of their objectives. The second one now is dealing with the issue of inflation. They close their eyes, dunk their heads in the sand and pretend inflation is something unique to Canada. Here is a reality check: Inflation is happening around the world.

Yes, we are concerned about inflation, and that is the reason we bring forward bills such as Bill C-31. The Conservative Party voted against that bill, even though it would support Canadians in a very real and tangible way.

I have a question for the critic of finance of the Conservative Party. Why is it that the Conservative Party refuses to reflect on reality? Yes, we have serious inflation in Canada, but it is better than in countries, such as the U.S., England, those in Europe and so many others. Why will the Conservatives not support initiatives to support Canadians?

• (1030)

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:** Madam Speaker, of course we are consistent. The Liberals give us enough ammo with all their corruption, scandals and wasteful spending. Of course we are going to stay on the same topic all the time. All those things are costing Canadians more money, driving more seniors, children and families into food banks, and we do not see an end to any of this spending. The Liberals need to stop the spending, stop the pain and stop sending more people to food banks.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I will clarify the question I asked my hon. colleague earlier.

I agree with the premise. Canada and Quebec have a huge inflation problem. People are struggling to get by. Food and rent are expensive.

This morning's article revealed that Canada invests \$8.5 billion in the oil industry every year. Canada's public spending on fossil fuels is the second-highest in the G20.

Does my colleague think that \$8.5 billion could be better spent on things like building social housing, sending cheques to struggling seniors and transferring money to health care systems in dire need, such as Quebec's?

[*English*]

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:** Madam Speaker, did the member walk here, or did he get here on a plane? The reality is that Canada has the most responsible energy sector in the entire world. The world needs more Canadian energy.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the New Democratic Party will take no lessons from the Conservative Party, which sent Jason Kenney to Alberta. He became premier, and guess what? He lost \$4 billion of taxpayer money.

Does the member have any answers for that?

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:** Madam Speaker, it ought to take lessons from us, because it keeps teaming up with and propping up the Liberals over and over again. It is a costly coalition, which Canadians can no longer afford, and which keeps sending more people to food banks. The NDP needs to answer to Canadians.

Why does it keep supporting and propping up this corrupt, unethical and incompetent Liberal government?

**Mr. Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member went through a litany of Liberal failures, excessive spending and corruption.

In the last three years, as the Canadian government has grown in size, and people have lost their jobs, we have seen examples such as the Department of Fisheries and Oceans growing by 4,300 net new jobs in the last three years, 1,000 of which are in finance and HR. I guess they have a lot of HR problems in fisheries.

The only place in this economy that seems to be growing is government jobs. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan:** Madam Speaker, it is more and more of an example of the government creating more Ottawa jobs and not helping our small businesses create jobs. Small businesses are the real job creators in this country.

We know that, over the pandemic, the Liberals bragged about more jobs being created. The reality is that more than 85% of those jobs were created in the public sector, not the private sector. The government has done the best job it could to drive down small businesses and make investment run away. By not supporting our energy sector, it has driven away good jobs and great energy.

• (1035)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise to speak to this opposition motion, which has been brought forward by the member for Carleton.

I am going to come to the substance of my remarks shortly, but before I do, I want to say that, listening to the Conservatives this morning, it seems that throughout the pandemic they have suffered from some amnesia.

The very federal spending and investments this government put into place during the course of the pandemic included many initiatives the Conservatives voted in favour of. As one of my colleagues was reminding me this morning, when it came to CERB, the Conservatives were advocating that it was a federal program that ought to have been increased and enhanced.



There is, regrettably, some cognitive dissonance in the lack of ability of our Conservative colleagues across the aisle to remember the very investments the government made during the pandemic to have Canadians' backs to help workers, families, seniors and young people were federal investment initiatives that the Conservatives supported. That is an appropriate background to bear in mind as we debate the merits of this motion.

As the Minister of Public Safety, I am always proud to talk about what our country is doing on all fronts to protect the health and safety of Canadians. In much of the work before us as parliamentarians, I am also pleased to help scrutinize how we are spending to do just that.

However, the wording of this particular motion is perplexing, to say the least, as the ArriveCAN app has been tenuously lumped in with a broader discussion about the cost of living. The measures we have introduced to protect Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic should not be confused with the cost of living topic. That said, if it is the will of the House to discuss our pandemic measures, including ArriveCAN, I am very pleased to do so today.

Throughout the pandemic, the government put in place the measures necessary to protect the health and safety of Canadians. We introduced the Canada emergency response benefit. We made sure to introduce wage and rent subsidies to keep businesses alive and to protect workers. Indeed, we put into place the public health-related measures necessary to keep Canadians safe, to facilitate travel, and to keep our economy moving, including the tool we know as ArriveCAN.

Let me preface my remarks further by saying that we have removed all testing, quarantining and isolation requirements for anyone entering Canada as of October 1.

[*Translation*]

Public health measures at the border were lifted on October 1, 2022, and people are no longer required to provide health information via ArriveCAN.

[*English*]

The government has taken a prudent, incremental and risk-based approach to adjusting our public health measures at the border. I am pleased to have this opportunity to explain that approach.

The goal has been simple. It is to reduce the risk of importation and transmission of COVID-19 and the new variants of concern. Our measures have both helped to reduce and monitor the risk of the importation and transmission of COVID-19 and new variants in Canada associated with international travel.

As the situation evolved, we worked closely together with our partners in real time, especially those at Health Canada, and we adjusted and eased measures based on the best-available data, associated risk and the latest available scientific evaluations.

At every phase of the pandemic, we took careful steps based on the epidemiological situation in Canada, as well as the international situation. We saw that restrictions were lifted in domestic jurisdictions, as they were internationally. We saw that the latest science told us that Canada has now largely passed the peak of the omicron

### *Business of Supply*

BA.4- and BA.5-fuelled wave. The largest urban areas are showing decreased levels of the virus, and with some regional variation remaining across Canada, we are now in a much better position.

In no small part, that is also thanks to the actions of Canadians themselves. We have seen a high uptake in vaccination rates and strong adherence overall to common sense, evidence-based public health measures. We have more tools now, such as rapid tests, to help prevent the spread of the virus, as well as better treatments.

Just recently, the World Health Organization indicated, “We have never been in a better position to end the pandemic. We are not there yet, but the end is in sight.”

● (1040)

Today, I am pleased to say that based on all these considerations, we have now removed all COVID-19 border requirements for all travellers entering into Canada. That includes the removal of all federal testing, quarantining and isolation requirements. Relevant to this motion today, it includes removal of the mandatory submission of health information in ArriveCAN.

[*Translation*]

As I said, as of October 1, 2022, travellers are no longer required to provide health information via ArriveCAN.

[*English*]

Allow me to parse this further. All travellers arriving in Canada are no longer required to be vaccinated against COVID-19 or subject to COVID-19 testing, quarantining or isolation requirements. Travellers no longer have to submit their public health information through ArriveCAN. However, travellers may, on a voluntary basis, use the optional CBSA advance declaration feature in ArriveCAN to submit their customs and immigration declaration in advance of arrival if they so choose. It has saved travellers time, and it continues to be available at Toronto Pearson, Vancouver and Montréal-Trudeau international airports. Border officers have the authority to screen passengers for illnesses, and not just COVID-19.

With respect to the motion's language on the efficiency of ArriveCAN, I can offer some further insight from a public safety perspective. It was imperative that we had ArriveCAN as a tool. It helped us to collect necessary health information while facilitating travel and border processing. At the pinnacle of that information, we were able to screen whether or not travellers at the time had met the threshold for being appropriately vaccinated.

*Business of Supply*

It also allowed travellers to be processed efficiently and saved about five minutes of time at the border for each traveller, in what would have otherwise been a series of questions put to them by CBSA frontline officers. The information collected by ArriveCAN was mandatory at the time.

It had high ratings in the mobile app stores, and as of September 2022, ArriveCAN had been downloaded more than 18 million times. It was built with accessibility needs in mind. If not for the app, every traveller would have had to input their information manually, spending more time with a border services officer while the lines were growing longer.

The situation has now evolved. With the removal of public health border measures surrounding vaccination, testing and quarantine isolation requirements, travellers are no longer required to provide mandatory travel and public health information through ArriveCAN.

As noted, travellers can continue to use the optional CBSA advance declaration feature in ArriveCAN to submit their customs information, should they choose to do so. Data shows us that using advance declaration cuts down the amount of time a traveller spends at a kiosk by roughly one-third, which is significant. In the coming months, the optional CBSA advance declaration feature will also become available to travellers arriving at the Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Billy Bishop Toronto City, Ottawa, Quebec City and Halifax international airports. The CBSA is exploring other optional ArriveCAN features to provide a smoother, more efficient experience for travellers. This will be expanded to include travellers by land and other modes of entry, such as marine and rail, so that all can make use of the available technology to expedite and facilitate travel.

ArriveCAN has clearly been an important tool in our tool chest during the pandemic to keep Canadians healthy and safe and to facilitate the movement of people across the border. I want to remind the House that we are aware of the costs related to ArriveCAN. They covered many things. They were not just for the development of the app; there are many safeguards built into the procurement system. The proper processes were followed. An analysis of the costs associated with ArriveCAN is posted on the CBSA website.

All members can see that several professional service contracts were used for its development and maintenance. Contractors were selected based on their expertise and were compensated within the terms and the rigours of the policies that are put in place to ensure accountability and transparency.

All payments related to ArriveCAN were made in line with Government of Canada policies and directives on financial management, as managed through PSPC, and the maintenance of the internal controls framework.

Further, a review of the list of contracts is ongoing to ensure that Canadians and Parliament are provided with all accurate information. ArriveCAN served as an important tool to keep Canadians safe and to manage public health information at the border.

Moving forward, though, we cannot be complacent. That is why the Government of Canada will continue to work with international

partners to closely monitor the global epidemiology of COVID-19, and that is a very important part of our overall strategy.

● (1045)

The epidemiology of COVID-19 is different in other countries, and some are experiencing higher case counts than Canada is. Just as we have done throughout the pandemic, we will remind travellers to make smart, informed, common-sense decisions when considering travel outside of Canada, to ensure their health and safety.

The Government of Canada will maintain a capacity, obviously, to reinstate testing where necessary for monitoring purposes at the border, if and only if required, so that we are prepared and so that we can protect the health and safety of Canadians.

Colleagues, allow me to be quite clear. It is still important for individuals to remain up to date with their vaccinations; it is also important to get boosters when they become eligible, and it is still important to keep up with personal protective habits like hand-washing, wearing masks in poorly ventilated places and staying home if symptoms manifest.

[*Translation*]

Canadians can still help to protect themselves and others and reduce the spread of COVID-19 by getting vaccinated; getting boosters; wearing a well-fitting, good-quality mask; staying home if they have symptoms; and self-testing if possible.

[*English*]

There is no doubt that the last few years have been challenging. I want to thank all of our officials, our agencies and the frontline workers who have been rigorously there to help support Canadians through this unprecedented time. I also want to thank all colleagues in the chamber for this important debate.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank Canadians, because indeed it is they who have made the sacrifices; it is they who have been following the advice of public health care experts, and it is they who have gotten vaccinated. It is Canadians who have gotten boosted; it is Canadians who continue to show good, smart, common-sense practices when it comes to not only protecting themselves but each other, and that is at the very spirit of what makes this country strong, healthy and prosperous.

I welcome the opportunity to answer some questions.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I was stunned by what I heard from my colleague across the aisle. He would have us believe that there were no problems with ArriveCAN. One would think this was *Alice in Wonderland*. According to the member opposite it was a great success, when, really, it caused complete chaos.

Our constituency offices received complaints from people in a state of panic who were afraid of being fined. Now we are learning that the app cost a fortune and needed constant updates, and it still never worked properly, sending out incorrect notifications. According to the Liberals, though, everything went great. I am trying to understand.

Were the Liberals the only ones who actually figured out how ArriveCAN worked?

Maybe only Liberals could understand the app, or perhaps it was willful blindness.

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank my hon. colleague for his question.

The health and safety of Canadians is at the heart of the federal government's strategy. That is precisely why we implemented border measures and introduced essential tools like the ArriveCAN app, to prevent the threat of COVID-19 transmission.

The purpose of the app is to collect information and statistics in order to understand whether there are any risks for travellers arriving in Canada. Technology sometimes poses challenges, and I accept that. However, the government was always there and ready to work with our partners to make ArriveCAN more effective. That is why the app was needed during the pandemic, but it is no longer mandatory.

[English]

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his speech.

I would have to agree with the previous questioner on this. ArriveCAN was basically doomed from the start, because the government was requiring all Canadians re-entering Canada to use it. They did not have a choice. It assumed one had a cell phone, and it assumed one had the tech savvy to use the app. Many people did not.

I have a riding with six border crossings in it, and I had numerous complaints about how it failed people and sent them into quarantine when they should not have been sent into quarantine. Now we hear that it cost a ridiculous amount of money.

My question is this: Given that the government has spent more money in the last year on hiring IT consultants than it has spent on its own in-government IT workforce, will it really make sure that it builds a good IT workforce that we can depend on, that we have control over and that we have transparency on, so we can get things done with a good, moderate amount of money and have control over that?

• (1050)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, I take my colleague's point and I want to say two things in response.

First, with regard to the investments in ArriveCAN, at every critical stage we followed with great rigour the policies that were put in place when it came to procurement. We made sure we could get value for taxpayer money when it came not only to the creation of this app, but also, a distinction that is regrettably lost on the opposition, to the ongoing maintenance of the app, to ensure that we could

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address some of the challenges my colleague mentioned when it came to accessibility or other compliance issues. That is precisely why it is important as we debate this motion to look beyond just the development of the app, but rather to its ongoing maintenance as an essential tool at the time.

Second, there can be no doubt that ArriveCAN was an essential tool during the pandemic, precisely because it helped us to screen travellers as being vaccinated upon their entry into Canada. There ought not to be any debate in this chamber about what was and continues to be the most effective strategy to overcome COVID-19, and that is to get vaccinated. That is what ArriveCAN helped us do. It helped us to make sure travellers were vaccinated.

**Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it would seem that the debate today is all about ArriveCAN, and it should be, because the questions are very good.

The app was, first of all, mandatory, so I find it interesting that the minister bragged about how many people downloaded the app. They had to download the app; they did not have an option.

The real question is the \$54 million that it cost. We already know payments were made to companies who did not even know they got paid, and that all this money was lost. Will the government actually audit the money that was spent and figure out, number one, why it cost so much more than it should have cost for what it did, and number two, where all this money went that nobody knows about? Who got rich on this?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, there is a link to a CBSA website that lists exactly how the app was created in terms of the spending. We encourage this debate as a vehicle for transparency and scrutiny. We should all embrace ensuring that we are using taxpayer dollars in a way that is fiscally and transparently responsible.

However, the more important point that I want to make to my colleague across the aisle is that if he agrees, and I hope he does, that vaccinations are the most effective way to overcome COVID-19, a once-in-a-century pandemic, then surely a logical extension of that strategy is that it was a useful mechanism to have ArriveCAN at the border to make sure that travellers were vaccinated upon entry, not only for their individual safety but for the safety and security of all Canadians.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Madam Speaker, given that the entire day today will be occupied by a discussion of the ArriveCAN app, I want to put to the minister that there are deep divisions in this country that will persist for some time related to other issues in terms of how the COVID pandemic was handled. For example, we now see the Premier of Alberta deciding to block public health officers from allowing children to be masked in school, even if that is the safest way to protect our children. This reflects deep divisions.

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The current Emergencies Act inquiry, which is mandated by the Emergencies Act, helps Canadians see all sides of complex questions. I wonder if the minister's government would be open to a full review, engaging knowledgeable members of Parliament, including the member of Parliament for Yukon, who was the public health officer for his territory at the time, and really examine the medical and scientific information here.

Let us hear all sides so that we can have what I always aspire to as a lawyer: Can we have an agreed set of facts, so that Canadians do not go into the next decade without the unity that comes from understanding a shared set of facts?

• (1055)

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, I applaud and endorse my colleague's question. There is no doubt in my mind that we should all be concerned about the extent to which disinformation has proliferated on all of our online social media channels in a way that has made it very difficult to have thoughtful, responsible, fact-based debates in every aspect of life, including when it came to the public health measures that we took at the border and including on the necessity and the essential qualities of a tool like ArriveCAN.

I would be very open to working with my colleague and all members of this chamber to continue to examine the extent to which there is polarization in our country that is being driven very deliberately and consciously by the spread of disinformation. We need to come back to facts. At every critical stage in the decisions we took at the border, we looked at the facts and we looked at the evidence. That is what informed our decisions around ArriveCAN and all border measures.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, one thing I find most fascinating about the Conservative motion today is that it is about ArriveCAN. The minister responsible for this is here and the Conservatives let their first question go by. They were entitled to the first question and they let it go to the Bloc. They did not even bother asking the minister a question. Meanwhile, the member for Abbotsford was chirping away in the back row over there, heckling him the entire time.

I will go back to the opening comments of the minister today. He mentioned specifically the Conservatives' willingness to support programs that supported Canadians during the pandemic, but they did not only do that. The Conservatives actually fought to spend more.

Let us look at the Canada emergency wage subsidy. Originally what was introduced by the government versus what ended up being passed by the House was considerably more because the Conservatives wanted to spend more money.

Would the minister not agree that it is slightly hypocritical for the Conservatives to suddenly be so critical of the spending for which they voted in favour?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino:** Madam Speaker, I do think it attracts a certain curiosity that for two-thirds of the pandemic, it was the Conservatives urging the government, and I would say justifiably, to spare no expense and no effort whatsoever when it came to

procuring vaccinations, because it was a lifeline and that lifeline helped to save literally tens of thousands of lives.

If the Conservatives believed in that, if they believed that it was important for the government to get people vaccinated, then surely they ought to support an essential application at the border that allowed us to ensure the strategy—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to wash the member for Kingston and the Islands' mouth out with soap since I have had enough of his constant lack of respect.

I will begin by saluting my constituents in Trois-Rivières.

I will be sharing my time with the member for Terrebonne if she gets here in the next 10 minutes.

The worst obligation for a prince, may be—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I must remind him that we are not to mention the absence or presence of colleagues in the House.

The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, I was saying that the worst obligation for a prince is always having to cover things up.

Unlike the Conservatives, who were not pleased to speak to our motion last week, I am pleased to speak to the Conservative motion this morning. I am pleased to talk about it.

A lot of attention has been given to inflation. However, I will look at this from another angle, specifically, from an ethical perspective. Ethics is about doing the right thing. Currently I am concerned. I am concerned because the articles we read in the media leave us with a lot of questions. They leave us hanging. They pique our interest and then fail to report on what really happened with ArriveCAN. I am concerned and this is why.

For several years now, the government has made a habit of outsourcing its services. Many services have been outsourced to the private sector. Here we are talking about GC Strategies. Again and again, private firms are benefiting from the government's decision to let go of the expertise it should have internally. By outsourcing its services, the government is draining departments of their expertise, thereby becoming vulnerable to the whims of its outsourcers. I recently read a book about the McKinsey firm entitled *When McKinsey Comes to Town*. Companies like McKinsey advise governments and, on some level, influence public policy despite the fact that they are not elected. I am therefore concerned. I am concerned that the government is outsourcing this procedure and the related expertise.

GC Strategies knows all this. The company is a two-person intermediary that finds resources elsewhere. Without this intermediary, however, the government of Canada could not act. I am a little concerned about that as well. I wonder what that company had that the departments in question did not. Outsourcing worries me. I am concerned that companies are influencing public policy and making choices that governments should be making.

On several occasions, the government has shown a culture of secrecy and cover-ups. Secrecy means preventing others from seeing and knowing, and to cover up is to make believe. The government's culture is often to make us believe something other than the truth. We are kept in the dark. Essentially, there are some files, of which ArriveCAN is a prime example, that show us how secretive the government's intentions are. It does not want us to understand. I am concerned about this culture of cover-ups.

As they say, people who know they are serious tend to be clear, while those who want to look serious tend to be secretive. I think this applies here.

Basically, when I look at ArriveCAN from an ethics standpoint, what strikes me is the fact that they talk about trust. Trust is the foundation of life in society. Without trust, we are constantly asking questions, which, incidentally, is what we are doing now. Trust means not having to provide proof. When there is no trust, we need a facsimile or substitute: transparency.

When trust is not possible, we must content ourselves with transparency. However, trust is more important. Transparency enables us to see behind a policy, but trust enables us to live together. Montaigne talked about loving without hate and hating without love. That is what trust is, the ability to work hand in hand without always having to provide proof.

The thing I dislike about ArriveCAN is the constant need for proof, the constant need for one party or another to introduce a motion or go to committee to demand an explanation about what was done because we do not understand. It is never particularly clear.

When trust is not possible, we must content ourselves with transparency. When the government engages in dissimulation, it prevents us from seeing its intent. It is on the verge of lying. I am not saying that it is lying. What is lying? It is making someone do something they would not have done had they known the truth.

• (1100)

I travelled to Rwanda this summer, and I had a hard time entering my information in ArriveCAN. When I returned to Canada, no one even asked to see it. That is how useful it is. I was a little taken aback.

Once again, lying is what hinders communication between two entities. The government is not quite lying, but almost. That is when we need to act ethically. When we are lost in a fog of uncertainty, a grey area, we need to act ethically, which means that, in a discussion such as this one, I am going to focus a little less on myself and a little more on others. I will think about others. In a situation like this, I know that I am going to have to be open-minded to understand what is at issue.

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Above all, acting ethically means doing the right thing even when no one is watching. I have a story about this from classical philosophy. There was once an emir who had a ring adorned with a small diamond. By twisting the ring on his finger, he could become invisible. Well, he lost the ring, of course. It was found by one of his slaves, who put it on, twisted it around and went off to the harem. The rest can be imagined, but in all the excitement, the ring twisted back around and he became visible again. Let us say he had a rough day after that.

This is what I mean: Acting ethically means doing the right thing even when no one is watching. We, the opposition members, including the Conservatives who moved this motion, are watching. All we see is secrecy. We are not okay with that.

I would like someone to explain why the government used such a strategy, specifically an outside business that subcontracted its services. I do not know much about IT services, but I do not see how something would start at \$80,000 or \$250,000 and end up costing \$54 million, even though I understand that there are many things included in the cost breakdown. It seems to me that an organization as large as the Government of Canada should be able to do such work itself without resorting to this type of middleman.

I am curious and I would really like some help understanding this situation, shedding some light on it and getting rid of the secrecy. That is what I want, but I am not sure we will be able to do it.

I will quickly conclude by saying that, beyond the fact that the ArriveCAN app appears unnecessary, as I did not use it when returning to Canada, I find it outrageous that money is being spent frivolously and that we often accept it and just let it go.

Paul Valéry, an author that I really like, said that it is not the wicked who do the most harm in this world. It is the maladroit, the negligent and the credulous. The wicked would be powerless without a certain quota of the good.

It is time for the good people to stand up and say that enough is enough. I would like to get to the bottom of this.

• (1105)

[*English*]

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member talked a lot about trust and specifically about the arrive scam. However, there has also been a number of other indiscretions, including the WE Charity, the Aga Khan trip and others. The member talked about the impact of those. Many authors have written about trust and how that slows down the operation of business.

Are the people of Quebec starting to feel as though they do not trust the Liberal government?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very relevant question. Quebecers' trust in the Liberal government is waning.

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Given my past experience, I noticed that the culture of secrecy and cover-ups seems to be part of the Liberal Party's DNA, and that is a problem. Whether we are talking about the sponsorship scandal or things that happened before that, all of these cover-ups and this secrecy are not conducive to building trust, and yet trust is exactly what is needed today.

[English]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I love when we talk about the sponsorship scandal. I was in high school at the time, so forgive me if I do not remember the details of that.

On the topic of the last question asked, about trusting the Liberals, I wonder if the member from the Bloc could tell us how Quebecers feel about trusting Conservatives. They must trust Conservatives more than they trust Liberals. Is that correct?

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Kingston and the Islands for his question.

In Quebec, people trust the Bloc Québécois.

[English]

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Trois-Rivières, as he always provides a really high level of nuance in these very important discussions.

The hon. member referenced the need for transparency and trust. Having worked alongside him at the ethics committee, I know he will likely have a comprehensive answer to this.

At the heart of this, we have staffers, people within the public sector, who sometimes witness malfeasance or things that might be in conflict with the law. What suggestions does the hon. member have for enhancing whistle-blowing to allow public sector workers who see government malfeasance to step forward with adequate protections and supports to ensure that Canadians have access to information on what is happening in the back rooms of government?

[Translation]

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, I thank the member from Hamilton-Centre for his question. I work with him on the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, and his perspective is always refreshing.

First, Canada has the worst whistle-blower protection regime. Under the current regime, there is no way of knowing whether one person made 40 complaints or whether 40 people made one complaint. It is really anonymous and confidential. Second, the more specific the complaint, the easier it is to determine who the whistle-blower in question is. That is what we want to focus on right now. Under the current regime, the whistle-blower is done for in every case.

• (1110)

**Mr. Maxime Blanchette-Joncass (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. It is always very interesting to listen to him.

As he mentioned, the issue of transparency seems to be in the Liberal Party's DNA. I can certainly recall some of the scandals, such as the sponsorship scandal. More recently, public confidence in the institution and in the Liberal Party was shaken again because of the WE scandal. That \$900-million contract was awarded to members of the Prime Minister's family who were very close to him. In addition, an untendered contract for respirators worth nearly \$240 million was awarded to a former Liberal Party MP.

Today we are talking about the untendered contracts for the ArriveCAN app. The situation is understandable, but it is always the opposition parties' responsibility to raise the public's concerns about this transparency.

My colleague from Trois-Rivières spoke about the culture of avoidance and cover-ups. I would like him to explain how the government could be proactive in improving public confidence in institutions and, hopefully, in the Liberal Party.

**Mr. René Villemure:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his hard work.

There have been numerous scandals over the years. Contrary to what the member for Kingston and the Islands said, I was not born at the time of World War II, but I remember it. I was not born at the time of the Peloponnesian War either, but I remember it too.

The only way to restore confidence is to expose what happened and enable people to understand, to fully comprehend what is at stake.

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to start by taking the time to read the motion the Conservative Party moved today:

That, given that,

(i) the cost of government is driving up the cost of living,

(ii) the Parliamentary Budget Officer states that 40% of new spending is not related to COVID-19,

(iii) Canadians are now paying higher prices and higher interest rates as a result,

(iv) it is more important than ever for the government to respect taxpayer dollars and eliminate wasteful spending,

the House call on the Auditor General of Canada to conduct a performance audit, including the payments, contracts and sub-contracts for all aspects of the ArriveCAN app, and to prioritize this investigation.

Is anyone else getting that déjà vu feeling today? It is actually “déjà vu” in both official languages. Yes, it is déjà vu, because, once again, here we have a member of the Bloc Québécois rising in the House to ask the Liberal government questions about contracts awarded to party friends, contracts so redolent of collusion that even amateur detectives can identify it in their sleep.

We have just lived through an unprecedented event in our time. The government tried, in good faith, to react to the unknown. Is it any surprise that, in this situation, the age-old reflexes of the Liberal Party of Canada resurfaced? It is illegal but, after all, “a friend is a friend”.

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What did the government do? It did the same thing it always does when it does not know what to do: It threw money at the problem, hoping that it would go away. The federal government's management of the airports at the start of the pandemic was shamefully inept. Let us not forget that the City of Montreal had to send its own staff to tell people arriving in Canada that they needed to be careful about bringing in COVID-19. The government did not act quickly enough. It spent untold amounts of money on a shiny new app. It contacted two friends of the Liberal Party directly to take charge of the situation. After all, "a friend is a friend".

GC Strategies patriotically answered the call. The company said that of course it would help make Canadians safer in these troubled times and that it would find subcontractors capable of coding the app for a modest middleman's fee of 15% to 30% of \$9 million.

What were these people thinking? When I worked in the private sector, if I had suggested taking such a big cut simply for acting as an intermediary, I would not have kept my job for very long, but "a friend is a friend".

I have had the opportunity to work in the private sector, providing institutions in developing countries with training on contracting integrity. I worked in Mexico, Central America, Brazil and Palau, where we helped the finance department improve their contracting process. In any self-respecting country, contracts are awarded only after a rigorous process that prevents cronyism. Obviously, that is not the case in Canada.

In the interest of justice and fairness, the Bloc Québécois believes it is important to ensure that no one profits off of the COVID crisis. As the people of Terrebonne are facing the rising cost of living, it goes without saying that the government's contract-awarding process must be transparent. However, there have been many indications that the process for awarding the ArriveCAN contract was problematic. First of all, GC Strategies was handed an untendered contract. It was actually the government that reached out to the firm, which has only two employees. They did not develop the app, but rather acted as intermediaries for which they made a profit of between \$1.3 million and \$2.7 million. That is a pretty hefty fee just to be an intermediary.

This is somewhat reminiscent of several other questionable contracts that have been awarded by this same government. Between 2017 and 2020, under the Trudeau government, WE Charity was paid \$120,000 across at least five contracts—

• (1115)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would remind the hon. member that we do not mention other members by name in the House.

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, thank you for reminding me.

Under the Liberal government, WE Charity was awarded at least five contracts worth \$120,000, as well as \$5.2 million in grants and contributions. WE Charity received a \$19.5-million untendered contract to administer and distribute \$9 billion in student grants. It was revealed that the Prime Minister's mother and brother received \$250,000 and \$32,000, respectively, for speaking at events organized by WE Charity between 2016 and 2020. Moreover, the

daughters of the former minister of finance also work, or at least they did at the time, for the charity, one paid under contract and the other in a volunteer position.

Let us bring up another relatively recent event, although some people like to say that they were in high school when it happened. Okay, I was in high school, but it is still "recent" in terms of Canadian history. Everything is relative, but it is important to keep a cool head when governing, which is not the case here.

History always sheds light on the present. Let us remind the Liberal government of one of its most typical episodes, the sponsorship scandal. Frightened by the tie in the 1995 referendum on sovereignty, the Canadian government responded with a massive visibility campaign aimed at making Quebeckers believe that they could not live without the federal government's assistance, support and money. It spent a fortune to blanket Quebec in Canadian flags and, because, after all, a "friend is a friend", contracts were awarded to major Liberal donors, who hastened to return a large portion of their profits to the Liberal Party's election fund because "a friend is a friend".

Let us look at what has been done in Quebec. Once again, the Liberal Party is the poster boy for incompetent crisis management. The list is long and includes the airport and border control sagas. At the height of the crisis, the Government of Quebec asked the federal government to implement airport controls to limit the spread of COVID-19. As I said, the federal government did nothing. Instead of dealing effectively with the borders during the height of the crisis and following up on the isolation of travellers, the government developed its dysfunctional app too late.

The Government of Quebec also developed and launched a vaccine control app, which cost a lot less than the federal one because it used simpler, QR-code technology. For \$9 million, the equivalent of what the intermediaries earned, not those who created the app, the Government of Quebec launched a simple and effective app that was used by every business in Quebec.

I propose that we take stock at this point.

First, a pandemic hit the whole world. As usual, the federal government did not know how to react, even though the Auditor General had already presented a report warning the government that it was not prepared for a pandemic. The Auditor General had done that work just after the H1N1 crisis. The government's disastrous lack of pandemic preparedness had already been noted, but nothing had been done.

Then, hoping to avoid an even worse public relations situation, the federal government called on GC Strategies to find people able to create an app for managing airport traffic.

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Ultimately, not only did that app cost a fortune, but it also had intermediary fees, suggesting that the Liberals never forgot their good old *modus operandi*. To recap, in Quebec, our vaccine passport app, which involved literally every business and individual, cost \$9 million. As we know, however, a friend is a friend.

The Bloc Québécois supports the motion before the House today for two reasons. First, the money that Canadians entrust to their governments must be spent wisely, and it seems very possible that that was not the case with ArriveCAN. More importantly, and I hope my Conservative colleagues are listening to me right now, the pandemic was and still is a formidable preparation for future crises, first and foremost the climate crisis.

While the Conservatives do everything they can to ensure that it comes even sooner and the Liberals do nothing, that climate crisis is getting closer every day. When it hits us, the federal government will not be able to justify its usual ineffectiveness by saying, teary-eyed in apologetic tones, that a friend is a friend.

• (1120)

[English]

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member would agree with the following statement: A friend is a friend indeed; however, only when it serves Liberal greed.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, I wonder if we could generalize and use the term federalist because, in this case, some Conservatives were involved in the sponsorship scandal. However, it does seem to be more of a Liberal pattern in Canada.

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, on many points I would disagree with the member opposite. I would suggest that Canada did exceptionally well when going through the pandemic. We had a team Canada approach and it made a difference in a very real way. If I was allowed another hour, I would be more than happy to amplify every one of those points.

With regard to the whole issue of awarding contracts, hundreds of millions of dollars went out. There is no doubt about that. Members try to give the false impression that Liberal businesses were the only beneficiaries, when we had literally thousands of contracts going out. I can assure the member that they were not only for Liberal entrepreneurs, Conservative entrepreneurs and New Democrat entrepreneurs. I would suggest that even some Bloc entrepreneurs might have received some of these grants. To paint with a broad brush puts a negative image on all politics, no matter what political party one belongs to.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, I was looking forward to answering that question.

I find it impressive that a member would dare state without evidence that people from the Bloc Québécois may have benefited from the crisis. I will simply provide two figures: a little

over \$50 million and \$9 million. I think we can agree that such a large discrepancy should not happen within a large, unified country.

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the speech by the member for Terrebonne.

Naturally, she focused on the ethical dimension, including when she referred to the sponsorship scandal. I think she could have also referred to the WE Charity scandal, in which a billion-dollar contract was awarded to friends of the Prime Minister. There is also the famous respirator contract granted at the time to well-known Liberals without a call for tenders.

With ArriveCAN, we do not know who the contract was awarded to or how it was done. However, we know that the government will create a new program through Bill C-31, which has just been passed. That program will give \$600 cheques to people who receive dental care. However, it would seem that the government again needs private companies. Once again, they will need to contract out.

The government systematically contracts out to the private sector, but every time, it seems to benefit friends of the Liberal Party in particular. What does my colleague think about that?

• (1125)

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising that issue.

It is mind-boggling: All public services are dysfunctional. On the immigration file, there was a major revolution and no one is answering the phone anymore, even when MPs try to call. Do we really need to revisit the passport issue? I think everyone is still in shock.

At the same time, it is true that, whenever there is something important, it is contracted out. Does that not show a real management and leadership problem in the Liberal Party?

[English]

**Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Madam Speaker, in my riding of Port Moody—Coquitlam, the call to help out during the pandemic was heard strongly.

I am wondering if the member would comment on some of the businesses in her province that did not get even a sniff of Canadian procurement during the pandemic.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné:** Madam Speaker, I think the list is too long. I do not have enough time to list all the people who have benefited from contracts.

It is important to remember that we are here to talk about the awarding of a clearly questionable contract. We still agree on one thing, although we think the wording could have been a bit less populist.



*Business of Supply*

We agree that it is important, for the credibility of all politicians, to remember that the government managed the crisis well, but particularly that none of its friends were able to benefit financially from those contracts.

[*English*]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise this morning to speak to the opposition motion before us.

I think everyone in the House would agree that one of the most important responsibilities of the government, which some would say is a sacred responsibility, is stewarding public funds and ensuring that every single dollar is spent in the best interests of Canadians, that the government gets maximum value and that public contracts do not excessively line the pockets of private companies. That is why the motion calling for the Auditor General to conduct an audit of all aspects of the ArriveCAN app is so important and why Canadians should rightly be concerned.

There are a lot of different aspects we could talk about. We could talk about the fact that this app erroneously sent over 10,000 Canadians into quarantine and put them in jeopardy of \$750,000 fines, or we could talk about the delays ArriveCAN caused at the border, something that was of great concern both to travellers and border officials. It made people struggle, especially people who did not have access to the technology. However, the focus of today's motion, and appropriately so, is on the decisions the government made around procurement to spend millions of dollars on private IT companies to develop and maintain this app.

The biggest concern is the lack of transparency around the cost of development and maintenance, and there are a number of things we know. First of all, we know the original estimate for developing the app was \$80,000, and we know that somehow development and maintenance ballooned to \$54 million. We also know the government paid an IT staffing firm here in Ottawa nine million of those dollars. This is a firm that has no office, has only a handful of staff and did not actually do the work, but rather assembled a team of contractors and took a 15% to 30% commission. They were making millions of dollars off this.

Finally, we know that when CBSA was asked to produce a list of all the contractors involved in the development and maintenance of the ArriveCAN app, there were a bunch of errors in that list. The original list included companies that had nothing to do with the ArriveCAN app, and when they saw their names on the list, they had some pretty serious questions for the government. A company called ThinkOn Incorporated and Ernst & Young were among the companies that had nothing to do with it and were quite confused by the fact they were being implicated. I appreciate that CBSA has promised to provide a full list and get to the bottom of these irregularities, but there are enough questions here that this motion to have the Auditor General conduct a full audit is very much warranted.

I also want to talk a bit about the broader questions this issue has brought up. There is a real question here about whether the government's overall approach to outsourcing is delivering good value for Canadians or whether it is simply lining the pockets of companies that have figured out how to maximize their returns from the system of government procurement.

We have heard concerns expressed by some of the public sector unions. They have shared with us that they believe IT companies are intentionally underbidding on government contracts. When they underbid on government contracts, it makes it very difficult for the government to assess whether it is in fact better value to outsource the contract to the private sector or whether better value is had by keeping that work in house with the government's own team of IT professionals. What happens after these companies underbid on the contracts is that the contracts start and they are able to have the contracts reopened.

While I am pausing, I note that I will be sharing my time with the wonderful member for Courtenay—Alberni, something I have been reminded of by my colleagues several times yet somehow have forgotten.

The reopening of these contracts then allows the government, on a discretionary basis, to jack up the value of those contracts again and again so that the total value at the end, when everything is said and done and all the dollars are added up, is many times higher than the original estimate for the work. This is something we need to get to the bottom of, and I think that is an opportunity the motion presents.

● (1130)

Here is the trend when it comes to government outsourcing. The Globe and Mail reported in January that the government outsourced \$11.8 billion of work in the 2020-21 fiscal year. That is up 42% from 2015-16. It is a pretty alarming increase. In 2020-21, the federal government spent \$2.3 billion on IT contracts, compared with only \$1.9 billion on its own government IT workforce. One public sector union has filed 2,500 grievances related to outsourcing.

There is something wrong with this picture. We need to ensure this decision, which some people call the “make or buy” decision, is informed by the best information and that it is always done with the public's best interests in mind. Getting good value for taxpayers' dollars for the public resources that our government is charged with stewarding is the primary and only concern of that process.

I want to mention that, thankfully, the government operations committee is working on this larger topic right now, and I want to point out the good work of my colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni. It is looking at this broader question of whether the Treasury Board's guidelines, which are supposed to inform this make or buy decision, are doing a good enough job, are doing what they are tasked with doing and are ensuring that the public interest is protected.

*Business of Supply*

Finally, I want to turn to one of the things I heard in the House yesterday, which I think is one of the unfortunate aspects of this debate over the ArriveCAN app. There is a common trope around IT work that I believe is neither accurate nor particularly helpful. Yesterday, we heard a Conservative member rise in the House and claim that ArriveCAN “could have been created by a bunch of pimply faced teenage hackers over a weekend using a Commodore 64.”

I hear my colleagues laughing. I agree that the quote is humorous, but it is an unhelpful stereotype and I will tell colleagues why. I used to work in IT as a website developer, and I came across the stereotype that we should not pay good money for IT work and for tech products. After all, these are things that our brother's cousin's nephew can do at home for fun. These are sophisticated technology products that are being developed, and IT workers in our country are among the most creative, the most sophisticated, the most sought-after and the most valuable assets we have. When we allow these tropes and stereotypes about IT work to persist, I think we really do them an injustice and potentially risk the future of the new economy that is so important in our country.

In conclusion, Canadians deserve to know that their taxpayer dollars are being managed responsibly. The irregularities around the ArriveCAN app raise serious questions and we need to get to the bottom of them. There is a larger question of whether the government's approach to outsourcing delivers value or whether it simply enriches its private sector friends. I hope through this debate and through the investigations and audits that follow we can get answers to those questions.

• (1135)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that over the last couple of years there has been a lot of new money and government expenses as a direct result of the pandemic. I think a vast majority of Canadians would look at the need for the government to step up during the pandemic as absolutely critical. In fact, the federal government spent somewhere around 80% of all the new money going toward fighting the pandemic compared to provincial expenditures. There does need to be a sense of accountability, but over the next coming days, weeks and months we will see more accountability in how some of that money is being spent.

I understand that OGGO, one of our standing committees, is already looking into the matter at hand. Could I get the member's thoughts in regard to the importance of standing committees and the roles they can play in ensuring more accountability?

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Madam Speaker, to the member's earlier point, I do not think any scenario really justifies shovelling money off the back of the government truck willy-nilly without the accountability that Canadians expect. We have seen in the past very worrisome and concerning instances where that has occurred, such as the WE Charity scandal and the Phoenix pay system, where we are hiring consultants who are hiring other consultants and the whole thing becomes a total debacle.

As to the role of committees, absolutely committees can help us get to the bottom of this. I think the work that OGGO is doing is

very much complementary to what this opposition day motion calls for, and I look forward to the outcome from both.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the government's intention to keep using ArriveCAN given all the access problems users have had, all the bugs in the software and the fact that travellers will likely stop using it.

What does the member think of the government's intention to keep using this app?

[*English*]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Madam Speaker, my colleague's question is one that we have been dealing with at the transport committee, and it is an important one.

Not many people can argue that technology in the travel sector has not made our travel sector more efficient and more productive. I think that we will see that role of technology increase in the future; I believe it is inevitable.

I would say two things. First, we need to ensure that we keep accessibility in mind and that people who do not have access to technology have accommodations that work for them. The second is that we need to be consulting closely with the people who are currently performing the roles that technology is meant to complement or replace, ensuring that we understand the role they are playing in our travel sector and that we are supporting them in their work.

If those two things are done, technology applications can have a place in our travel sector, and we certainly heard that from different parties, whether it be airports or others.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Madam Speaker, since the government has the ability to develop its own apps, and we have seen that already with other apps during COVID, why does he think the Liberals decided to go outside of government for this app, and elaborately do so with a bill of \$52 million?

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Madam Speaker, I wish I knew the answer to that. I am hoping that is one of the things the Auditor General will help us get to the bottom of, and I am very interested in what those findings might be.

• (1140)

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has a long history in civic leadership, including in procurement.

*Business of Supply*

I am wondering what reflections the member might offer on the importance of restoring public accountability and trust with the government through having a procurement process that brings to light all the different steps along the way, including when a project such as this goes from \$80,000 to \$54 million. At what point should there be off-ramps and at what point should the red flags have been raised for the government as this project went out of control?

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach:** Madam Speaker, that question really gets to the heart of it, because public trust is the essential ingredient in the governance of our country. If the government does not have the public's trust, it cannot perform its important role. When there are questions around transparency, when the public starts to feel the government is wasting public money, it erodes public trust at a time when we cannot afford that.

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to discuss the motion regarding the ballooning costs of the ArriveCAN app.

In a time when too many Canadians are struggling just to make ends meet, it is critical that the government ensure we have sound stewardship of tax dollars. I share the concerns of Canadians and frontline CBSA officers that the ArriveCAN app has cost way too much and delivered too little.

Last week at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, we heard from the national president of the Customs and Immigration Union that frontline service workers were never consulted on the development of the app or any of the more than 70 updates that were required.

While the government continued to pour money into ArriveCAN, frontline workers were forced to deal with the fallout of a glitchy app on top of a severe staffing shortage. This has had a huge demoralizing impact on the mental health and the moral of CBSA officers.

At committee, I supported a study to provide more transparency to Canadians, which they deserve, about the costs associated with the ArriveCAN app. I also pushed the committee to go further. I believe the ArriveCAN debacle is part of a larger systemic issue of the government increasingly hiring expensive consultants, who hire expensive consultants, with no regard for delivering the best value for Canadians.

That is why I tabled a motion, which was supported unanimously at OGGO, to request that the Auditor General conduct a performance audit on outsourcing policies and practices more broadly.

Earlier this year, the *Globe and Mail* reported that since the 2015-16 fiscal year, government spending on outsourced contracts had increased by 41.8% under the federal Liberals, reaching \$11.8 billion in the 2020-21 fiscal year alone. This trend started under the previous Conservative government and continues to cost Canadians today.

All too often, outsourced contracts seem to balloon and cost more than if public service workers were tasked with the same work. The Treasury Board has provided guidance on preparing estimates to help departments with “make-or-buy” decisions, as well as policies on the planning and management of investments that require departments’ decisions that demonstrate best value and sound

stewardship. However, it is not clear how these policies are applied in practice or what oversight is involved.

A broader performance audit by the Auditor General, as I proposed and as was supported at the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, could provide important insights to Parliamentarians on questions. How often are departments' cost estimates exceeded for outsourced work? What happens when a department gets an estimate wrong? How are lessons learned and shared across departments?

I want to highlight the concerning transparency and accountability issues that arise in relation to outsourced contracts.

The Public Service Alliance of Canada recently told the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates that “The procurement process to contract out work favours corporate secrecy over the rights of Canadians to know how funds are spent and how services are managed.”

Our access to information regime is broken and it is extremely difficult for Canadians to get a full picture of how funds directed to the private sector are being spent. This is a perfect example of what we are talking about today.

It is also extremely difficult for public service workers who become aware of mismanagement related to outsourced contracts to raise the alarm without fear of reprisal. Canada's whistle-blower protection regime has been called among one of the worst in the world and cases like the Phoenix pay disaster and the ArriveCAN app show how there are real costs to the Canadian public when public service workers cannot speak up.

The blame for Canada's ineffective whistle-blower protection regime lies with both the Conservative and Liberals parties.

David Hutton, a whistle-blower protection expert and senior fellow at the Centre for Free Expression at Toronto Metropolitan University, recently wrote in the *Hill Times* that when the member for Carleton, then-minister under the Harper government, introduced federal accountability legislation in 2006, “he claimed repeatedly that it would offer ‘ironclad’ protection, and indeed it does—but for the wrongdoers, not for whistleblowers or the public.”

*Business of Supply*

• (1145)

Since the Liberals came into power, they have failed to remedy this situation. Instead, they have sat on a unanimous report from the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates for over five years. That report recommended sweeping legislative reforms to Canada's whistle-blower protection law. As the Liberal government bounces from scandal to scandal, it seems to have no interest in improving protections for whistle-blowers who could shine a light on government wrongdoing or mismanagement of public funds. This is critical to the transparency for which we are calling so Canadians can trust their government.

In addition to the transparency and accountability issues that I am talking about, the government's increasing reliance on outsourcing raises concerning equity issues that warrant discussion.

In 2018, the UN special rapporteur on poverty and human rights discussed privatization as a cause of poverty while still costing governments more.

In 2019, the Standing Committee on Human Resources tabled a report on precarious work, recommending the government, "[re-view] human resources policies and budgeting practices to ensure that they incentivize hiring employees on indeterminate contracts." It is critical that the government stop the precarious work and incentivize hiring people full time.

Further, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada has written about the interplay between outsourcing and gender equity, stating:

In IT, lucrative contracts are doled out to a male-dominant industry that has notoriously struggled with gender equity. While at the same time, lower paid and precarious temporary service contracts are disproportionately filled by women. The majority of temporary workers become trapped in a cycle of persistent temporary work, defined by low pay, few if any fringe benefits, and high risk of unemployment and labour force exit.

While the government will say it is forced to rely on the private sector to deliver IT services because of skill shortages within the public service, it is ignoring in-house talent and failing to invest in building further institutional capacity in a way that promotes gender equity, and I will also say failing to work with public institutions to tap into that expertise and knowledge that lies in our public institutions, including higher-learning institutions.

The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada has filed more than 2,500 grievances where work was outsourced rather than assigned to existing expertise in the public service. In the last fiscal year, the government spent \$2.3 billion on information technology service contracts compared to \$1.85 billion on its own IT workforce. If the government is truly committed to building a strong and inclusive public service, it is essential that it maintain and build in-house IT capacity.

The government's increasing reliance on outsourcing is not only undermining efforts to promote equity, but it is also costing Canadians more. Although it is difficult to get information on outsourced contracts, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada shared with me the following alarming examples: "one IT Technical Architect at National Defence cost Canadian taxpayers over \$359,000 per year in a contract that was renewed for over 8 years. The equivalent public servant (including their pension)

would have cost \$147,876 – saving over \$1.5M"; and "Another example: Shared Services Canada has spent over \$14M over the past five years on 3 resources and posted a contract tender extension for another four years. Three public servants (including their pension) over the same five years would have cost \$1,855,476 – saving over \$12M."

It is not just in IT that we are seeing these increased costs because of reliance on outsourcing, but also in other areas like cleaning, grounds maintenance, health care and access to information.

While I agree that Canadians deserve transparency on the Arrive-CAN app, they deserve much more. They deserve transparency on the true costs and risks of outsourcing public services. I hope all members will agree that a broader examination of outsourcing by the Auditor General is warranted and is in the best interest of Canadians.

• (1150)

**Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am glad to see that New Democrats are calling for greater accountability with the arrive scam debacle, however, I am still troubled by the fact that they continue to prop up the Liberal government.

Does the member know if the words "transparency", "accountability" or "ethics" are in the confidence and supply agreement?

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Speaker, we are here every day, calling on the government to do the right thing and provide support to Canadians.

What we have are gatekeepers from the Conservatives and the Liberals protecting big corporations that are having record profits. Every day we are standing up for Canadians. Today, we are calling for transparency when it comes to outsourcing. Both the Conservatives and the Liberals are the champions of outsourcing. It is their friends. They are highly paid consultants hiring highly paid consultants. This is their history. It needs to stop, and it needs to stop now.

We are here to fight for the people.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I understand that the NDP will be voting in favour of this motion. The first clause in the preamble says, "the cost of government is driving up the cost of living".

*Business of Supply*

Could the member comment on what cost of government he thinks is driving up the cost of living?

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Speaker, I will just start with the government financing oil and gas. It makes these huge investments in industries that had \$147 billion in profit last year, and here the government is subsidizing building the Trans Mountain pipeline, which is skyrocketing out of control.

Outsourcing is built into this whole regime. It is a waste of taxpayers' dollars. It could all be going to help improve the lives of Canadians, so they could get access to medicine, housing and things they actually need to live.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very detailed and technical speech. He has done the research. I am always very pleased when my colleagues provide information that can help us in our debates. I thank him very much.

The premise of the motion today is somewhat naive. The Conservatives are saying, for example, that had the government not spent \$54 million on the ArriveCAN app, it would have helped fight inflation in Canada. It is \$54 million nonetheless.

This morning, we learned something really interesting in the news. As we suspected, Canada is the second-biggest investor in fossil fuels in the G20. It spends \$8.5 billion a year.

Right now, food banks do not have enough money. According to a survey, 20% of respondents stated that they are having smaller meals and just over 30% stated that they are eating less healthy meals because they are less expensive in Canada.

Does my colleague not believe that this \$8.5 billion invested in fossil fuels would be put to better use helping people here in Canada right now?

[*English*]

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Speaker, that fits the whole story, the whole regime of the Conservatives and the Liberals. It is about them bailing out their friends, whether it be big oil, big grocery or the big banks. This is what they do.

They do not want to go after them and make them pay their fair share. Instead, they leave Canadians hung out to dry. This outsourcing that we are talking about today is again part of their history and story. It is about their friends, these expensive consultants who hire expensive consultants.

The Conservatives started the Phoenix pay system. It was supposed to save over \$80 million a year. It has cost \$2.4 billion. The Liberals are not innocent, but they carried it on. They kept going with it. It needs to end.

We are going to be here to stop it and to fight for the Auditor General to come in and look at this. It needs to change. We are going to stand up for Canadians and make sure that Canadians get the support they deserve.

• (1155)

**Mr. Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the member is doing a fantastic job on government operations, looking for accountability and holding the government accountable.

What reflections does the member have on the importance of having a whistle-blower regime? With that, when public sector employees find waste or any kind of malfeasance, they would have the ability to step forward and be protected so that they would not have reprisals in their workplace.

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Madam Speaker, this needs a deep dive, and it needs support from all parties.

We need to work collectively on this. Right now, there have been 18 complaints out of 500 that have come through and made it to the commissioner to look at. Not one has made it to the tribunal. This is not okay. It is actually impossible to imagine that not one whistle-blower complaint would have gone through to the tribunal and been supported—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes.

**Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for New Brunswick Southwest.

It is important that we are all able to speak to this important issue today and have as many voices as possible. Canadians are facing a cost of living crisis and the cause was made right here in Canada. The \$54-million arrive scam is one of a litany of examples of how the cost of government is driving up the cost of living. The more the current Prime Minister spends, the more Canadians are finding things cost.

We are seeing higher prices. Canadians are very concerned as they get that first fill-up of home heating fuel, propane or oil, or their first natural gas bill. When they look at that they see taxes on taxes. They see the carbon tax on there and they are concerned. What are these bills going to look like when they get a fuel delivery in January?

What is the government doing to help control the expenses that Canadians have? Is it committed to cutting taxes? No, it is raising taxes. Is it committed to getting its spending under control. No, it is not. Is it being accountable for the spending that it has undertaken? That is what we are doing today. We want accountability. We want an audit.

An audit is something the government should be able to vote in favour of. When we look at what was spent and look at the public accounts, 40% of the deficit spending the current government undertook was not related to the pandemic. It will say the Conservatives voted in favour of helping people who needed help during the pandemic. We are not talking about that spending. We are talking about the waste, the excess and the insider deals, and there was an awful lot of that.

*Business of Supply*

If we can believe it, when we read the public accounts that were published last week, every single minute of last year the government incurred more than \$170,000 of new debt. That is staggering. If two income earners in a family were each making \$40,000 to provide a living for their family, they could not put a dent in one minute of the debt the current government racked up that year. It is unbelievable.

Because of that, Canadians are going to pay higher prices for everything. We know they are paying higher prices for their homes. We know they are now going to pay higher prices for their mortgages, on the interest they pay, as well as on credit cards and lines of credit. We know that rent is going up to \$2,600 a month for a one-bedroom apartment in Vancouver and to \$2,300 a month for the same in Toronto.

It is more important than ever that Canadians extract accountability from their government. For it to spend \$54 million on this failed app is an egregious number, but I fear the number is much higher. We are hoping to find that out. It does not even know where all of that \$54 million went.

When members of the House asked the government for information, it came back and listed some of the contractors. However, there are tens of millions of dollars in subcontracts for which it is not willing to say who did the work or what work was done. Of the ones we do know, and the list was short, it claimed that it paid \$1.2 million to a company that claims it did not do any of the work, nor did it get a penny for it. The government said that it was a mistake and that it was actually someone else.

● (1200)

It is bizarre the government was so quickly able to say it made a mistake but did not know where the money actually went. When we are dealing in millions of Canadians' dollars, it is really important to know where we are sending the cheques. When it came to the support measures some Canadians needed, it was less careful. It sent cheques to prisoners, as an example, people convicted of crimes, and to people who did not need the help and who were gainfully employed, making great salaries with great benefits and great pensions.

One needs to wonder why the Liberals were so cavalier with these particular millions. Did they go to someone with an inside connection? We have seen before that folks who appear on the Liberal list end up getting cushy order in council appointments and fat government contracts. I will remind the House of course that we saw a half-billion dollars try to get shovelled out the door to the Prime Minister's buddy at the WE organization, but Conservatives caught it.

We saw when the Prime Minister was found to have broken ethics laws. He was happy to take a vacation to billionaire island, but we caught him. It is really about accountability. We found, through the work of members here and a referral to the Ethics Commissioner, that the Prime Minister had inappropriately interfered in the criminal prosecution of his buddies at SNC-Lavalin. This is another company that does quite well under the Liberals.

Recently, while Canadians are facing this cost of living crisis, there is scrutiny about this \$54-million boondoggle. I have talked

to, face to face, dozens of CBSA officers, who signed up to protect our country and our borders and to interdict weapons smuggling, drugs and human trafficking, and they are getting asked to be IT support for an app that does not work. They did not find it enhanced their ability to keep Canadians safe. It slowed the lines down. It slowed the movement of people. They can look at a certificate. If the government demanded proof of vaccination, if that was its decision, misguided as it may have been, it could have done that and those customs officers could have verified those documents the same way they verify a passport, without a \$54-million boondoggle with all kinds of pork to Liberal insiders.

While that is going on, the Prime Minister jet-sets on one of his many travels and does it in style, of course, with a private taxpayer-funded jet and stays at the finest hotels and charges it to the taxpayer. One thinks he had to go to London and it was important he was there. What does one think a hotel room, one room, should cost for a night for a prime minister?

● (1205)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** You tell me.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, we have the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader asking how much I think it should be. I know it should not be \$6,000 a night. The fact that these apologists are not demanding accountability speaks volumes, and that is why they are going to vote against this motion.

I look forward to when the parliamentary secretary stands up in about 30 seconds and says he will call for accountability because he believes in transparency, but that is not what he is going to say. We know that because that is the pattern. They spend Canadians into the poorhouse. Canadians are lined up at food banks in record numbers, and what do these Liberals say? They say, "Let them eat cake."

We want accountability. That is exactly what we are going to get.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I find it somewhat humorous at times when the member decides to take the track of character assassination and is talking about the costs and says, "it is a fact" and "let me give the member a fact, a real fact." Stephen Harper, as prime minister, travelled to India. He spent a million dollars, not for him or for other people, but a million dollars to fly a car from Canada to India so he could have something to drive. Do they not realize there are vehicles in India? Really, it was a million Canadian tax dollars by former prime minister Stephen Harper. I am wondering if he could provide his thoughts on that stupid expenditure.

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, well, stupid is as stupid does, as they say.

When they are covering for a Prime Minister who claims that he is seized with a climate emergency but burns more jet fuel in a single vacation on his taxpayer-funded jet than a Canadian family spends in an entire year in its carbon footprint, we know that this is a very unserious government that is out of ideas. While it is out of ideas, Canadians are out of money, and they need accountability from the government. That is why we are here. That is what we are going to get.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very insightful comments.

What does he think of the secrecy surrounding the ArriveCAN app and the fact that we have to search for and find answers and that this all seems to have been done in secret?

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, we have asked for basic transparency from the government, and it wants to drag out document production for months. The information that it does provide is erroneous. While I would like to think that there is malice at play, it may very well just be incompetence, which is especially concerning when we are dealing with tens of millions of dollars.

We are going to continue to ask for this level of transparency. Hopefully, with an independent audit, we will get the answers that the government is concealing from Canadians, which it is likely doing to protect the insiders who got rich.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, accountability is fundamental for all parliamentarians. However, and I do not want to challenge the member, I remember that he said that \$500 million was shovelled out the door to the Kielburger organization. It was upward of \$912 million without checks and balances. We simply asked what their capability of handling this program was and how it came about. That brought down the finance minister because we learned of this outrageous back-room connection between the Kielburger group and the minister.

I want to ask my colleague this because he was on the committee. We never ended up finding out who owned all their companies, how many companies they had and how the money moved through their complex organizations. This was supposed to be a children's charity, yet the Parliament of Canada could not get to the bottom of this. Does my hon. colleague feel there are still unanswered questions about that attempted deal between the Liberals and the Kielburger brothers?

**Mr. Michael Barrett:** Madam Speaker, it is a big question for not a lot of time. As opposition parties, we worked very hard to try to get answers for Canadians, and there is still a need. If folks at CRA are watching, an audit or two is well overdue for those folks at WE Charity because, my goodness, there was a spider web of shell companies in an attempt to hide from transparency. We know that they hid witnesses and would not reveal documents.

While it cost a finance minister his job, and we saw even more corruption, we still do not know all of the details. The government tried to give \$912 million, nearly a billion dollars, to buddies of the Prime Minister. It is incredibly concerning. We do not have all of the information. We want to know what happened with those prop-

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erty sales in this company, which they said they were folding up. It is another great example of the accountability that Canadians deserve when the Liberal government is being cavalier with their tax dollars.

• (1210)

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Madam Speaker, as the MP for New Brunswick Southwest, I know first-hand how harmful ArriveCAN was to the lives and livelihoods of Canadians.

My riding in southwest New Brunswick borders the state of Maine, in the United States of America. We have five international crossings, and many of these border points do not really feel like we are dealing with a foreign, distant government. This is because these cross-border communities were actually in place long before Confederation. These communities, with Maine residents on one side and New Brunswick residents on the other, have long lived together and shared services, including emergency services and community activity. When the border was closed, it had a devastating impact, and ArriveCAN was a poor solution.

There is a very good reason why the Auditor General should conduct a performance audit, including of the payments, contracts and subcontracts for all aspects of the ArriveCAN app, and good reason to prioritize that investigation. The ArriveCAN scam disrupted lives and family relations. It damaged the Canadian economy and infringed on mobility rights.

We have discovered that it was a costly government boondoggle rolled out by the Liberal government, which seems incapable of governing any federal institution in the country. Whether it relates to passport offices, the CRA or social programs, this is a government that just cannot shoot straight. It cannot govern well and, as a result, costs are going up everywhere.

This program, like many others, was a costly and unnecessary bureaucratic exercise. It was also heavy-handed and trampled over the guaranteed constitutional rights of Canadians. Millions were spent on a computer-based program and a mandate forcing all travellers, citizens and visitors alike, to register before entering Canada or, for citizens, coming home. Failing to do so could result in fines and/or a forced lock-up.

Independent software developers tell us that this app could have been built for less than a quarter of a million dollars. That would have been \$250,000. It could have been completed in a weekend, but not in Ottawa, and not under this government. Instead, the Liberals spent an eye-popping \$54 million and paid out millions to Liberal consultants. Of course, the government will not tell us who received those payments or who got rich.

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My colleague from Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes spoke about the gross negligence that went toward the creation of the ArriveCAN scam. Regrettably, everything he said is true. The government said that one company was paid \$1.2 million and then the company stood up and said that it had not received a dime. Where did that money go?

The Auditor General needs to investigate this because the government is not coming clean with the Parliament. It is not coming clean with Canadians.

This entire program is in desperate need of an audit, since Liberals will not tell the truth to Canadians. Canadians want to know what happened. Why was \$54 million spent to control Canadians and strip away charter rights for a program that not only did not work but also was not necessary?

The Liberals, of course, cannot get their stories straight. We need an investigation. We need an audit.

Since the introduction of ArriveCAN and its subsequent mandatory use, I have been amazed by the lack of concern that the Liberal government has for the basic rights of Canadians. Anyone who is legally allowed to enter Canada, either as a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, under the Liberals, could now suddenly be denied re-entry into the country, through the threat of a fine of up to \$5,000 and/or a 14-day quarantine because they did not register to come back into their own country.

The government requiring citizens to register as a condition of coming home is not something that we see in democratic and free countries, yet the government thought nothing of this infringement.

● (1215)

It was an infringement on charter rights, and there is no way around it or to explain away that citizens coming home could be fined for not following the government's rules. It was not just the invocation of the Emergencies Act that suspended civil liberties. ArriveCAN did the same to Canadians for a much longer time. Liberals believe theirs is the party of the charter, but this is difficult to square when we consider the actions they took while ArriveCAN was in place.

It is difficult to measure the economic impact on the Canadian economy, especially on the tourism sector, but we know there was a cost, and one part of my riding is quite a revealing example. Many members have long heard me talk about Campobello Island, a unique island, which is in New Brunswick. The only way on or off that island, year round, is over a bridge to Lubec, Maine.

This island has a population of only about 1,000 people, and it is especially popular with visitors from the United States because Campobello is home to the Roosevelt Campobello International Park. This was the summer home of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the former American president, and his wife, Eleanor. It attracts tens of thousands of visitors from the United States every year in the summer, or at least it did before the Canada-U.S. border was closed, either because visitors were not allowed or because of the de facto closure with ArriveCAN.

According to my discussions with CBSA officials, of the American motorists who crossed onto Campobello from the state of

Maine, for every three cars that arrived, two were returned to the state of Maine because the U.S. visitors were either not aware of ArriveCAN or had not completed it. It is estimated that between 25% and 50% of those visitors who were sent back did not bother to complete the ArriveCAN, did not come into Canada and just returned to Maine to go elsewhere.

I do not know if it was because of a lack of quality Internet in Lubec, because senior citizens are not familiar with apps and uploading medical documents or because these Americans just did not feel comfortable about uploading documents onto the database of a foreign country. However, if the Canadian government had been more reasonable from the start, it could have allowed CBSA officials to screen individuals at land crossings that enter our country and to do their jobs, but it did not.

Instead, it was a bureaucratic mess. It caused hardship to Campobello. It caused hardship to tourist operators across New Brunswick, as well as across Canada, and as it is with everything else, the government failed its task to run the country in a way that does not penalize Canadians and working Canadians.

Last week I was home in New Brunswick in Saint Andrews, after the Liberals had come back from a summer caucus meeting there, and I asked some of the operators how the season went. The answer was that it was great, once the Americans were allowed in at the end of the summer. It has an impact when we close the border and stopped allowing our American friends in.

ArriveCAN was a costly and flawed program, and there are many questions for the Auditor General to look at. If ArriveCAN requires one to take a PCR test and schedules pickup by the government's testing supplier, why were so many rural homes in my riding completely ignored for pickup? Why did the government not contract this pickup service to Canada Post and the rural post office carriers, so rural homes could be serviced? How many PCR tests were left outside homes on doorsteps for pickup and never collected? Why were children, who were ineligible for COVID vaccines, forced into quarantine because of random selections?

There are numerous questions the Auditor General should look at. If this motion passes, I intend to forward these questions to the Auditor General of Canada, and I hope the House votes to pass this, so we can get down and see what happened with the ArriveCAN scam.



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• (1220)

**Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it would be nice if the Conservatives could square a few things and pick a lane, because early in the pandemic all we heard from the Conservatives was, “Close the border,” and, “Shut it down,” and then, once the vaccines became more readily available, they sided with the people who would be quite happy to have unvaccinated people spreading the virus back and forth across the American border.

Where are they on this one? Do they not like ArriveCAN simply because it does what it does?

**Mr. John Williamson:** Madam Speaker, I have heard this line of questioning from Liberal members before. It is typical, and they have forgotten a few important facts.

When the Liberals were busy locking down Canadians, they kept the airports in this country open, and flights were coming in from around the world. They had it backwards. We should have been securing the borders, but they did not do that. We had airports across the country where provincial officials were rushing to try to test people, to try to determine what had happened. This government closed its eyes to the problems abroad and focused on Canadians and locking them down, and that is why the problem became as serious as it did as fast as it did. It was because of this government's neglect and not because of what Canadians were doing in their homes and communities across this country.

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

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** Order. I have not called for questions and comments, and I would ask members to wait until I do that before they speak.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Jonquière.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Madam Speaker, our Conservative friends are talking about how the cost of government is driving up the cost of living. They are saying that the government needs to use taxpayer dollars more wisely and eliminate waste. They are focusing on the \$54 million that was spent on the ArriveCAN app. I agree with them that that was a stupid mistake.

Last week, we pointed out an even stupider mistake: the monarchy. Eliminating that recurrent expense would save us \$67 million a year. Then there is the stupid mistake to end all stupid mistakes, and that is the oil and gas industry, which gets \$8.5 billion a year. Yes, I said billion, not million.

Today, we see that ExxonMobil's profits rose from \$4.7 billion a year to \$17.9 billion. Our Conservative friends are saying that we need to support the oil and gas industry and that we should be criticizing the \$54 million that was spent on the ArriveCAN app.

Am I the only one who finds this completely outrageous?

**Mr. John Williamson:** Madam Speaker, there are a number of areas where we think the Liberal government is wasting money.

I do not completely agree with my colleague. In my opinion, we need to support our energy sector so that prices remain affordable for consumers.

So far, we have the carbon tax and regulations that are constantly driving up the cost of energy. If we come up with solutions that will drive up prices, then prices are going to go up.

Finally, with regard to our King, I do not think that is a priority for Canadians or Quebecers. That is a debate for another day.

I say “long live the King”.

• (1225)

[*English*]

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his interventions today.

I want to really think about the work the public service has done to date. We know that the public service is a very valuable service and was especially so throughout the pandemic. We have seen Canadians rely on the services of the public service.

We know as well that this Liberal government supports outsourcing. We hear that from public service workers across Canada, that outsourcing is hurting our workers. Would the member agree that we need to protect public service workers, ensure that there is quality for the taxpayer and make sure these programs actually work?

**Mr. John Williamson:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate that question from my colleague on the public accounts committee.

I tend to agree with the member. The amount of outsourcing from this government is stratospheric, and it is costing taxpayers way too much money, but I also think there is a quid pro quo. If we are going to rely on public servants, public servants need to show up and do their job. In my riding and across this country, Service Canada closed for too long during the pandemic. If Service Canada is not there when Canadians need it most, I think a lot of Canadians will ask: “Why do we need Service Canada?”

I agree with the member that we should rely on our public servants, but at the same time, let us ensure that they do the job they have been hired to do.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague and friend, the member for Hochelaga.

A good starting point on this debate is to take a look at what we have had to overcome over the last couple of years and what brings us to where we are today. It was not that long ago that the pandemic hit the world. There are some Conservatives who genuinely believe that maybe Canada was in a position to have completely avoided the pandemic. It took a little while, I would suggest, but I think Canadians from coast to coast understood that the pandemic was going to have an impact here in Canada. It was a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, and when it hit Canada it dictated that governments at all levels needed to take action.

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When it came to Canada, the national government here in Ottawa, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, insisted on working with all Canadians, no matter what political stripe, and the many different stakeholders, different levels of government, indigenous people and so many others in order to minimize the negative impact of the pandemic. We had a team Canada approach.

It is truly amazing, what we were able to pull together in a relatively short time span. Need I remind others across the way that there were programs developed virtually from nothing in order to support Canadians in all regions of the country? Many of those programs, which included the expenditure of billions and billions of dollars, were voted on by every member of this chamber, and they voted unanimously to support that expenditure.

Listening to some of the members of the Bloc or the Conservatives, one would think there was a lot of politicization of the tendering and procurement process. Here is a reality check. There are entrepreneurs throughout this country of all political stripes. Not only did some of the Liberal entrepreneurs receive contracts, but the same happened with Conservative entrepreneurs, New Democratic entrepreneurs and even Bloc entrepreneurs.

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

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, to the New Democrat who asked if they have some of those, yes, there are some NDP entrepreneurs out there. All were given contracts, because there is a process in place.

The Conservatives name an organization, and then they put the word “scandal” behind it. That assumes it is an official scandal if all they have to do is to put the word “scandal” behind it. The most natural scandal is the word “Conservative” followed by the word “scandal”. Having said that, they cite the WE charity as if to say, wow, this is it. This is the gold mine of all scandals. However, WE has contracts with the Manitoba government, a Conservative government. It is hard to believe. WE has contracts with the Saskatchewan government, another Conservative government.

The bottom line is that when we needed to be able to work with industries, entrepreneurs and Canadians in general, there was a need and a process. To identify a Liberal entrepreneur and say that it is corrupt because a Liberal entrepreneur won a contract does a disservice to all of us. That is really a sad aspect of this. At the end of the day, Canadians expected the government to work at delivering, and that is what we did.

● (1230)

We worked with other levels of government and the many different stakeholders I made mention of, and it helped. Around nine million Canadians received CERB, even though we are now being criticized for providing that program for the many people who received those benefits. At the time, we were criticized when we were not moving fast enough, and we were told we should be more generous. Tens of thousands of jobs were saved because of the wage subsidy program.

We can talk about the ArriveCAN app. It is being suggested that the Auditor General look into it. That seems to be supported by the New Democrats, the Bloc and the Conservatives today. It is being

looked at in the standing committee. CBSA is also doing a full review of the issue. The government is not running or hiding from anything here, but the Conservatives want to attach the word “scandal” to it and attach numbers without giving any details. That is what they want to debate.

They want to give the false impression that there is scandal after scandal. I was here when Stephen Harper was prime minister. If we want to talk about scandals, there was the riding of Muskoka and the minister, Mr. Clement, or we could look at the Senate issue. However, it is not about scandals. I would suggest it is about providing the supports that were absolutely necessary at the time to protect Canadians. That is what the ministers were charged to do. ArriveCAN was a part of that.

I suspect that over the days, weeks and months ahead, we will continue to look at the manner in which public dollars were being spent. There needs to be a sense of accountability. We do not need to be reminded of that. After all, I remember when the Prime Minister first became the leader of the Liberal Party. One of the first actions we did was to call for proactive disclosure from MPs on how they were spending money. We requested unanimous leave in order to enact it, and the Conservatives said no to that.

We are not trying to hide anything. We, like all members, would like to show that the tax dollar, which is very important to all of us, is being appropriately spent. We have systems in place to ensure there is a high level of accountability.

The leader of the Conservative Party, in his speech, emphasized the issue of inflation. It is truly amazing how the Conservatives seem to be completely out of touch with what is happening around the world. They seem to think Canada needs to do more. I am concerned about the price of groceries and the price of widgets at our local stores. That concerns me, as it concerns all Liberal members of Parliament.

That is why we are bringing forward things like Bill C-31, the dental plan and rental plan. It was to support Canadians. The Conservatives voted against that. They talk about inflation and doing things, but when it comes to standing up for Canadians, they stand up to say no.

There are things we can do, and we should not settle, even though Canada's inflation rate is lower than that in the U.S., England or most of the European countries. We can still do more on the issue, and we will continue to look at ways to make things easier for Canadians.

● (1235)

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Madam Speaker, here is how standards have fallen under the Liberal government.

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Back when the Conservatives were in office, the chamber was seized with a glass of orange juice purchased in London that cost \$16. Today, it is a hotel bill that cost \$6,000, and the government will not even come clean about who stayed there. We know it was the Prime Minister, but that is how the government has lost its way. It will not even be honest with Canadians.

My question for the member is straightforward. If the contractors identified by the government were never paid, and this \$1.2 million is one example but I am sure there are others, what companies had access to this data through the contracts they received? If the Liberals do not want to make it about money, let us talk about privacy. Which companies have access to the private information of Canadians through these contracts that the government is not willing to reveal to Canadians?

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I guess I have more faith in the procurement process and our public servants, which the Conservatives do not have. It is one of the things with which we should all be somewhat concerned. We saw that with respect to the independent offices.

In regard to the shots that the Conservatives continue to use, and they cited the issue of London earlier today, I asked a very simple question of one of the member's Conservative colleagues about why Stephen Harper spent \$1 million to fly a car from Canada to India so he had something to drive in. Why \$1 million to fly a car to India? The member opposite would have been here and would have been very much aware of this issue.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for his passionate speech.

If the Bloc feels that the awarding process is flawed, it may be because things are not clear or because that is a habit with the Liberals. In this case, we should not confuse slander, which is an untrue accusation, and the truth.

My question for the member for Winnipeg North is this: How can he defend the indefensible?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, I can easily explain that we have in place a procedure through Procurement Canada and that things are put in place to protect the public interest when it comes to spending public dollars. I have faith in that. It does not mean it is an absolute total blind faith. I do believe there is a need for accountability. That is one of the reasons why I am a strong advocate for our standing committees. I think standing committees have a very important role. In fact, the very issue we are debating today is before the OGGO standing committee.

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I used to sit on the Forest Appeals Commission in British Columbia. At appeal hearings, we would hear forest companies blame their contractors for some misdemeanour and the contractors would blame their subcontractors, and the subcontractors would blame their sub-subcontractors.

I wonder if the member could comment on the practice of hiring teams to assemble teams to assemble teams that not only balloons

the cost of a project like the ArriveCAN app but shields it from any sort of transparency.

● (1240)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, for me, it is all about how we best get the job done that needs to be done.

When we think of the ArriveCAN application, we have to put it in the context of the pandemic, the concerns that Canadians coast to coast to coast had, and what was available at the time with respect to going through the process. Very sensitive data is being collected. I would imagine that if any of that data had been released, some howling would have taken place. We had to take the necessary precautionary measures and have faith in the system. That does not mean it is perfect.

CBSA is doing a review. OGGO is looking into it. We will get to the bottom of what has taken place. I am confident of that.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion (Housing, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is my turn to rise today and to reiterate several things that have already been heard in the House but are still worth repeating.

Our government understands that many Canadians are struggling with the rising cost of living and continue to face higher prices when they go to the grocery store or pay their rent. For many families, it is increasingly difficult to make ends meet.

Inflation is a global phenomenon and a lingering result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and by disruptions in supply chains. This phenomenon affects people and businesses around the world. Although Canada's inflation rate is less severe at 6.9% than that of many of our peers, such the United States, where inflation is now at 8.2%, the United Kingdom, at 10%, and Germany, at 10%, we know that many Canadians are struggling and that we are not out of the woods yet.

Many Canadians will continue facing tough times. Our friends, our families and the people around us will continue to struggle to pay the bills at the end of the month. Every day, we see the cost of groceries rise dramatically. Our economy will slow down, as will economies around the world, while central banks act to fight inflation. There will be people whose mortgage payments will increase, companies or entrepreneurs whose businesses will not do as well as they have since the end of the lockdown. It is quite likely that our unemployment rate will no longer be at its lowest level.

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Canadians are worried, and that is why we are moving ahead with measures to support those who need it the most, when they need it the most. Our plan is to make life more affordable, with measures totalling \$12.1 billion to help Canadians make ends meet and provide for their families.

Our plan includes an enhanced Canada workers benefit, which will put up to \$2,400 more in the pockets of low-income families; an average reduction of 50% in child care costs by the end of the year; a 10% increase to old age security for people 75 or older, which has already been in place for four months; dental care for Canadians with a family income under \$90,000 per year, starting with children under the age of 12; an additional one-time payment of \$500, coming this year, to help tenants who have trouble paying the cost of housing; doubling the GST credit for six months, which will give additional targeted help to about 11 million individuals and families. Of course, we cannot forget our main support programs, including the Canada child benefit and the GST credit, which will be increasing, as they are already indexed to inflation.

The measures we are putting forward in our affordability plan do not add fuel to the inflation fire. They simply provide targeted and fiscally responsible help to those who need it the most.

Unfortunately, we obviously cannot support every Canadian as we did during COVID-19. We implemented exceptional emergency measures that ensured the safety and solvency of people at the height of the pandemic. We cannot fully compensate every Canadian for the inflation they are now facing, inflation that is, again, fuelled by the global pandemic and Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Canadians fully understand that doing so would only aggravate and prolong inflation, and that is clearly not what we want. That would also force the Bank of Canada to raise interest rates even higher.

While we are emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic and we support those who are hardest hit by inflation, we continue to pursue a tight fiscal policy. Indeed, this year, the International Monetary fund, the IMF, expects Canada to have the lowest deficit, as well as the lowest net-debt burden, of all governments among G7 countries as a percentage of GDP. This is a track that our country is forecasted to maintain over the coming years.

While many Canadian families have to tighten their belts and make difficult decisions because of inflation, our government is doing the same thing to ensure we do not make the situation worse. We are acting responsibly.

Our government believes that everyone should have a safe, decent and affordable place to live.

● (1245)

That goal was seen as a given for generations, but it is increasingly unattainable for many Canadians. Rents continue to rise across the country, pushing people further and further away from the places where they work and live. There has even been an increase in both visible and invisible homelessness.

That is why Bill C-31 proposes a one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit that would consist of a tax-free payment of \$500 to provide direct support to low-income renters.

That payment would provide direct help to the people most exposed to inflation and those experiencing housing affordability challenges. It is estimated that 1.8 million low-income renters, including students who are struggling with the cost of housing, would be eligible for this new support.

This one-time top-up is part of a broader suite of initiatives introduced in budget 2022, which will invest over \$9 billion to make housing more affordable, including by addressing supply shortages, one of the main factors making housing more expensive.

With many families grappling with the rising cost of living, our government understands that it can be hard for them to pay for the dental care they need. Unfortunately, a third of Canadians currently do not have dental insurance, and the 2018 Canadian Community Health Survey suggested that Canadians without insurance were about three times as likely as those with insurance to avoid seeing a dental professional because of cost.

That is why, with Bill C-31, which is moving through the legislative process, we are proposing to help uninsured families with children under the age of 12 get the dental care they need.

The Canada dental benefit would provide parents with children under the age of 12 who do not have access to dental insurance with direct payments of up to \$650 per year, for a total of \$1,300 per child over the next two years for dental care beginning this year. It is estimated that 500,000 Canadian children would benefit from this targeted investment of \$938 million.

Our government knows that these are tough times for everyone, for all Canadians and all Quebecers. That is why we are implementing our plan to make life affordable for the most vulnerable.

On Thursday, our colleague, the Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister, will be presenting the fall economic statement, which will outline our government's plan to continue building an economy that works for everyone.

Canadians can count on us to continue managing our finances responsibly, while supporting those who need it the most, when they need it the most.

**Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

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She spoke about Bill C-31 and the housing assistance set out in that bill. Unfortunately, there is a severe housing crisis going on. A few weeks ago, I spoke with an economist from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. He told me that in Quebec alone, 600,000 new units would need to be built over the next 10 years to deal with the crisis.

Bill C-31 does not provide for the construction of a single unit. This year, \$500 is being sent out, but more money will need to be sent out next year. In addition, 85,000 Quebeckers who live in social housing are being left out. That is a fundamental issue.

Does my colleague not think that Bill C-31 could have built units to address the shortage, instead of sending out one-time cheques this year?

• (1250)

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

Like me, he knows that we invested an additional \$14 billion in housing in the last budget. We reinvested to extend the rapid housing initiative for a third round. If there is one place that has benefited from the rapid housing initiative in many ways, it is Quebec.

The benefit will support people in need. Fortunately, in Quebec, a lot of people are already in subsidized housing. Part of what allows those units to be subsidized is federal funding, and my colleague knows that very well.

[English]

**Mr. Tako Van Popta (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about housing affordability. My riding, which is part of metro Vancouver, has a real housing affordability crisis. I was talking to a young family that had just been told its mortgage payments were going up \$700 a month, which makes the government's \$500 rental assistance plan really pale in significance.

I wonder if the member could comment on the government understanding the fundamentals of an economy that drives inflation and interest rates? That is the real solution.

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that his party voted against the measures in the budget, including measures that sought to help families in need with respect to housing.

I would also like to note that we are committed to banning foreign investment, imposing a 1% tax on non-Canadian property owners to curb market speculation and, of course, working on programs that I hope will help most Canadians buy their first home from coast to coast to coast.

[English]

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, Canadians are worried about privatization, whether that is in the public health care system, which is being privatized now, or when it comes to public services like the ones we are talking about today with the ArriveCAN app.

The Globe and Mail reported in January that the federal government spent \$11.8 billion in the 2021 fiscal year on outsourcing contracts, which is a 41.8% increase since the 2015-16 fiscal year. Additionally, The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada filed over 2,500 grievances where work was outsourced rather than assigned to the existing expertise in the public service. The question Canadians have is, why?

[Translation]

**Ms. Soraya Martinez Ferrada:** Madam Speaker, I would remind my colleague that, during the pandemic, eight dollars out of every \$10 invested to support health care across the country came from the federal government. We made sure to provide the best support possible during the pandemic, from coast to coast to coast.

As for the awarding of contracts and how the public service works, I would like to reiterate what my colleague said earlier: We have faith in our process, our public servants and our departmental employees. Unlike other members of the House, we also believe in the independence of public servants. I hope my colleague believes in that too.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Calgary Midnapore.

I am very pleased to participate in this debate, which centres on one of the main reasons I got involved in politics 14 years ago today, first at the provincial level and then at the federal level. That reason is the sound management of public funds.

Not a single dollar that the government has in its hands has fallen from the sky. Someone has gone to work, produced something and saved that money, and the government has gone and taken that money through taxes so it could manage it responsibly. In this case, however, its management was anything but responsible.

I will get right to the point. We are talking about the infamous ArriveCAN affair, which started out as a typical tale of a government wanting to bring people into its country. People coming to Canada have to pass a test to ensure that there are no issues. That makes sense.

However, the leadership of this Liberal government—which spends lavishly and has never, in the last seven years, shown the slightest interest in reining in its spending, yet boasts about its lofty principles while generating huge debts and deficits that our children, our grandchildren and our unborn great-grandchildren will have to repay—has given rise to the financial disaster that is ArriveCAN.

Let us review the facts. About a year ago, the government began this process to allow people to come to Canada and fill out the questionnaire.

*Business of Supply*

I do not want to get into my life story, but my brother is an engineer and a Canadian citizen, and he now lives in Portugal with his family. Unfortunately, as fate would have it, he had to come to Canada last spring. My brother is an engineer. As a student, he was among the first computer programmers at Laval. The point is, he is pretty comfortable with computer stuff. When he got off the plane, one of the first things we talked about, after personal and family matters, was ArriveCAN. He asked me what was up with that. He said it took forever to fill out, it was complicated, it did not work, there were lots of pages and so on. If my brother, who is an engineer, who studied engineering and knows a lot about this stuff, had problems, let us imagine what it was like for average citizens who were not used to doing that kind of thing but, all of a sudden, had to.

It was fundamentally poorly designed, but when we look at how it was managed, that was even worse. The Canadian government spent \$54 million of taxpayers' money, which Canadians saved and set aside, for which they worked and for which companies worked by producing products. The government collects taxes in order to run things properly, but that has definitely not been the case here. This app has been a fiasco from day one, considering that it almost never worked. It was not at all user friendly for people who had to enter their information. It was a fiasco because more than 10,000 people had to quarantine because of it. Worst of all, however, was the financial mismanagement, because it cost \$54 million.

As we have heard, a programming expert said he could have made it in his basement over a weekend or a Saturday night for about \$250,000. The Liberal Canadian government spent \$54 million on this. That is why our motion today states:

...it is more important than ever for the government to respect taxpayer dollars and eliminate wasteful spending...

No one can be against that. Our motion goes on to demand that:

...the House call on the Auditor General of Canada [a neutral and objective entity] to conduct a performance audit, including the payments, contracts and sub-contracts for all aspects of the ArriveCAN app, and to prioritize this investigation.

How can anyone be against transparency? How could anyone even think of voting against this motion, which asks the Auditor General to do her job with respect to a matter that has affected hundreds of thousands of Canadian families?

Many people did not want to travel because of this. Some 10,000 people ended up in quarantine. More than \$53 million seems to have been poorly invested, because someone could have done the job for \$250,000 rather than \$54 million. That is our job here in the House of Commons.

● (1255)

All 338 of us, regardless of political stripe, were elected to see to the sound management of public funds, among other things.

This is a prime example of mismanagement of public funds. We have a golden opportunity to get to the bottom of this business and find out exactly why things did not go as planned, so we can avoid making similar mistakes in the future. That is why I do not see how anyone in the House could be against us doing our job and asking the Auditor General to do hers.

Government members are likely to be a bit embarrassed when we start analyzing their management of public funds, and rightly so. Let us not forget that, seven years ago, right after the election, this party, led by the member for Papineau and current Prime Minister, boasted that it would run very small deficits and a zero deficit in 2019 because it wanted to stimulate the economy. The result was anything but. It ran one large deficit after another, missing the target set by the former minister of finance three times. Then, it ended its first term with an accumulated debt of more than \$100 billion.

The Liberal Party was elected on a promise of running small deficits and then eliminating the deficit entirely. That is not at all what happened. The government ran four deficits in a row. That was the Liberal government's record even before the pandemic and current economic problems caused concerns.

When the pandemic happened, we all realized that an emergency situation called for emergency measures, which was likely to bring about deficits. When we were in power in 2008, 2009 and 2010, our country, like every other country, grappled with the worst economic crisis since the great recession of 1929. Very reluctantly, our government ran deficits because we had no choice under the circumstances. However, starting in 2015, our government managed to balance the budget. Canada was the first G7 country to get back in the black thanks to sound management of public funds. That is what responsible government looks like.

The Liberal government ran massive deficits during a period of growth. When the pandemic happened, emergency measures were needed and money had to be spent. We knew that would result in deficits, but we did not know the deficits would be this big.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer recently concluded that \$205 billion of the \$500-billion deficit had nothing to do with COVID-19. In other words, over 40% of the debt accumulated under the current government over the last seven years was in no way related to the pandemic. Those folks over there say that these were emergency measures and no one knew for sure what was going on, so it was important to be vigilant.

A few months into the pandemic, when there was a bit of a lull in the summer, I remember very clearly talking to people in my riding, as we probably all did, and when I spoke with entrepreneurs or business leaders, I was always asked why parliamentarians had decided to pay people to stay at home and do nothing. People commented on the fact that CERB, which served a purpose during the emergency, was paying people \$2,000 to stay at home, even though activities had resumed in the summer and workers were needed. That was the sad reality. That was the reality, but it was also our responsibility to sound the alarm about it. The government was attacking us and calling us names, but that was the reality.

That is why we now know that the inflation that is hitting people rather hard all started with the current government's mismanagement.

*Business of Supply*

I hear my friends across the way say that the entire planet is experiencing a period of inflation. That is true, of course, but let us not forget that the future leader of the Liberal Party, Mark Carney, said that it was mainly a national issue, and therefore a Canadian issue. The Minister of Finance finally opened her eyes and said that the government may need to tighten its belt a bit and cut down on spending.

• (1300)

I sincerely hope that this government will vote in favour of our motion so that Canadians can learn the truth behind the ArriveCAN financial fiasco.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member would agree that one has to put things into proper perspective. When we talk about ArriveCAN, for example, it is in fact something that was absolutely necessary in order to protect the interests of Canadians and their health. When we look at the application, there is also more to it. We could talk about the data bank or the security aspect. Imagine the sensitive information that being put into it, today's cybersecurity and so forth.

Could the member provide his thoughts on the fact that it is not as simple as saying that it would only have cost a Conservative government \$250,000 to do what has been done through the ArriveCAN app?

• (1305)

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Madam Speaker, the best way to answer the question of the member for Winnipeg North question is to say that it is not me. The Auditor General will do her job; she is there for that. She is there to analyze each and every penny that the government spends.

On ArriveCAN, it is normal to have a system to evaluate the details of someone who is returning home, and we understand that, but why was it so difficult for everybody? My brother, who is an engineer, had difficulties with the app, like the hundreds of thousands of people who had to use it. The best person to answer that question is the Auditor General, and I am quite sure the member will support this motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Simard (Jonquière, BQ):** Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about sound management, reckless spending, financial disaster and the fiasco surrounding ArriveCAN and its \$54-million price tag. He is right.

However, there is another even greater fiasco that is part of what I would call the sacred cows of the Conservative Party. First, there is the monarchy, which represents \$67 million a year. That said, the fiasco to end all fiascos is the support for the oil and gas sector, which represents roughly \$8.5 billion a year. We know that Exxon-Mobil's profits have surged from \$4.7 billion to \$17.9 billion, or nearly \$18 billion. Our Conservative colleagues are calling on the government to cancel the carbon tax and support the oil and gas sector.

I have a question for my colleague: Which one is the real fiasco?

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Madam Speaker, it is always nice to listen to my colleague.

However, I would like to remind him of the facts. In his riding, and everywhere else in Quebec, people still need traditional energy sources, the so-called fossil fuels. What is happening in Quebec right now? Well, over 45% of the oil we use comes from Texas. I assume that my colleague himself uses some. In any case, if he does not use it, many people in his riding do.

Bloc members are very much against developing the energy sector in Canada because that is not the kind of energy they want to use. That magical thinking is all well and good, but the reality is that 45% of the gas that Quebecers put in their cars comes from Texas. If these people are proud to support Texas, that is on them. I will always support Canada.

[*English*]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, we need to put this into perspective. During COVID, there was a crisis and we had to get projects approved. We had to get them out the door, but that still required oversight.

For example, the government suddenly announced upward of \$912 million to the WE Charity, the Kielburger brothers, and it was the duty of the staff to say that there were a whole series of holes in the plan. What we saw was that former finance minister Bill Morneau, and we can see this in the Ethics Commissioner's report, had a very unhealthy relationship with the people from the WE group. He had them in his office and he was basically working for them, so the oversight that should have been in place was not there.

I want to ask my hon. colleague about the importance, and we sometimes need to get projects off the ground, of having oversight and accountability to ensure we do not end up with these kinds of dumb boondoggles.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Madam Speaker, to be brief, I totally agree with my colleague. We have a job to do. The Auditor General has a job to do, and I am sure everybody will ask the Auditor General to do her job.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Madam Speaker, this motion is about an application that was supposed to cost \$80,000, but instead ended up costing \$54 million. Furthermore, a group of experts said that they could have created this app for \$200,000 in a weekend.

What this app represents is so much more than the app itself. It represents the level of government bloat we have come to see under the costly coalition. It represents the lack of transparency that we have come to expect from this coalition. Most of all, it reflects the serious situation that Canada finds itself in now of inflation, and the cause is inflationary spending.

### *Business of Supply*

As we know, the bank rate started this year at 0.25%. It recently jumped to 3.75%. It is true that some external factors have contributed to this rate hike. Of course, there is the oil price spike, which began with the recovery of demand after COVID and was made worse by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That was one of those external factors. Also, China's hyper-restrictive COVID lockdowns disrupted international supply chains. However, there has been a consensus that the main reason for this inflation is inflationary spending by this costly coalition.

An article was recently published by one of my favourite economists, Jack Mintz. In it he points to a study of the U.S. Federal Reserve last July. It concluded that countries with the largest-spending binges tended to have much higher inflation rates. Therefore, this is not something that is unique to Canada; it is something that has been seen as a trend, but certainly something of which the costly coalition is guilty.

We know that Canada's headline inflation rate has eased to 6.9% from a peak of 8.1%, but food costs are still accelerating and underlying price pressures remain sticky. At the same time, the Bank of Canada has hiked interest rates by 350 basis points in just seven months, one of its sharpest tightening campaigns ever, to try to force inflation back to what was supposed to be a 2% target. Unfortunately, the bank last week signalled its tightening campaign was nearing its peak, but made it clear that it was not done yet as it hiked rates by 50 basis point to a fresh 14-year high.

The average family will spend \$3,000 more next year as a result of these inflationary effects. Food inflation is at a 40-year high. Grocery prices have been raised by 11.4%, and interest rates are going up. Energy costs are up 100% to 150%, some even 300%, and winter is coming of course. Mortgage payments, groceries, fuel and consumer goods have all gone up.

We talk about what other nations are doing. Other nations have managed to fair much better than Canada. Japan, Switzerland, Taiwan and Hong Kong have all managed to keep their rates below 3%. Other nations are providing tax relief to their citizens. Fifty-one other national governments have provided some form of tax relief. That includes more than half of G7 and G20 countries, and two-thirds of the countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. It found that at least 25 countries were choosing to provide tax relief at the pumps. Australia cut its gas tax in half. The United Kingdom announced billions of dollars of fuel tax relief. The Netherlands cut gas tax by 17¢ per litre. South Korea cut its taxes at the pumps by 30%. India cut gas taxes to keep inflation low, thus helping the poor and middle classes.

● (1310)

Instead, the Prime Minister is also choosing to take more money from the pay of Canadians. If people are making \$65,000 this year, the federal government is taking nearly \$4,500 directly from their pay through the Canada pension plan and employment insurance taxes. Their employers are also coughing up an extra \$4,800. This year, the annual payroll tax bill, including employer and employee payments, increased by \$818 for each middle-class worker. Over the past decade, seven of which the Liberal government has been in power, it increased by \$2,435.

Our peers are choosing to reduce income taxes.

Former U.K. chancellor of the exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng said, "We believe that high taxes reduce incentives to work", as he announced payroll tax relief.

Down under, the Australian government said that by putting more in their pockets, families would keep more of what they earned, allowing them to spend more on what they needed, as is provided by permanent tax cuts of up to \$2,500 for individuals in 2022-23.

Eighteen countries, including Belgium, Germany and Norway, chose to save their citizens money by reducing consumption taxes.

As we can see, many of the nations I have named have made the choice to provide tax relief to Canadians. The costly coalition, the Liberal-NDP coalition, has not chosen that.

The numbers are in. Canada ran a \$90.2 billion deficit last year. That deficit is equivalent to almost \$2,400 per Canadian and at the rate of \$172,000 of new debt for every single minute of the fiscal year. That is not a small amount. It also means that Canada's total debt now stands well north of a trillion dollars. As of March 31, the Government of Canada also had an accumulated deficit of \$1.13 trillion.

We wonder where this is coming from. The Auditor General says that there are \$500 million in overpayments to civil servants that need to be collected. A new report from Canada's Auditor General said that 28% of civil servants in its sampling had errors in their pay. If a government cannot even handle the payroll, why should it handle our nation's finances or even our country?

Another example of this wasteful spending is the \$12 million to Loblaw's for new fridges.

Where are Canadians at with this? Forty-seven percent of respondents in a survey of Canadians felt that their finances had worsened over the last year. Fifty-three percent believe that we will be in a recession next year. Even worse, 30% believe that we are in a recession right now.

Canadians have long forgotten the sunny ways of the NDP-Liberal coalition.

The good news is that relief is on the way. Relief is on the way with a Conservative government. We pledge no new taxes. We pledge the "pay-as-you-go" system. For every new dollar of spending, we must find a new dollar of savings.



*Business of Supply*

The motion today is not just about a \$54-million application that was supposed to cost \$80,000, which experts say could have been made for \$200,000; it is about much more than that. It is about how the NDP-Liberal coalition has lost its way and how it needs to stop the taxes and stop the inflationary spending, now.

• (1315)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am looking for a little clarification and perhaps the member could help.

The very first clause in the motion says, “the cost of government is driving up the cost of living.” When I asked the New Democrats about this, they said that this referred to oil subsidies. However, what I heard the Leader of the Opposition and the finance critic say this morning was that more and more government employees were being hired and that was what they were being critical of.

I want to ensure that the NDP knows what it is voting for here. With respect to the first clause in the motion, could the member confirm whether we are talking about oil subsidies or are we talking about the hiring more and more federal employees?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, well, it is true. Numbers have come back, and there has been a significant increase in the number of full-time equivalents, without a doubt, and in fact even more than planned originally. The unfortunate thing is that this has been done without an improvement to services for Canadians. Canadians are still waiting for their passports, and there is still an incredible backlog in our immigration system. The Liberal-NDP government is clearly not up to the task of not only reducing spending but spending and getting results for Canadians.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I agree with one part of my colleague's speech. I have to say that the part of the motion calling for an investigation to shed light on the astronomical amounts paid for ArriveCAN, an app that received far more complaints than praise, at least from my constituents, is welcome. We received calls condemning this fiasco of an app, which cost a fortune. We have to shed light on this matter.

However, I am a bit concerned, because we are in a period when people need help and a recession is probably imminent. There will be an economic statement on Thursday. There are issues such as assistance for the most vulnerable and for seniors starting at age 65 and the workers who are being abandoned because there is no sign of EI reform. There is a whole set of issues with the Government of Canada's social programs, which should be strengthened to help people.

Are these the types of measures that the Conservatives are prepared to support, yes or no?

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, obviously we agree on the need for transparency.

I also think we agree on the fact that the app cost too much and that far too much money was spent developing it. However, I think

that the most important thing here is that we need to get value for our money, but we are not.

I think we agree on the need for transparency. I think we also agree that we should be getting a return on our investment.

[*English*]

**Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I will try to be brief, but there is so much I want to get into.

First is the idea that if we cut gas taxes at the pumps, it will help people. The member's own provincial government in Alberta tried this, and for a week the price went down relative to what it is in British Columbia. However, a week later gas companies pushed it back up to where it used to be, so it was cutting government income and saving nobody any money at all.

Second, when it comes to the debate we had last week, NDP members had asked the Conservatives to support their idea of cutting the GST on home energy and they refused, instead fixating on a carbon tax that will go up by two cents a litre in April, saving nobody—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** I am sorry, but there is not enough time. The hon. member used the whole minute.

I will allow the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore to answer.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie:** Madam Speaker, everyone's fuel prices went up as a result of commodity prices, and the reality is that as long as the Liberal-NDP coalition, which the member is a part of, continues to spend, inflationary prices will continue to increase across all goods and services.

**Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I would like to start today by offering some context for the opposition motion debate that is before the House. I would like to go back to the spring of 2020, when we were facing one of the most serious public health crises in our country, the largest we have ever seen. I am proud to say that our government, this Liberal government, made every effort to buy essential supplies and services to protect Canadians.

As the central purchasing agent for the federal government, Public Services and Procurement Canada, or PSPC, was at the forefront of that effort. It was a monumental task for procurement experts to carry out. Our government worked non-stop to support our frontline health care professionals and all those keeping Canadians safe.

### *Business of Supply*

When it came to procurement, we were operating in a hyper-competitive market. From the beginning, we followed a deliberate, strategic and comprehensive plan that helped us get results. We can all take pride in the fact that our focused procurement approach, over more than two years, has ensured that Canada has a secure supply of vaccines and personal protective equipment. In fact, Canada is a world leader on this front.

Because of the groundwork we laid at the beginning of the pandemic, and thanks to the hard work of so many Canadians across the country, we remain in one of the more enviable positions in the world when it comes to access to vaccines, personal protective equipment and other supplies. We took action when Canadians needed it most: when their health and safety were on the line.

Our approach was no different when it came to the ArriveCAN application. Early in the pandemic, ArriveCAN was put in place urgently to track and trace travellers as they crossed the border. The app was created in the spring of 2020 as a joint initiative between the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency to meet sudden new pressures brought on by the pandemic. Their goal was an important one: to limit the spread of COVID-19 within Canada to ensure the health and safety of Canadians.

When urgent needs were identified by Canada's border agency, it turned to Public Services and Procurement Canada to put necessary contracts in place urgently. This was a request to develop, integrate and maintain a completely new and secure application, needed immediately to support Canada's response to the pandemic. That was in April 2020, only one month after the pandemic began, and as a common service provider, the department moved quickly to help shore up the resources needed to produce ArriveCAN. It acted with the greatest of urgency, leveraging existing tools to respond.

As GC Strategies is a pre-qualified supplier on an existing method of supply, namely a standing offer and supply arrangement for informatics professional services, the Government of Canada tapped into its expertise. This was done on an emergency basis using existing tools, and the app was developed and launched as quickly as possible during an unprecedented time in our history.

As the pandemic dragged on, our government sought to ease difficulties at the border and at the same time improve the app. By late 2020, the Government of Canada made the necessary decision to make an ArriveCAN submission mandatory for all travellers in 2021. Again, the goal was to further mitigate the spread of COVID-19 associated with international travel and, ultimately, to keep Canadians safe.

With the app soon to be mandatory, in December 2020 the government obtained expertise to ensure that ArriveCAN would meet requirements under the Accessible Canada Act and the Government of Canada's policy on service and digital. In late 2021, the Canada Border Services Agency identified a new requirement to maintain and support various ongoing informatics professional needs, and that included maintenance for the ArriveCAN app.

This requirement for services, which was competitively solicited, included ongoing complex work to support the Canada Border Services Agency. This included work in application development, bio-

metrics, digital credentials, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence and machine learning, among others, as needed. The procurement was publicly posted on buyandsell.gc.ca. One bid was received, and following a rigorous evaluation, the government awarded a three-year contract to GC Strategies in May 2022.

I would reiterate that this contract is not only for resources to support ArriveCAN, but is supporting a variety of IT requirements for the Canada Border Services Agency. In addition, the Canada Border Services Agency has noted that GC Strategies was not the only contractor involved in developing and producing ArriveCAN. Several companies have worked on this highly complex and continuously evolving app, and not just private sector contractors but also Government of Canada experts.

● (1325)

For example, throughout the design, development and deployment process of the app, Shared Services Canada worked to enable the application to securely exchange information between the cloud and Government of Canada data centres. Again, this is a highly complex application, one that requires high levels of security, protection and interoperability with federal databases. I cannot underscore that point enough.

As the pandemic situation evolved and the Government of Canada made regular adjustments to border measures, regular updates to ArriveCAN were also needed. These updates had to be developed and tested prior to launch to ensure the app worked as expected while safeguarding the personal information of Canadians and international travellers. It required more than 70 app and website releases over two and a half years. The contracts we put in place allowed that to happen quickly and in a time of crisis, and I note that the Canada Border Services Agency has released a breakdown of costs associated with ArriveCAN.

The ArriveCAN app was absolutely necessary. Despite what the opposition may say, ArriveCAN was a critical tool that we successfully stood up in the middle of a global emergency. It is an app that has helped keep Canadians healthy and safe. That is what our government is focused on and has always been focused on.

Allow me to emphasize that we are committed to an open, fair and transparent procurement process, while obtaining the best possible value for Canadian taxpayers. The ArriveCAN app was put in place to protect Canadians. The ability it gave us to manage public health measures at the border in a time of crisis to keep Canadians safe was absolutely necessary.

*Business of Supply*

ArriveCAN evolved with the pandemic and, yes, this required expertise from and contracts with private sector experts, as well as work performed by civil servants. Without this vital tool, Canada's ability to administer the border measures needed to protect public health would have been significantly reduced. I hope my colleagues in the House can agree that responsible governments take action in times of need to protect their citizens, and that is precisely what we did.

Throughout the pandemic, our government has been there for Canadians. We have had their backs and we will continue to be there for all Canadians as our country recovers from this crisis.

• (1330)

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would ask the member if he is aware of the metrics used to determine the number of COVID-infected individuals entering Canada that validated the millions and millions of dollars spent on the ArriveCAN app. Does he have a number?

**Mr. John Aldag:** Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my comments, our government's first and foremost priority was the health and safety and protection of Canadians during a worldwide pandemic. The fact that international travellers or Canadians abroad could be bringing COVID-19 and its variants into Canada was a concern. That is why, as I mentioned, the government made sure that resources were spent to protect Canadians' safety. That was done in part through the resources expended on the development and refinement of the ArriveCAN app.

[Translation]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am rather surprised by what the member opposite said. He seems to be saying that his government's actions were above reproach and that everything went well.

However, just this summer, the Minister of Transport was urgently called to testify and explain the whole mess surrounding the ArriveCAN app and the chaos in our airports. His response was not very convincing.

Today's opposition day is entirely focused on the ArriveCAN app itself, but there were also many articles in the media last spring, summer and fall about the problems being caused by the app, even though it apparently cost a fortune.

I would like to know whether my colleague opposite should not instead be apologizing on the government's behalf.

[English]

**Mr. John Aldag:** Madam Speaker, the government has nothing to apologize for. We were putting the health and safety of Canadians first and making sure we were there in an urgent worldwide crisis, a pandemic. We made sure we were taking every measure to keep Canadians safe.

I hope the Bloc is not saying that the money spent was inappropriate when we were protecting the health and safety of Canadians, because members on this side of the House, and I hope members in the opposition as well, want to protect the health and safety of Canadians not only in a pandemic but on all days. We never know

where the next threat is coming from, and this is the effort that our government put into protecting Canadians.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to preface my next question with a fact related to the treatment of the public service in Canada. It is no secret that over 2,500 grievances have been made against the government for outsourcing IT contracts and other contracts to the private sector.

Can the member explain why his government continues to outsource valuable work to the private sector that our public sector here in Canada can do?

• (1335)

**Mr. John Aldag:** Madam Speaker, the IT world is fast moving. In the case I mentioned in my statement, we had a worldwide pandemic facing the world. As a country, we wanted to act to make sure Canadians were safe. This would have extended beyond the capabilities of the public service to do something as quick and complex as was needed, not only for the ArriveCAN app but for all of the other myriad aspects of the project I spoke about, including maintaining the safety and integrity of data.

The government procures expertise from both internal and external resources. In this case, it was determined that IT resources and expertise from outside contractors was warranted. Those are the steps the government took.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this opposition day motion introduced by the Conservatives.

From the outset, I do not have an issue with the fact that the Conservatives are seeking accountability by asking the Auditor General to conduct some work. The premise of my concern is with respect to the preamble and the rhetoric that precludes the call on the Auditor General. That is what I will be focusing my time on.

For starters, I am concerned with the tone being suggested about such an important piece of infrastructure, which is this particular program for the security of Canada. We have members, like the member for Louis-Hébert who said moments ago that somebody could have made this for \$200,000 in their basement. I believe those were his words.

Do we really want somebody working individually from their basement to create an app that holds such sensitive data as passport numbers and health information of not just Canadians but individuals around the world? Is that the standard by which we establish and set the quality of service that people visiting Canada and Canadians have come to rely on? I highly doubt it.

*Business of Supply*

There is also the fact that the contract for ArriveCAN was not just about the creation over the weekend of an app. It was about multiple variations of it, changing the app, updating the app and maintaining the data. Let us think of the incredible amount of maintenance that was involved in this particular app on its own.

It is quite disingenuous when members get up in the House, namely Conservatives, like the member for Louis-Hébert did moments ago, and very haphazardly say that somebody could have created this app in their basement over the weekend. It is extremely disingenuous. They are heckling now, suggesting that they said they could do it. I am sure that a lot of people could say they could do it, but are these individuals who are qualified to handle such sensitive data?

Are these individuals who could properly put the required measures in place to make sure that data is secure and kept secure? That is the question. Are these individuals who have the ability to maintain that piece of a program for months and years to come so that it could properly be updated and protected against various threats? Of course not. It is extremely disingenuous to suggest that. At the end of the day, the members opposite know that.

What I find most interesting about this is that now we have the Conservatives saying that we did not need ArriveCAN and it was completely unnecessary. Let me read something from November 26, 2021. Conservatives do not want to hear this. They are already humming and hawing over it.

This is from the leader of the Conservative Party at the time. They have since given him the boot and gotten somebody else. He said, “Vaccines are the most effective tool to slowing the spread of known COVID-19 variants”. Do the Conservative members still support that? I would love to hear their input on that. That is a slight digression.

It goes on to say, “preventing serious illness, and ensuring that our economies from coast to coast to coast can stay open. As soon as COVID-19 began to spread, Canada’s Conservatives called on the...government to take action to secure the border and prevent the spread of the virus in Canada.”

This is the Conservatives. This was their former leader making that statement.

How about this from CTV News on April 22, 2021, again quoting the federal Conservatives and their then leader. With the words “Secure the Border” plastered behind him, the former Conservative leader “urged Canada to temporarily suspend all flights from COVID-19 hot spots.”

This is a quote:

“Canadians are being told not to go to work, not to send their children to school, but hundreds of international flights continue to land in Canada each week,” he said Thursday...“It is long past time for the [Prime Minister] to take action.”

This, again, is exactly what the former Conservative leader was saying. Now, they are suddenly saying that, when they said take action, they did not mean develop a way to prevent these people and to monitor these people coming to and going from the country. Do not forget, it was not that much later that the Conservatives suddenly started asking why the borders were not open.

• (1340)

The member for New Brunswick Southwest said earlier that he wanted his borders open and asked why his borders were not open?

What was their plan? Was it to just open the borders without any kind of safety measure? The Conservatives literally called on the government to bring in these safety measures. The government suspended those flights, brought in the safety measures and then gradually let people back into the country and that was not even good enough for them.

Here is another one from CTV on November 26, 2021. The member for Durham, the leader at the time, called on the Canadian government to issue travel advisories banning non-essential travel to and from countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe. The article says, “The party also wants to see mandatory screening at all international airports from affected countries, regardless of vaccination status and mandatory quarantine for all travellers from those countries.”

The member for Durham, the leader at the time, was literally calling on the government, in his words, for mandatory screening. How did they want to screen people? What was wrong with the piece of technology that was developed in order to screen them?

This is the hypocrisy that we are seeing from the other side. Earlier on, the Conservatives were saying to close the borders and set up tough measures to control people coming in. We brought in this app and then they suddenly changed their tune and asked, “Why are the borders not open and why do we have this silly app that we do not need?” That is the rhetoric that comes from the other side of the House.

I feel the most sorry for the New Democrats in this opposition day motion. They have been completely duped by the Conservatives. The first whereas clause in this motion says, “the cost of government is driving up the cost of living”. This is important because we heard in the opening comments by the Leader of the Opposition and the critic for finance that they were relating that specific clause to the increase in employees who work for the Government of Canada. That is what they said.

I asked the member for Courtenay—Alberni why he would support something like that. He said that they are talking about oil subsidies. I then asked the member for Calgary Midnapore whether she can confirm what that was exactly. She said it had to do with the rise in the number of employees who are working for the Government of Canada.

By supporting this motion, the NDP members are effectively agreeing with the Conservatives that the cost of government is driving up the cost of living and, by their own words, the Conservatives are referring to the number of employees who have been hired by the Government of Canada. That is not something that I would see the NDP in this House supporting.

*Business of Supply*

The member for Edmonton Griesbach keeps standing up and talking about protecting public service jobs. He keeps getting up and asking that question. The very first whereas clause in this motion goes directly against that. They are critiquing and challenging those jobs, but the New Democrats have no problem voting in favour of it, even though it has that whereas clause in it.

**Mr. Marc Dalton (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I hope that you will pardon us if we are in disbelief regarding the member's comments. He talks about the scrutiny of the app. The Liberals cannot even scrutinize the contracts they have given. They do not know where \$1.2 million of this \$54 million went.

We have all had blood tests. In a blood test there is a small sample of what is going on in the entire body. This ArriveCAN is like a blood test and inside of it we see wastefulness. We see incompetency and perhaps corruption. We see dysfunctionality. We see all sorts of problems. Will the member for Kingston and the Islands agree with this?

• (1345)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes):** The member talked about corruption. I would just caution him about some of the words that he used because members cannot say indirectly what they cannot say directly. I just want the member to be careful on that.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, do not worry about being in disbelief. Welcome to my world for the last seven years.

The member asks about the app and the way the app was being applied. The Conservatives were calling on the government to do something about this. I read direct quotes by the member for Durham when he was the leader of the opposition, and there are quotes from the member for Carleton. They were demanding that the federal government close the borders until we could set up a secure way to let people in. That is exactly what we did. We set up a secure way and, yes, doing secure operations in a G7 country costs money. However, they will dumb it down by saying not to worry about it and that they could have done it in their basement for 200 grand.

It is up to you, Madam Speaker, who you want to take seriously on that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I have to admit I am a little disappointed because I feel like I just listened to the most painful speech of the day so far.

Let us not kid ourselves: The Conservatives are not perfect—far from it—but the official opposition's motion does deserve credit for raising an important issue, namely, what happened to the \$54 million and how was that money managed? I think that is a reasonable and legitimate question.

I thought the member across the way was out of line. His speech was extremely partisan and aggressive at a time when the government should be demonstrating humility, openness and transparency.

I was surprised to see him also attack NDP members because he is mad at them for mildly criticizing the government for once, instead of kowtowing to it. Maybe he has forgotten that democracy still exists in the House?

Here is my question for the member opposite: Are the Liberals capable of introspection?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I am sorry that I disappointed the Bloc by not bringing up health care transfers because that is the only thing its members ever really want to talk about in here.

I will say that my concern for the NDP was laid out very clearly. I am concerned that the NDP would vote in favour of a motion that has a whereas clause basically saying that we have too many public servants working for the government. That is my concern.

I did not say they had to haphazardly follow the government like a lapdog, as the member suggested. I laid out exactly what my concern was. The member is trying to suggest I am doing something other than that, and that is simply not the case.

**Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to be very clear with Liberal members. The New Democratic Party is against giving Liberal-backed insiders all the money the government produces for a service that Canadians can barely use. When we are talking about contracts or privatization, we are talking about real public servants, which the government is trying to toss out the door right now. New Democrats are trying to protect those jobs.

When we are talking about actually protecting the public service, why does the member continue to outsource to and protect his big friends in the private sector?

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Madam Speaker, I am being lectured on not protecting public service jobs while the member is about to vote in favour of a motion that criticizes the government for having too many public sector employees. Maybe he should go back to read the motion again.

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to join my colleagues today in speaking in favour of our opposition day motion. This motion seeks to, among other things, underscore how the government's inflationary policies and overspending are driving up the cost of living.

For over two years, Conservatives have warned the Prime Minister about the consequences of his actions and how much they are hurting Canadians from coast to coast. Seniors are watching their life savings evaporate and having to delay their retirements. Families are downgrading their diets to cover the jump in food prices, and 30-year-olds, who did everything we asked them to do, are trapped in 400-square-foot apartments or their parents' basements.

*Business of Supply*

The government has done little to solve these problems. In fact, its out-of-control spending has only made things worse, with Canadians now paying higher prices and higher interest rates as a result. As the motion states, “it is more important than ever for the government to respect taxpayer dollars and eliminate wasteful spending”. That is why we put forward this motion that, “the House call on the Auditor General...to conduct a performance audit, including the payments, contracts and sub-contracts for all aspects of the ArriveCAN app, and to prioritize this investigation.”

The outrageous spending habits of the government have put the futures of Canadians at risk. Many times in this place, I have seen ministers of the Crown stand up and proudly tout the massive amounts of money they are spending, almost as if they were competing to see whose department could spend the most.

Recently, we saw the Prime Minister stay in a \$6,000-per-night hotel room in London. I recall a time when the Liberals were outraged by such extravagant spending, with the member for Winnipeg North calling a \$16 glass of orange juice an outrage. Now he stands silent while his fellow caucus members spend \$6,000 a night on hotel rooms.

Will there be calls for these members to pay back to taxpayers the extra money they used on such luxuries? It is not likely. Will ministers be removed from their offices? Only if they stand on principle and do right by Canadians. They wastefully spend taxpayers' money, and when they get no results, or even worsen the situation, they deflect.

The government continues to increase its spending, calling it necessary and urgent. As a result, at home I see the prices rising in grocery stores and at gas pumps, and I hear from constituents who are hit hard by rising interest rates. The government refuses to admit is fuelling the problem it claims its spending is solving. I suppose it should not be surprising, coming from a government led by someone who thinks that budgets balance themselves and, as such, has no plan except to raise taxes.

The plan to triple the carbon tax during the winter months is so devastating to constituents in my riding and will have devastating consequences for Canadians across the country, particularly rural Canadians. Rural Canadians already pay some of the highest heating costs for their homes in this country. These costs were already significantly higher than those of Canadians who live in cities, but now the divide is becoming larger. This is true for those who live in my riding and are struggling, as these costs will only continue to rise.

I should mention I will be splitting my time with the MP for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Canadians need relief from the government's inflationary policies, which are so focused on spending, it then raises taxes to cover its financial mismanagement. The government continues to brush off claims that its spending is out of control by saying it needed to spend in order to support Canadians during the pandemic, and that if one questions its spending, one must not care about Canadians.

• (1350)

As I mentioned, our motion reads, “the Parliamentary Budget Officer states that 40% of new spending is not related to COVID-19”. I will repeat that because it bears repeating: 40% of new spending since 2020, which is causing the steep rise in inflation and pushing hard-working Canadians towards the poverty line, had nothing to do with the pandemic.

As if this 40% of new spending, which has no link to COVID-19, was not bad enough. What is even more galling is the overspending the Liberals committed to while using the pandemic as a cover. The ArriveCAN app is one of these cases of overspending, with \$54 million for an app, which at the end of the day, was not only unnecessary but also exacerbated the situation at the border.

In committee, we heard from the president of the union for border workers that frontline border services workers were not consulted on the development or implementation of the ArriveCAN app. Instead, the idea was pulled together by the elites of this government with a contract awarded to GCstrategies, a small, Ottawa-based, IT staffing firm. These are individuals who had no idea what it is like to work at a border crossing, the challenges that workers deal with every day or how their situation would be made exponentially worse through the introduction of this app.

CBSA agents were forced to troubleshoot the app with travellers when they had not or were not able to complete the app. This caused significant lineups at the border, as the agents at each border crossing were forced to deal with the consequences of the Liberals' unnecessary intervention.

For all the money that was spent on the ArriveCAN app, which was \$54 million by the way, and it was an app that could have been built for \$250,000, it could have been replaced by a simple piece of paper with a QR code, like those already being used by provinces, to show proof of vaccination. On the ArriveCAN website, it is still described as saving time for travellers. The only way it has saved time is by being removed from mandatory use.

The overspending that plagues this government is very apparent with ArriveCAN. It is a complete lack of respect for taxpayers and their money. In fact, the government is so careless, it does not even keep proper records about who it gives money to.

In response to an Order Paper question, this government stated that it paid ThinkOn \$1,183,432 for experimentation of mobile QR code scanning and verification. ThinkOn has since come out and said that it was not paid this money, nor does it do this type of work. Ernst & Young, with no other information about its contract aside from the amount, was said to have received \$121,755; however, a spokesperson said that it had done no work on the app.

The misleading of Canadians and what has been done with their tax dollars needs to end. When \$54 million is spent on a failed app without oversight or transparency, and taxpayer money is missing from the ArriveCAN scam, Canadians deserve to know what the Liberal government is hiding. The government needs to come clean with Canadians.

We will not back down from demanding answers and accountability for Canadians. We will get to the truth for Canadians, and that is why we are calling for the Auditor General to conduct a performance audit where the government cannot hide anything.

This government will continue to try to shift blame off of itself and onto the bureaucrats, but it is government members' signatures that are on the answers to the Order Paper questions, and it is their responsibility to ensure that the information they are releasing is correct.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1355)

[*English*]

### CANADIAN SPACE INNOVATION

**Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, Space Canada represents Canada's space innovators and allied industries to convey the value of space technology, research, investment and results to domestic and international audiences, and to position Canada at the forefront of the highly strategic new global space economy.

From vibrant start-ups to large global companies, Space Canada members are designing, building and implementing innovative new solutions on and around our planet, from launch to space-based communications, space exploration, environmental monitoring and Earth observation, among many other applications.

Space Canada employs thousands of highly qualified people across Canada and contributes \$2.5 billion to Canada's GDP.

I support Space Canada, which is calling on the federal government to create a national space council, chaired by the Prime Minister, to guide space policies and investments.

\* \* \*

• (1400)

### CRAFT BREWING IN ALBERTA

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand in the House today to celebrate the recent achievements of Blindman Brewing, located in my hometown of Lacombe.

Blindman was named the best brewery of the year in Alberta and recognized best in show for its Brett 24-2 stock ale at the Alberta Craft Brewing Convention.

It is satisfying to see that the hard work of risk-taking and ambitious small business entrepreneurs is being rewarded, because small business is the backbone of our local economies.

### Statements by Members

Blindman is known for creating innovative, community-focused craft beer. It is the first Canadian brewery to document and tell the story of its beer's production. Every can is customized and tells the journey of each beer, right back to the field where the grain was grown.

I personally enjoy the Five of Diamonds pilsner, based on Len Thompson's signature five of diamonds spoon. A portion of the proceeds is used to enhance local fishing opportunities. It does not get much more Canadian than fishing and beer.

I encourage everyone to stop by and experience the Blindman taproom the next time they travel to central Alberta.

Once again, I congratulate Blindman Brewing for its award-winning craft beer and wish it every future success.

Cheers!

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### LILLIAN ADAMAKIS

**Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, our Toronto—Danforth community is shining a little brighter this week as we mourn the loss of Lillian Adamakis. She was also known as Diamond Lil.

People have described Lillian as “a force of nature”. She exuded brilliance. She was magnetizing. She was someone who was an amazing force. She made our community a better place, and we all will miss her deeply.

She was a real estate agent who introduced so many people to our beautiful neck of the woods in the east end. She was a glue to us. She supported many community organizations, like The Hunger Project Canada, the Riverdale Share, and our silent auction for our schools. She was a lovely person.

May Lillian rest in peace. We will miss her dearly.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### QUÉBEC CINÉMA GALA

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Madam Speaker, the curtain fell on the Québec Cinéma gala in 2022, with its last broadcast on Radio-Canada. This is a sad and, I believe, ill-advised decision.

Obviously, it is not up to this Parliament to decide on public television programming, and I am not about to tell Radio-Canada decision-makers what should or should not go on the air, but as a proud Quebec film buff, I am concerned.

I am concerned when an opportunity to showcase Quebec cinema is shut down, when our creators, talented and brilliant creators, are no longer recognized for their work. I am concerned that people are quietly disconnecting from our culture.

*Statements by Members*

The Québec Cinéma gala was an extraordinary showcase that Radio-Canada has shattered without any consideration for our artists, our cultural milieu and our film industry. When something does not work, it should be fixed and improved, not destroyed.

This decision is unfortunate, but it is not too late to correct it. The Québec film industry deserves much better.

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[English]

**RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS**

**Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the remarkable career of outgoing mayor Ken Christian on his last day as mayor of Kamloops.

Mayor Christian's public life began 29 years ago. Back then, Kamloops was preparing to host the Canada Summer Games, the population was much lower, and this face had not yet seen a razor.

Ken began his career on the Kamloops-Thompson school board. After serving for 18 years, he was elected to city council in 2011, followed by his election to mayor in 2017.

On a personal level, I will miss our tradition of taking a selfie at local events. Ken was extremely welcoming to me in my new role as an MP, and I am grateful for all he taught me.

Mayor Christian has left big shoes to fill for mayor-elect Hamer-Jackson. I thank him for his service and wish him, Brenda, Nic, Jon, Taryn and his grandson all the best in his well-earned retirement.

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**PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT SUPPLIER**

**Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we learned very early on in the COVID pandemic that masks save lives. As demand for life-saving masks spiked, we also learned valuable lessons about Canada's supply chain for personal protective equipment. When COVID hit, we were not manufacturing medical-grade respirators in Canada, which were badly needed to protect our medical staff and essential workers. As Canadians do when faced with a challenge, we all got to work.

Today I want to thank 3M Canada and its employees for their incredible commitment to Canadians' health and well-being. During the heart of the pandemic, 3M Canada, with support from our government and the Province of Ontario, was able to increase the domestic manufacturing of critical N95 respirators right here in Brockville, Ontario. It continues to supply those masks today.

By manufacturing N95s here, 3M Canada has demonstrated true dedication to our country, to our frontline health care workers and essential workers, and to our economy, supporting good jobs across the country. Today I want to thank 3M and its employees for that.

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● (1405)

**KANATA PARKRUN**

**Ms. Jenna Sudds (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, every Saturday, in neighbourhoods in Canada and around the world,

runners, walkers and joggers alike participate in Parkrun, a free, five-kilometre community event for people of all ages, abilities and fitness levels. Parkruns are volunteer led, free to join and open to all. Since 2004, Parkruns have been held around the world, and park runners often participate in local Parkruns while on vacation, meeting locals and creating a truly worldwide Parkrun community.

This year, I am proud to congratulate Kanata's Parkrun on its fifth anniversary. For the last five years, community volunteers like Linda Newton have been instrumental in organizing over 150 Parkruns, which take place every Saturday on Kanata's Beaver Pond Trail. I want to take this opportunity to thank Linda and all the weekly heroes who help make Parkrun a popular activity in my riding of Kanata—Carleton. I thank them for promoting a healthy, active lifestyle in our Kanata community every weekend.

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**AFFORDABILITY**

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last night was Halloween, but for too many Canadian families, what is scary is a trip to the grocery store. When Canadians talk about bread-and-butter issues, they talk about bread being up 17% and butter being up 14% in the past year alone. Even apples for treat bags this year are up 17%, with record-smashing uptake at food banks across the country.

Why? It is because farmers' costs are going through the roof, yet while Canadians are already struggling to feed themselves, the NDP and Liberal coalition will triple the carbon tax while adding fertilizer mandates. A Conservative government will repeal these and get out of our farmers' way so that we can grow our own affordable food.

The government's high energy taxes and proposed fertilizer restrictions will only drive food production abroad and undermine Canada's food security. Did we not learn how irresponsible it is to rely on others from our COVID experience? Canadians cannot afford this costly coalition between the NDP and the Liberal government. Trick or treat?



*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mrs. Élisabeth Brière (Sherbrooke, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again this fall, Sherbrooke Innopole has ranked among the top 20 economic development agencies in Canada, according to Site Selection magazine. I would like to acknowledge the leadership of Sylvain Durocher and his entire team. It is thanks to organizations like Sherbrooke Innopole that our community is enjoying strong growth in private sector investment.

Our government has supported many companies over the past year so they could invest heavily in order to increase their production and productivity. Those companies include Café William Spartivento, FARO Roasting Houses, Lamontagne Chocolate, Royer and Motrec. Our government remains committed to investing in local businesses so they can compete and grow in an uncertain world.

Let us continue to support our businesses and communities across the country.

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[English]

**MEDICAL RADIATION TECHNOLOGISTS**

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, next week, November 6 to 12, is Medical Radiation Technologists Week in Canada.

If colleagues do not know MRTs by name, they certainly know them by their actions and their impact in the health care system. MRTs are the essential frontline health care professionals who together perform more than 30 million diagnostic imaging exams, like CT scans, MRIs, mammograms and x-rays, and deliver tens of thousands of courses of life-saving radiation therapy each year in Canada. MRTs provide the essential link between compassionate care and the sophisticated medical imaging and therapeutic technologies that underpin modern health care.

In diagnostic imaging departments, cancer centres, emergency and operating rooms and clinics across the country, there are currently more than 22,000 MRTs. Today, I invite the House to join me in recognizing the expertise and dedication of MRTs, who provide essential care to Canadians every day.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as energy prices skyrocket, inflation is going through the roof and families continue to struggle to afford groceries, the Liberal government is fixated on raising taxes. The Liberals are the only government in the G7 to raise taxes on energy, and they are tripling down on their carbon tax. Canadians cannot afford higher taxes.

A poll released yesterday said 44% of households are concerned about not having enough money to make ends meet. While seniors and families are struggling, it is no wonder people are furious to find out the Prime Minister spent \$6,000 a night on a lavish hotel room.

The out-of-touch government needs to make sure Canadians and Canadian families are their number one priority. The Liberals have no plan to get inflation under control; they have no plan to get spending under control and no plan to provide meaningful tax relief.

On this side of the House, we will continue to put Canadians first and protect their paycheques and savings so they do not have to choose between paying their heating bill or paying their grocery bill this winter.

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**FINANCE**

**Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the cost of the NDP-Liberal coalition is coming to a head, and it is Canadians who are left with the bill.

The Prime Minister has added more to the national debt than all previous prime ministers combined, and the road to this record is littered with wasteful spending. Whether it is the inflated costs of the arrive scam app, luxury suites for the Prime Minister and his delegation to London, CERB cheques to prisoners, government contracts for Liberal insiders like Frank Baylis, or the half-billion-dollar WE scandal, wasteful spending is fanning inflation, which is already at a 40-year high.

The Bank of Canada hiked interest rates again last week, with more to come. Higher taxes and more inflationary spending are not the answer. I think most Canadians would agree that it is time we had a prime minister who thought about monetary policy.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MARC LAUZON**

**Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to rise today to acknowledge the winners of the 26th Gatineau Chamber of Commerce Excelor awards, which were handed out at a gala on Saturday evening.

Not only was this gala a success that showcased the efforts of every business owner and worker who excelled over the past year, but I could not have asked for better than to see my brother, Marc Lauzon, be named personality of the year 2022.

His business is located in the riding of Gatineau and not Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation, but my pride knows no borders. I am proud of his business, proud of the economic development he has brought to our region, and proud of the dozens of employees who contribute to the company's success, but most of all, I am proud of my big brother.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**SENIORS**

**Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday was Halloween, and in Edmonton Strathcona we welcomed children yelling “trick or treat”, rewarding them with sweet treats. It is a good thing they will have dental care, but trick or treating season did not end last night. For two million seniors, the tricks just keep coming.

In 2012, Stephen Harper announced his plan to change the age of eligibility for old age security and the guaranteed income supplement from 65 to 67, and Canadians were outraged. Seeing an opportunity, no doubt, the Liberal government restored the age of eligibility for old age security and GIS back to 65.

However, with the government, there is always a trick. This year, the overdue and necessary 10% increase for OAS became a trick when, surprise, the government decided to leave some seniors out. This increase goes only to seniors aged 75 and older. Seniors aged 65 to 74 are being left holding an empty bag.

All seniors are facing the same costs. It is time to stop playing tricks on seniors. All seniors need an increase. All seniors deserve an increase.

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● (1415)

[Translation]

**RENÉ LÉVESQUE**

**Ms. Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, René Lévesque left us 35 years ago.

Quebec owes René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois so much, including the nationalization of electricity, the Charter of the French Language, agricultural zoning, automobile insurance, the immigration agreement, the environment department and so much more.

More than any of these achievements, his main contribution, his greatest contribution, was that he made us Quebeckers. Before René Lévesque, we were French Canadians. Thanks to him, and to women and men like him, we have become Quebeckers. That is his greatest and most beautiful legacy. That is why Félix Leclerc described him as the liberator of the people.

René Lévesque was born 100 years ago. He left us 35 years ago. Sovereignists and federalists alike are in his debt, and we are all his heirs, because René Lévesque was something like a great man.

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[English]

**CARBON PRICING**

**Mr. Brad Redekopp (Saskatoon West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, winter is coming and Canadians are about to pay the true price of this tired, worn down NDP-Liberal coalition. Thanks to its carbon tax, everything has gotten more expensive, from groceries to gasoline to home heating, but the leader of the NDP talks out of both sides of his mouth.

On October 24, the Conservatives moved a motion to remove the carbon tax from home heating and make life more affordable. What did the leader of the NDP and his colleagues do? They voted to keep the carbon tax, making it more expensive for Canadians.

However, this past weekend, the NDP leader spoke from the other side of his mouth, demanding that the government remove the GST from the price of home heating. He cannot have it both ways.

Canadians see through this hypocritical charade. They know that it is actions that matter, not words.

By voting to make home heating more expensive and supporting the tripling the carbon tax, the NDP has made it clear. It is a cold, costly coalition partner of the Liberal government that Canadians cannot afford.

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**LEBANESE HERITAGE MONTH**

**Ms. Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in Nova Scotia and in Ontario, November is officially recognized as Lebanese Heritage Month, a time to celebrate the generations of cultural, economic and civic contributions of Lebanese Canadians.

November holds great significance for Lebanese people all over the world as independence day, Eid Al-Istiqlal, is celebrated on the 22nd.

In my own province, the Lebanese presence dates back to the 1800s.

In 2018, I was part of the provincial government that proclaimed November as Lebanese Heritage Month.

Again, this year, celebrations will be held from Yarmouth to Halifax to Sydney. I am proud to have introduced Bill C-268 to recognize Lebanese Heritage Month nationally and honour, share and celebrate our culture.

I am equally proud to work with Senator Jane Cordy on Bill S-246 to do the same. I encourage all members to mark Lebanese Heritage Month in their communities, join our parliamentary friendship group and support these important bills.

**The Speaker:** While I have your full attention, I want to point out two things. First, the rules state that members are not supposed to walk between the Speaker and whoever is speaking in the House. The other is that the S. O. 31s are 60 seconds long. I would not want to cut anybody's message off.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### THE ECONOMY

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first inflation ballooned thanks to the Prime Minister's \$500-billion inflationary deficit. Then he added inflationary taxes that are making it even more expensive for our businesses and farmers to produce goods and services. Now these deficits are raising the interest rates for Canadians. Everything he does makes things worse. Canadians are telling him to stop raising taxes, stop the inflationary deficits and stop the inflationary spending.

Will he listen to them and stop?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what I am hearing from Canadians is that they are concerned about the cost of living, the cost of dental care for their children, and the cost of rent if they are low-income earners. That is why we have introduced concrete measures to help Canadians.

Canadians are also confused about the fact that the Conservative Party chooses to oppose dental care assistance for children. The Conservatives choose to oppose direct assistance for low-income renters. If they really want to be there for Canadians, they should support our plans to help them.

• (1420)

[English]

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, everything he does makes the problem worse. It started with half a trillion dollars of inflationary deficits; more money chasing fewer goods equals higher prices. Then he brought in more inflationary taxes. With the help of his costly coalition partner, they want to triple that tax. Now his deficits are driving up interest rates faster than at any time in 30 years.

There is really one thing for him to do, which is to stop, stop the inflationary taxes, stop the inflationary deficits, stop driving up the cost of living. Will the Prime Minister do the honourable thing, the compassionate thing and stop taxing Canadians?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the investments we made during the pandemic to support seniors, to support young people, to support workers, to support small businesses not only helped people significantly through the difficult years of the pandemic, but also ensured that our economy came roaring back faster than many other economies around the world. That is why we have continued to be there to support Canadians, not just because it is the nice thing to do but also because it is the way to ensure that our economy grows in the best possible way for all Canadians.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, he claimed he had to add that half a trillion dollars of debt because of COVID, but according to his own Parliamentary Budget Officer, 40% of the new debt he added in the last two years alone had nothing whatsoever to do with COVID.

The Prime Minister has added more debt than all previous prime ministers combined, saying that low interest rates would make it a costless proposition. Now we learn from Desjardins Bank that

### Oral Questions

Canadians will spend more on debt interest from the federal debt next year, \$50 billion, than we typically spend on health care transfers to the provinces.

Why is the Prime Minister giving the money to bankers and bondholders instead of doctors and nurses?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our investments to support Canadians through the pandemic, our investments to support them right now with the GST credit that will help families with hundreds of dollars at a moment they need them, to support low-income families pay for rent, to support low-income families with help for dental care, these are the things that will make a difference right now in the way we move forward. The Conservatives are talking about cuts to EI, cuts to pensions and taking money away from Canadians by ending the climate action incentives that has most Canadians far better off with the investments we are making to fight climate change.

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it kind of reminds me what he was saying about the carbon tax, that paying higher taxes would make people better off. We found out from the Parliamentary Budget Officer that was not true. Then he said that he would take on all the debt so Canadians would not have to. Not only are they stuck with a higher national debt with more interest payments, but now their personal debts are going up. According to Equifax, the average Canadian household has more credit card debt than at any time in Canadian history and the Prime Minister's inflationary policies are driving up interest rates on those costs.

If the Prime Minister really took on all that debt so Canadians would not have to, who is going to pay those Canadians' credit card bills?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition were truly concerned about the cost of living for Canadians, he would be supporting our measure to support families with the cost of dental care for their kids and help with our support for low-income renters as well.

I am also astonished that the Leader of the Opposition has been silent on the matter of the use of the notwithstanding clause preemptively to suspend people's fundamental rights and freedoms. I call on the Leader of the Opposition to stand up for workers' rights, to defend people's rights and freedoms, and condemn the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause to suspend workers' rights.

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### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, no one has done more to attack workers' rights than the Prime Minister, who eats up their paycheques with 40-year high inflation.

### Oral Questions

Who did he give the money to? He spent \$54 million for the arrive scam app, an app we did not need and that did not work. It sent 10,000 wrongly into quarantine and it could have been designed for a quarter million dollars in a weekend, but took \$54 million instead. Some of the companies the Prime Minister said got the money said they never received it.

It is time for the truth. Will the Prime Minister support our motion to call in the auditors?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know we are all astonished to hear the Leader of the Opposition miss an opportunity to stand up for the rights and freedoms of workers. That is something we expect him to continue to do, alongside all of us in the House, in condemning the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause.

On top of that, he is also talking about cuts to EI. When he criticizes us for being there and ensuring that EI and CPP are there for workers into the future, he calls that tax increases.

We are going to be there to support people paying for EI. We are going to be there to support people with their pensions. We are going to be there for dental and rental; he is not.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### HEALTH

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, our hospitals are at the breaking point. So said the Regroupement des chefs d'urgence du Québec, Quebec's association of urgent care chiefs, this morning. In a letter, they said that the lack of resources means emergency rooms can no longer care for people whose clinical condition is unstable and potentially fatal. Just days ago, the Toronto Star reported that the Prime Minister is plotting to undermine Quebec and the provinces' united demands for increased health transfers. He wants to divide them and force them to drop their \$28-billion demand.

Does he realize this is really not a great time for a ploy to deprive our hospitals of \$28 billion?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all Canadians deserve a health care system that works, with doctors and nurses who can provide treatment and mental health services and who are there to help Canadians who need help. Our systems are experiencing major challenges right now.

That is why we are stepping up with more money. This is not just about more money; it is about results for Quebecers and all Canadians. That is why we want to work with the provinces to achieve the best possible outcomes within a health care system that works for all Canadians.

**Mr. Alain Therrien (La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we have a Prime Minister who is trying to divide the provinces, and we know his intention is to isolate Quebec. He wants to negotiate an agreement on his own terms with the weaker provinces. He wants to be able to go to the Premier of Quebec last, present him with a fait accompli and say, "Here is the deal, so either sign it or get lost".

I see that some people are wondering whether I am talking about this Prime Minister and the health transfers or his father, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and the night of the long knives.

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us set aside the partisan politics for a moment. We can all agree that Canadians deserve better health care and services. They deserve better access to family doctors. They deserve better access to mental health services. We are here to work with the provinces, but we want concrete results. Simply putting more money into a system that does not work is not the answer. The system needs to be improved. That is where we are very willing to work with Quebec and all the provinces and territories.

\* \* \*

### OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on the weekend, the Minister of the Environment begged the oil companies that are making record profits to invest in renewable energy. Instead of begging, the government should stop throwing billions of dollars in public money at the oil industry. According to a report, except for Japan, Canada leads the G20 in financing oil companies. The Liberals promised to end these subsidies by 2023. That is in two months.

Is there a contingency plan for ending these subsidies, or was it all just talk?

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we have always said, we will be phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by the end of 2023. That is something we promised for 2025, but we accelerated the timeline because we know how important it is.

We will do that while investing in the transition to greener energy, in the decarbonization of our industries, and in creating good jobs for our workers in all sorts of industries, because we know that all Canadians expect a better future thanks to a green shift and investments in better technologies.

\* \* \*

[English]

### TAXATION

**Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we know that people are struggling right now with the cost of housing and the cost of groceries. We know they are struggling with the cost of heating their homes and that those prices continue to go up.

We have tried, in this place, to work with Conservatives to take the GST off home heating. It is a long-standing NDP position, but they would rather put their fundraising against the climate and ahead of reducing costs for Canadians in this difficult time.

Will the Liberals do the right thing and work with us to take GST off home heating now, in the fall, before people have to keep paying higher and higher prices?

*Oral Questions*

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we brought in a price on pollution that applies in provinces across this country, not all of them but many of them, and we know that we return more money to average families to help with the cost of paying their bills than the price on pollution costs them.

That is why we are going to continue to step up with affordability measures for families, whether it is the climate action incentive that lands in their bank accounts four times a year, the GST credit return that is coming to them in the coming days or support for rental and dental. We will continue to be there for Canadians.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister needs to stop misleading the House. The seven years of inflationary spending have pushed a record number of Canadians from grocery stores to food banks. Now data shows that 88% of Canadians say it is more difficult to buy food to feed their own households. A staggering 54% of Canadians are cutting back on grocery shopping altogether. Canadians cannot keep up and now they are barely hanging on.

Will the costly coalition stop its inflationary spending and cancel its plan to triple taxes on groceries?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, people across the world have been going through difficult economic times, and there is no exception here in Canada. Canadians are struggling to make ends meet.

The responsible thing to do is provide targeted supports to Canadians who need it the most at a time when they need it the most. That means providing dental supports to half a million kids, making sure we have a \$500 cheque for rental support and making sure we are able to double the GST credit.

What is irresponsible is misleading Canadians, mis-characterizing the source of inflation and telling Canadians they are on their own. That is the Conservative plan. We have the backs of Canadians.

**Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is irresponsible is that the government gave wage subsidies to wealthy corporations so they were able to pay their own dividends. What is irresponsible is paying \$54 million on an arrive scam app that should have cost \$250,000.

Let us get this straight. The Liberals are the arsonists of this inflationary fire. Today, more Canadians and more newcomers want to leave Canada because they cannot afford things anymore. Canadians cannot afford this costly coalition any longer.

Will the Liberals stop their inflationary spending and stop raising taxes on hard-working Canadians, yes or no?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are experts at revisionist history. Let us go back to 2020, when this government was faced with the worst pandemic in 100 years.

This government made historic investments in our communities, our provinces, our businesses and Canadians. What did the former Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz say about those invest-

ments after his analysis of that spending? “In fact, what the stimulus did was to keep the economy from going into a deep hole in which we would have experienced persistent deflation.”

The Conservatives do not like it, but those are the facts.

**Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once up a time, many Canadians trusted the Liberals that interest rates would stay low. Many purchased homes based on this promise. The Prime Minister then added more debt than all other prime ministers combined. Even Liberal Mark Carney has said that “inflation is principally a domestic story”. For many Canadians, inflation is not a story; it is a nightmare. Some mortgage payments have risen by over \$2,000 a month.

Will the Liberals end this inflationary nightmare and commit to cancelling their plan to raise taxes?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, time and time again, the Conservatives have demonstrated that they do not care about supporting low-income Canadians and Canadians who are facing the high cost of living.

When it comes to initiatives such as lowering taxes for the middle class and the Canada child benefit, or when it comes to child care, with families across the country saving up to 50% in fees, thousands of dollars are going into their pockets every year. The Conservatives have voted against this time and again. We know where we stand, and we stand with Canadians.

**Ms. Leslyn Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, those benefits will never reach the average Canadian. The Liberals can help Canadians today by getting their spending and taxes under control. People on fixed incomes, such as seniors, veterans and those on disability, are really suffering. Many have written to me saying they can barely afford food to eat. Twenty per cent of them are skipping meals to save money, and people are resorting to food banks.

Will the Prime Minister commit to giving Canadians a break and cancel his plan to raise taxes?

*Oral Questions*

• (1435)

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know about Conservative members, but I speak to real Canadians every single day, and today in Ontario, 86% of child care centres have signed on to the Canada-wide early learning and child care agreement. I have heard from families that are saving thousands of dollars. In fact, last week, a woman in Toronto contacted me to say \$4,000 is what her family is getting back, dating back to April 1. That is a lot of money in people's pockets that is going to help them with the high cost of living.

We are going to continue to be there, delivering real measures for real Canadians every single day.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, according to Equifax, non-mortgage debt is over \$21,000 per consumer, and over 50% of Canadians are worried about not being able to pay their monthly bills. Over the past two years, the Prime Minister has spent over \$200 billion on things that had nothing to do with the pandemic. That is equivalent to the federal income taxes of 27 million middle-class Canadians.

Once again, will he commit to stopping his inflationary spending and to not raising taxes for Canadians, who have had enough?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder who wrote my colleague opposite's question, because these days, the Conservatives seem to spend their time repeating the messages of web giants. It seems as though the web giants are writing the Conservatives' speeches. If the Conservatives were really interested in what is happening in Canada, they would be expressing concern about our democracy, about our regional and national media, about our independent news sources. The Conservatives are repeating the messages of web giants and Facebook rather than standing up for Canadians.

\* \* \*

## FINANCE

**Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, can my colleague explain why Canada's debt has surpassed \$1 billion since the arrival of the Prime Minister in 2015? According to Desjardins, Canadian taxpayers will have to pay \$49.5 billion in interest alone to service the debt. We have gotten to this point because of the Prime Minister's unjustified spending. For example, he cancelled the repayment of two multi-million dollar loans to the Irving family. He also gave \$50 million to Mastercard, and he gave \$12 million to Loblaw's to buy refrigerators. Those are just a few examples.

Will the Prime Minister commit to stopping this wasteful spending, which is adding to the debt and the burden on Canadians? No, it is not—

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. minister.

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will give some other examples. What is happening in the area of culture? What is being done for our artists and creators?

Instead of helping culture by supporting Bill C-11, the Conservatives are blocking the bill in the Senate. Once again, instead of defending our culture, our music and our television programs, the Conservatives are repeating the web giants' messages. For once, instead of repeating the rhetoric of Facebook and the web giants, the Conservatives should stand up for Canadians.

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## NATURAL RESOURCES

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, with five days to go before COP27, we have learned that Canada is still pouring public money into the fossil fuel industry. It is the second-worst country in the G20, according to Oil Change International. Canada is worse than Russia. It invested \$8.5 billion a year between 2019 and 2021.

How are other countries supposed to react at COP27 when they hear Canada talk a good game, while knowing it has the second-worst record in the G20? What do we call someone who says one thing and does the opposite?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to phasing out public financing of the fossil fuel sector by the end of 2022. We will eliminate subsidies to the fossil fuel sector by the end of 2023. We must address climate change. We need to implement a plan to fight climate change while fostering economic prosperity. Of course, we are in this together.

**Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has been promising to stop subsidizing fossil fuels since 2009. However, here we are 13 years later and nothing has changed. We have had enough of empty promises. This government promised to stop subsidizing fossil fuels by 2023. That is in two months, or 61 days. If the government intends to keep that promise, it must have made a lot of progress and must have a really good plan.

Will the minister finally be able to announce at COP27 that there will be no more subsidies for fossil fuels? Will that finally be a reality instead of another empty promise?

• (1440)

[*English*]

**Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that we need to go further and faster on fossil fuel subsidies in our journey to net zero by 2050, and we are doing exactly that. We are capping emissions from the fossil fuel sector. We are implementing a clean fuel standard. We are investing in carbon capture. We will also be eliminating inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by 2023, two years in advance of the deadline.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is going to be awkward at COP27. Canada will be giving speeches on the green transition when it just announced in Washington that it wants to fast-track its oil and gas projects. It will be giving speeches about protecting nature when it just authorized oil drilling over 100,000 kilometres in a protected marine area. It will be giving speeches about government responsibility when it just approved the Bay du Nord project.

Do members recall when Stephen Harper boycotted the UN to inaugurate a Tim Hortons? At this point, we are wondering why this government does not do the same.

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

As I said yesterday when she asked this question, we have implemented a plan to fight climate change, a plan that may well be the most detailed one in the whole world. It is an aggressive plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring a clean and prosperous future for our children and grandchildren.

We want to work with our partners in the Bloc Québécois, the NDP and, of course, the Conservative Party.

\* \* \*

[English]

**FINANCE**

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the numbers are in: \$2,400 per Canadian was spent last year. That is \$171,000 a minute, yet 47% of Canadians feel they are in a worse economic position this year than last year, and 30% of Canadians feel we are already in a recession.

Canadians cannot afford this costly coalition, so will this Liberal-NDP coalition commit to no inflationary spending?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us just look at the record. When the Conservatives were in office, they did nothing to help the most vulnerable Canadians. It is this government that has introduced the Canada child benefit and doubled the GST credit, and will give a \$500 top-up on housing supports, cut child care fees in half and provide dental care to half a million kids. It is the responsible thing and it is targeted. That is our job as a government. We are doing our job.

**Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are opposed to all wasteful spending, which includes \$6,000 for a hotel room, \$12,000 for groceries in a single month and \$54 million for a single application. However, 53% of Canadians are worried we are going to enter a recession next year. Why is that? It is inflationary spending.

Will this Liberal-NDP coalition commit to stopping inflationary spending?

**Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the Conservatives do not like to admit it, but we are actually coming out of a global

pandemic, one of the most difficult periods of time that Canadians have gone through in almost a century.

When we talk about extraordinary spending, it is because we supported nine million Canadians with the Canada emergency response benefit. It is because we supported thousands of businesses through the CEBA. It is because we supported millions of people through the Canada emergency wage supports. That is what we did. It was necessary and it was important, and we made sure we were there for Canadians in their time of need.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what the government did not need to do was take \$200 billion of the \$500 billion and spend it on programs in no way related to COVID-19. That is the reality. They hide, they deflect and they do all sorts of things to avoid telling Canadians the truth. Of the \$500 billion, 40% was not for COVID-19.

Meanwhile, 1.5 million Canadians had to use food banks for a month and 20% of Canadians said they had to skip meals because they could not afford groceries.

When will the Liberals stop wasting money?

● (1445)

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. During the worst pandemic in 100 years, the House and this government decided to support Canadians, our communities, our provinces and businesses.

The former governor of the Bank of Canada, Stephen Poloz, analyzed our expenditures. He said, and I quote, “In fact, what the stimulus did was to keep the economy from going into a deep hole in which we would have experienced persistent deflation.”

The Conservatives do not want to admit it, and yet, it is a fact.

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the future prime ministerial candidate says that the primary causes of inflation in Canada are domestic.

What we were against was sending cheques to inmates, sending CERB cheques to public servants, giving \$500 million to Liberal friends at WE Charity, spending \$54 million on an ArriveCAN app that did not work and spending \$6,000, no, \$7,200 a night on a room for the Prime Minister.

When will they stop wasting money?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what is the Conservatives' new economic action plan? They plan to cut EI benefits, cut the CPP, cut child care benefits, cut money for action against climate change. They will go chop, chop, chop.

### Oral Questions

Every one of their measures would take money out of Canadians' pockets. It is irresponsible, it is unprecedented, it is typical Conservative austerity. That is their plan. Our plan is to invest in Canadians.

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[English]

### LABOUR

**Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, people in Canada are struggling with their mental health and accessing help is almost impossible. Yesterday, a report found that almost all Canadian workers have experienced mental distress, and for many it is only getting worse.

Years ago, the government said it would amend the Canada Labour Code to protect workers, but the Liberals have failed to follow through, just like they have not delivered on promised new funding for mental health supports. When will the government finally do what is right by delivering on its promises to protect the mental health of workers?

**Hon. Seamus O'Regan (Minister of Labour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that very soon we will be talking about a mental health policy that will also include the right to disconnect. The world of work has changed so much over the past few years, but particularly during the age of COVID, and we recognize that workers do have a right to disconnect from their employer and enjoy a work-life balance. I look forward to working with members in the House to make that a reality for workers in this country.

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### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Ms. Lindsay Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, I joined hundreds of protesters in London demanding justice for Mahsa Amini. One local activist stated, "We are not going to back down. This is the point of no return."

The government needs to step up to support the brave women and men fighting for women's rights in Iran, but to date not a single Iranian official has been targeted by Magnitsky sanctions to hold those committing human rights violations accountable. When will the government start taking concrete actions and use specific sanctions to support Iranians?

**Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. Obviously, what is happening in Iran is completely unacceptable. That is why we are taking strong measures against the Iranian regime, which include sanctions against it. Yesterday, I announced strong sanctions, which also include isolating Iran at the UN Human Rights Council, particularly for women's rights.

Now we are going to announce more sanctions. We will work on the implementation of sanctions. We have announced more funding to do so, and I look forward to working with the member on this.

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### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during the pandemic, our government waived interest on Canada

student loans and Canada apprentice loans for two years. We did this because we knew young people were among the hardest hit by job losses. As we look toward the future, we know that student-loan repayment continues to be a top concern for many Canadians, especially those with low or modest incomes.

That is why the hon. Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion is taking action to make people's loan repayment more flexible and affordable. Could the minister please share with the House more details about the change being implemented today?

**Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Cloverdale—Langley City, my hometown, for his tireless work on behalf of his constituents and all Canadians. We believe that no one should be deterred from pursuing an education because of unaffordable interest costs. That is why, effective today, graduates will not have to start repaying their federal loans until they learn at least \$40,000 per year, and maximum payments will also be lowered from 20% to 10% of household income. This will support an estimated 180,000 borrowers each year.

\* \* \*

● (1450)

### FINANCE

**Ms. Lianne Rood (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 51% of Canadians are struggling to afford food, and those who cannot cut back any further are being driven to their local food banks. However, the government does not care. It is too busy blowing money on \$7,000-a-night hotel rooms or the \$54-million arrive scam.

To pay for their scandals and secret backroom deals with the NDP, they want to raise taxes, further driving up the cost of basic necessities such as food. Canadians cannot afford this costly coalition. Will the Liberals end their inflationary spending?

**Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no point in bringing politics into this. Every member of the House wants to make life more affordable for Canadians. That is what we did. I remind my colleague of what I said earlier this week.



*Oral Questions*

Back in May, I wrote to the Competition Bureau to ask it to use all of the tools it has at its disposal to make sure that there are no unlawful practices in the grocery market in Canada. More recently, I asked it to launch an investigation. I called the CEOs of a number of food chains so they could do their part to help Canadians. Everyone needs to do their part to help Canadians at this time.

**Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say they want to reduce inflation, but everything they are doing is going in the wrong direction. The Liberals are piling up more debt and taxpayers cannot keep up.

When the PM travels abroad, he stays in a \$6,000-a-night hotel. The ArriveCAN scam cost \$54 million and handed millions to Liberal insiders. The cost of the administrative state has exploded. The debt last year was \$90 billion. The Liberals have racked up more debt than all Canadian governments combined.

When will the Liberal government stop, reverse course, bring down prices for Canadians and stop its inflationary spending?

**Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been asking the Conservatives to put a plan on the table for affordability. We have it now. It is hot off the presses. It is the new Conservative economic action plan to cut employment insurance benefits, cut the Canada pension plan, cut child care benefits and cut climate action cheques. Each one of the planks in their plan pulls more money out of the pockets of Canadians to give it to the wealthiest.

I do not know what kind of plan they have, but our plan focuses on those Canadians who need it the most, when they need it the most. That is responsible government. That is our plan.

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians cannot afford this costly Liberal-NDP coalition. These Liberals have showered Liberal friends such as Frank Baylis with \$237 million in COVID contracts. They gave \$28 million to Liberal donor Pierre Guay for Roxham Road, and they shovelled over \$54 million to a couple of guys sitting in their basement who created the ArriveCAN app, which should have been built for under \$250,000.

Why is that Liberal insiders under the Prime Minister always get rich while regular Canadians have to pay more for heating, eating and—

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister for rural development.

**Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will tell members what we cannot afford. We cannot afford not to do something on climate change. I want to put some faces to what happens if we do not act on climate change.

I want to talk about Norm, who saw his wife washed out to sea. I want to talk about Amy and her daughter, who literally ran from their house without shoes on their feet. I want to talk about Smokey, who was pulled from the ocean by his brother.

I want to talk about Brian Button, who has had to have sit-down conversations with over 100 homeowners to tell them that their homes are destroyed and condemned, and there are more on that list.

I want to talk about the people in Burgeo, Burnt Islands, Channel-Port aux Basques and Marguerite—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if that minister actually cared about those Canadians, she would make life more affordable by cutting the carbon tax. Right now that continues to prove that this Liberal-NDP coalition is out of touch with Canadians, and Canadians are out of patience with the government.

Canadians are suffering from the Liberal-induced inflationary crisis while their Liberal friends are rolling in cash. Now, if the NDP and Liberals truly cared about average Canadians, they would not have voted to triple the carbon tax.

What does the Liberal-NDP coalition have to say to Canadians who are skipping meals and using food banks because of the government's—

• (1455)

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to continue my narrative because I was talking about Canadian lives who were impacted by our not acting on climate change and not acting on climate change now. I have seen people go through the rubble looking for their parents' urns of ashes. I have seen people looking for memorabilia—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. minister can begin from the top.

**Hon. Gudie Hutchings:** Mr. Speaker, I am talking about Canadian lives. I am talking about the lives of people who have lost their homes or belongings and memorabilia. They have lost everything, and we have to do something on climate change. We have to do something now. We have seen the hurricanes in the Atlantic. We have seen forest fires. We have seen droughts.

The cost of inaction is only going to get worse. I hope nobody has to stand up in the House to talk about a life lost in their riding because of inaction on climate change. Everybody needs to act on this, and we need to act on it now.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, at the Rouleau commission we learned that before the truck convoy even arrived in Ottawa, the government was planning to insult the occupants to wind them up. Text exchanges between Liberal employees show that it was strategic. They wanted to give interviews on the extreme elements of the convoy to make them look bad. This would, and I quote, bring out the nut jobs. Two days later, the Prime Minister did in fact insult the convoy, and the police confirmed that this inflamed the crisis.

Does the government realize that its strategy was dangerous and irresponsible?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we invoked the Emergencies Act because the situation was unprecedented. The disruptions were very negative for workers, families and young people. That is why we worked with the police services. It was a necessary decision.

Now, we will collaborate with the commission and Justice Rouleau because transparency is an important part of the exercise.

**Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, worst of all, when the Liberals saw the truck convoy driving towards Ottawa, they did not put any plans in place to stop them from laying siege to the city. They had no plan for how to get them to leave, either. The Liberals developed a communication strategy to escalate the crisis, because they thought they could score political points.

Not only did they allow the protesters to hold the city of Ottawa hostage, but their strategy led to over three weeks of tension. How can the minister justify his strategy to the people who were held prisoner in their own city?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as soon as the illegal blockades began, the government was managing the situation using certain resources, including three RCMP facilities, which were assisting the Ottawa police as well as other police operations across the country. This was an unprecedented situation, and the decision to invoke the Emergencies Act was necessary to help Canadians who were suffering the consequences of this situation.

\* \* \*

[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Hon. Rob Moore (Fundy Royal, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under the government's soft-on-crime agenda, violent crime has risen by 32%, but now there is more devastating news for victims and survivors. Last Friday, in a 5-4 split decision, the Supreme Court struck down the legal requirement that all sex offenders be listed on the national sex offender registry.

This is the part where the minister stands up to say he is studying the decision, but what Canadians and victims want to hear is a clear commitment from the government that all sex offenders will be listed in the national sex offender registry. Will the minister make that commitment?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, safety is a priority for our government, and certainly our hearts go out to victims of sexual assault and sexual violence. The registry was passed by a government, and unfortunately the Supreme Court of Canada found two provisions in that registry to be unconstitutional.

We are going to look at that decision. We are going to look at the options responsibly and move forward from there, but victims and the safety of Canadians will always be our priorities in this matter.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister took office and implemented his soft-on-crime policy, violent crime in Canada has risen 32%, and 62% of Canadians have said that they have seen an increase in crime in their communities. Families are afraid to take their children downtown. Businesses that are barely hanging on are seeing a decrease in customers because Canadians are choosing to stay home and feel safe.

Will the Prime Minister do his job, punish violent criminals and protect innocent Canadians?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear, and I hope all members will share this sentiment, that we have to do better when it comes to protecting our communities. That is why I am proud of the work this government is doing in launching a national handgun freeze. I am proud of the fact we have launched a national ban on assault-style rifles. I am proud of the fact that we have launched a \$250-million fund to prevent gun crime from occurring in the first place.

What have the Conservatives done? They have filibustered at every single stage, blocking important resources for law enforcement and smart sensible policy. They should come on side and do right by all of the victims and the survivors, who we meet far too often.

**Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this Sunday, during Halloween festivities in Vancouver, five people were stabbed. The drug trafficking epidemic continues to get worse in British Columbia. Property crime is skyrocketing and small businesses are losing money because people do not feel safe going to visit those businesses. Across B.C., there is a pervading sense of lawlessness that is hurting the social fabric of our communities.

When will the government finally deal with prolific offenders and end its soft-on-crime approach?

**Hon. David Lametti (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know that this is a priority not just for British Columbians but, indeed, for all Canadians.

Recently, at a meeting of justice and public security ministers for the provinces, territories and federal government, we committed to looking at the question of prolific offenders and what to do. We are working with our provincial partners in order to find a solution. In all cases, keeping Canadians safe is our first priority.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### LABOUR

**Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to collective agreements that are reasonable for taxpayers and that provide employees with fair wage adjustments and provisions that reflect today's workplace.

Can the President of the Treasury Board inform the House of the new agreement that has just been reached?

**Hon. Mona Fortier (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for his important question and for his contribution to his community.

I have good news. I am proud to announce that after a year of negotiations, the Government of Canada has reached an agreement in principle with the comptrollership group from the Association of Canadian Financial Officers. Thanks to the hard work and good-faith negotiations of both parties, this agreement is fair to employees and reasonable for taxpayers.

I thank both parties for coming to a successful resolution.

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[English]

### TAXATION

**Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in Dawson City, Yukon, the cost of furnace oil has gone up almost 61% since last year, thanks to Liberal inflation and the carbon tax. Families will now have to pay over \$7,600 to heat their homes. Yukoners should not have to decide between staying warm or buying groceries, all while Liberals have not met a single environmental target. They have a tax plan. We know that. It is not an environmental plan.

Why will the Liberals not give Yukoners a break and cut the carbon tax?

**Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, certainly, affordability is extremely important. We have taken significant steps, including allocating a quarter of a billion dollars to replacing home heating oil with greener alternatives and doubling the GST credit. It is also the case, no matter how the Conservatives attempt to mislead, that eight out of 10 Canadian families get more money back in the rebate from the carbon tax than what they pay.

It also bears stating that Conservatives also misled Canadians during the recent general election, when they campaigned on putting in place a carbon tax. Given that position and the position they are taking today, each Conservative member in the chamber is, in fact, breaking a promise they made to the constituents who sent them here. How can Canadians believe—

### Oral Questions

• (1505)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, massive Liberal deficits have caused 40-year high inflation, resulting in major increases to the cost of living.

I have many seniors in my riding like Cathy who, at 68 years of age, has had to go back to work in order to pay for utilities, food and her mortgage payments. As well, a disabled constituent reached out to me by email this weekend, indicating that she is down to one meal per day and, in her words, is contemplating applying for assisted death instead of starving to death.

What is the government doing for 65- to 74-year-olds and will the Liberals stop punishing them and cancel all tax increases on gas, groceries and home heating?

**Hon. Kamal Khera (Minister of Seniors, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will not take any lessons from the party opposite, whose plan for seniors was to raise the age of retirement to 67 and attack their pensions.

On this side of the House, we restored that age back to 65. We enhanced the CPP. We increased the guaranteed income supplement, which lifted thousands of seniors out of poverty. We also increased the OAS by 10%. We are delivering on doubling the GST credit. With the payments that are going to be going out this Friday, we are going to continue to deliver for all Canadians, including seniors and those living with disabilities.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

**Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, because of this government's non-stop spending, inflation keeps rising and families in Quebec have to cope with ever-increasing bills.

Instead of spending prudently over the past few years, the government kept spending recklessly. For example, it sank \$54 million into the pricey ArriveCAN app, an app that could have been developed over a weekend for \$250,000. The difference is astounding.

When will the government do the right thing and refer this matter to the Auditor General of Canada so she can get to the bottom of this wasteful spending?

**Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about families in Quebec. What those families need is government support. They need benefits for children, they need child care, they need support for workers. The Government of Canada has given them all of that.

*Oral Questions*

I am curious as to where the Conservatives would cut. In technical terms, this is their “chop, chop, chop” strategy. What would they cut?

\* \* \*

[English]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recently, the Minister of International Development and I were in Ukraine to show Canada's steadfast support but also to learn what more Canada can do to help. We were there one day after Russian missile strikes targeted civilians across the country. During our visit, the minister and I each received the shirt I am wearing today. Everyone we met with told us that, after Russia's missile strikes, Ukrainians are more determined than ever to win this war decisively. Many also asked whether we would be there until the end, until Ukraine wins this war.

Can the minister share with Canadians the importance of this message? Will Canada stand with the Ukrainian people until they win?

**Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of International Development and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during our visit to Lviv, Ukraine, we had the opportunity to meet with youth from the Ukrainian Leadership Academy, and one thing is clear: Young people have contributed to Ukraine's resistance in the face of Putin's illegal war. These courageous students launched their own campaign called “Heroes Among Us”. They are telling the stories of ordinary people standing determined in the defence of Ukraine. It is inspiring to see their resilience and determination, and Canada will stand firm in our support for all Ukrainians. *Slava Ukraini.*

\* \* \*

**NORTHERN AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP):** *Uqaqtittiji*, the outdated diesel power plant in Sanirajak resulted in the community being without power for four days as temperatures dipped to -17°C. Not only do the power plants harm the environment, but they are unreliable and outdated. The government continues to neglect the needs of communities and they must invest in projects such as the Kivalliq hydro link.

When will the government help Nunavut transition to reliable power solutions so people do not go without basic necessities?

**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 thank the member for that very important question. Concerning the first part of the question about the power outage, I will speak to my team at the end of this meeting and make sure we get those details and see what our role is.

We have a very good relationship with the Government of Nunavut, and we are very proud to support the Kivalliq community and the Government of Nunavut on the Kivalliq fibre optic line, which we are working on in partnership with all partners.

• (1510)

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been shocked by allegations of political interference into an RCMP investigation. They want to know that the organizations that are protecting them are not serving a political agenda, but the archaic language of the RCMP Act is a recipe for disaster. It needs to be fixed. Today, I called for new measures to clarify what directions the Minister of Public Safety can issue to the RCMP and for them to be issued in writing. We need to see more accountability.

Will the Liberals support my proposal to help restore public trust in our institutions?

**Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to work with my hon. colleague on the private member's bill he put forward this morning.

In the meantime, I want to update the chamber and say that my mandate calls for strengthened standards when it comes to the use of force, strengthening the role of the management advisory board, and finally Bill C-20, which will ensure there is an opportunity for Canadians who have concerns regarding the quality of service they are getting from the RCMP and the CBSA, for the first time. This is legislation that I hope we will pass with great haste so that we can raise the bar on transparency and accountability and ensure the confidence of Canadians in their law enforcement institutions.

**The Speaker:** That is all the time we have for question period.

Before we go on, I want to remind hon. members that props are not allowed in the chamber and referring to them is even more frowned upon. I just want to make sure everyone is aware of that. It was very subtle. I am not going to point anyone out; they know who they are. Please do not do that again.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**LAC-MÉGANTIC BYPASS**

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you were to seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That the House recall that almost 10 years ago, the worst rail tragedy in Canadian history cost the lives of 47 people and, therefore, reiterate its support for the construction of the Lac-Mégantic bypass and urge the government to carry out the project as a whole as soon as possible.

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

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

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

**Mr. Gord Johns:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been consultations and I hope that if you seek it, you will find consent for the following motion: That given that: one, that the mental health of Canadians has been negatively impacted by the pandemic; two, that economic conditions are exacerbating financial barriers to mental health supports; and, three, that our public health care system is under immense strain, the House call upon the government to put into place a Canada mental health transfer without delay.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ARRIVECAN APPLICATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat disappointing that the Conservatives continue to not come to the realization that what is happening around the world is quite serious with regard to inflation. The United States, England and many European countries have higher inflation rates than Canada.

Having said that, Liberal MPs are concerned about the cost of groceries and about the cost of some of the important consumer products. That is why we are bringing forward progressive legislation to help Canadians at a time when they need it.

Why does the Conservative Party, when it comes time to do something to support Canadians, vote against our progressive, supportive legislation for Canadians?

• (1515)

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after all the mismanagement and examples of Liberal insiders getting rich, why should anyone trust the government to do what it says it is going to do? When Canadians are struggling to make ends meet and cannot pay their bills, it is an outrage to ask them to foot the bill for the government's wasteful spending, and I refuse to do it.

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleague why she thinks this NDP-Liberal costly coalition becomes so irritated every time we ask it for metrics, for proof behind what they do; in this case, the metrics used to

### *Business of Supply*

determine the number of COVID-infected individuals entering Canada that validated the \$54 million spent on the ArriveCAN app.

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Mr. Speaker, it is very concerning that the government refuses to be transparent and has reacted the way it has when we have made what would be typical requests around a significant government procurement program or any other data that we need to ensure the way it is spending Canadian taxpayer dollars is done wisely. It shows that Conservatives are worried about transparency and the Liberals are worried about being held accountable for how they are spending Canadians' money.

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek is quite concerned about the cost of the ArriveCAN app. I wonder if she is also concerned about the \$21 billion it is expected to cost for the Trans Mountain pipeline, the expansion of a leaky pipeline in the midst of a climate emergency; and the \$17 billion more in a loan guarantee from just a few weeks ago. Could the member comment on that?

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Mr. Speaker, what I would simply point out for the member is that Canada has the most ethical energy sector in the world. If we are concerned about lowering global emissions, not just our country's, and supporting our allies abroad, particularly in Europe, then we should be helping our oil and gas sector to flourish rather than slowly suffocating it and always criticizing it.

**Mr. Frank Caputo (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Here we are today talking about accountability. I wonder if my hon. colleague could comment on the lack of accountability we have seen when it comes to a hotel room that cost somewhere between \$6,000 and \$7,200.

We are having a discussion on the \$54 million that was spent, and that is a big sum of money. We have smaller sums. Could the member comment on the lack of accountability when the Prime Minister will not even tell us who was in that room?

**Mrs. Kelly Block:** Mr. Speaker, what I will say in the very short time that I have is this. The Conservatives will not back down from demanding answers and accountability for Canadians. We will always seek to get the truth for Canadians when it comes to the over-spending and mismanagement of the government.

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise to speak to this great opposition day motion and I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for moving it.

Many different things have happened over the last two or three years and that has brought us to where we are today, with a very particular focus on the ArriveCAN app. We need to show respect for taxpayer dollars, which is more fundamentally based on respect for the rights of our fellow Canadians.

### *Business of Supply*

An essential part of Parliament's role is to hold the government accountable for its spending along with its policy decisions regardless of the party that is in power. That is exactly what the motion calls for, nothing more. Hopefully all members from all parties in the House can agree with that idea, including Liberals who sit on the government side. We will have to wait and see the result of the vote, because the issue in question has to do with the controversial arrive scam app.

The motion calls for the Auditor General to conduct a performance audit, and that is something different from the House expressing our approval or disapproval toward a specific government policy. It is not even a committee study. Instead, this would be an independent review that would take the issue away from partisan debates between the government and the opposition.

It would address the need for some necessary accountability, though, because we cannot pretend that nothing really happened with the ArriveCAN app over the last two years. If government members are truly confident that they have made the right decisions along the way, then they should have no problem supporting the motion. In the end, it would prove their case with no problem, and I hope that point has been clearly understood.

We are here today, one month after the government eventually decided to drop the mandatory use of the ArriveCAN app, but that alone does not mean all issues have been resolved. We do not have the whole story, and many of the questions that Canadians have are left unanswered.

Why did the federal government mandate it in the first place? Why were Canadian citizens required to download and use an app to enter their own country? Why was there a lack of accommodation or flexibility? Why did it take so long for the government to finally drop the mandate? Why did it cost \$54 million to create, when it has since been shown that it could have been made for as low as \$250,000. It was originally projected to cost only \$80,000. Who exactly benefited or profited from paying out all of these millions of dollars? This is what all members need to know on behalf of their constituents all across the country.

While we are having this debate, we also cannot forget all the impacts this mandated app has had on Canadians. The government has tried to claim that this was somehow about vaccination, to turn the issue against those who did not receive COVID vaccines. The reality is that we saw how this mandate affected different people regardless of their medical status. ArriveCAN took it a step beyond the other problems involved with vaccine mandates for work and travel. It created yet another barrier for new groups of people in our society, which relates to the technology used.

If the Liberals want to defend this decision by making it all about vaccines, then they are at least revealing part of the unfortunate truth by saying so. They have essentially admitted that their intention was to punish the unvaccinated, which came with the suggestion to the wider public that doing so would stop transmission. This might have worked to scapegoat and divide people during and after a snap election, but the mandate did not do what they said it would do. Of course, it is true that the app was clearly part of a broader policy that undermined and violated Canadians' right to medical privacy. What was the result?

Although the Prime Minister might not understand this fact, regular people have many reasons to travel besides taking luxurious vacations. These mandates devastated careers and relationships for people. Some of them were unvaccinated, while others did not disclose that they were vaccinated for privacy reasons, because that was the issue at stake. The government chose to keep it in place while it became more apparent over time that its excuse for it was flawed.

Again, the ArriveCAN requirement took all this to a new level. It made the situation more complicated and nonsensical. Some people could show their papers, but their personal circumstances did not allow for them to use ArriveCAN. Some did not have the right technology. Some just simply were not able to use it or maybe did not have ready access to it for practical reasons. In a lot of cases, we are talking about seniors or minorities who found that their government had added an arbitrary barrier under the vaccine mandate.

These are our fellow Canadians who live in my riding and in every other riding, including those belonging to Liberal members, and I am sure they have heard similar stories from constituents as I have.

For example, I had someone reach out to me by phone from one of the many Hutterite colonies. They do not use technology, do not have access to computers and their options for other access are limited. However, this individual was vaccinated and crossed the border into the United States, but upon returning to Canada was forced to quarantine simply because he was not using the ArriveCAN app and did not have the means to even have the app in the first place. It did not make any sense to him, and I agreed with him.

● (1520)

There are also a number of seniors in a similar situation who were forced to quarantine, even though they could otherwise prove their vaccination status under the rules. This had consequences that were more than a mere inconvenience. People were confined to their homes.

In the case of the constituent I mentioned, the community's lifestyle is based on agriculture and food production. This would have disrupted his ability to contribute to the important type of work that needs to get done. In fact, this constituent was down in the States getting the parts he needed for his agricultural machinery, his agricultural implements, to be able to perform what the government at the time had deemed to be an essential service, but he was told that he had to go home for 14 days anyway.

Farmers know they cannot afford to lose up to two weeks of valuable time. Their work, as we all know, is isolated by nature. There is one person driving a machine. Ranchers are out checking their cattle and herds. There is zero risk to the communities around them. This is another example of how the Liberals have zero understanding of what life is like in rural Canada.

*Business of Supply*

Then it somehow got worse. Not only was the app intrusive, but it also had glitches. If people complied and used ArriveCAN, they still were not safe. There were people who were able and willing to use the app but who were still wrongly identified for quarantine time anyway. At one time, the Canada Border Services Agency said that these incorrect notifications went out to over 10,000 people. This is a disaster that was as embarrassing as it was confusing. It went right along with the government's failure to provide Canadians with passports and with notoriously bad flight disruptions at our airports, but the Liberals dragged it on nonetheless despite the calls to end it from border communities, tourism groups, border guard unions and the public. By the time they dropped this restriction, the travel season was all but over.

My riding is along the border we share with the United States, and tourism is an important part of our local economy. It also happens to be a rural area, which adds its own limitations to the situation. From that perspective, I can assure everyone there was real damage done to these communities because of these misguided policies. What makes it worse is we knew from common sense that the extra burden and impracticality for tourism, agriculture and other local industries was not necessary.

There were all kinds of Canadians who paid a price for the Prime Minister and the Liberal government to save face or score political points. Fortunately, the Liberals could not ignore the mounting pressure any longer and dropped the requirements at the border, which was the right thing to do. There are still some challenges remaining for our citizens and border communities. One such example is that the hours of operation still have not returned to normal.

A constituent of mine had a two-hour trip to make to the U.S. and back to get his cattle to the vet. It turned into a 14-hour trip because he was not allowed to come back over the border. There are regulations in this country that limit how long animals can be in a trailer, and this simple decision put him at risk. He had to spend even more time on the road away from home, risking the health of his animals as he was travelling.

Canadians can once again fully exercise the spirit of their charter right to remain in, enter or leave Canada. We also no longer restrict international travellers from coming here, but the United States still has a vaccine mandate at their border for our citizens. That is their decision to make. Our government obviously cannot make it for them. However, does the Prime Minister care to advocate and stand up for the same Canadians he has demonized and marginalized over the past two years?

The Liberals have not acknowledged what they did wrong. There has not yet been an expression of regret or apology. One way for them to show some goodwill would be to support this motion. There are a lot of strong opinions on these issues both inside and outside of Parliament, but if we at least agree to this, we could start to focus on getting more of the facts involved with a divisive policy.

That is something the Auditor General could provide. We could get a better idea of what happened and learn to do better in the future. Canadians could see some unity and leadership across party lines in this place. Hopefully, this would set a good example and help to heal the divisions we have in this country.

• (1525)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, I heard the member talk about the requirements for being vaccinated, and I was thinking back to when I was speaking earlier and was quoting the former leader of the opposition, the member for Durham, when, back in November 2021, he said that the best way to protect our economy, the best way to protect our country, was to get vaccinated and he was calling on everybody to get vaccinated.

I am wondering if the member agrees with that. Was the best way to protect our economy and our country to encourage people to get vaccinated?

• (1530)

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the vaccine obviously was a helpful tool during the pandemic, but it was not a means to mandate things and to drive a wedge in the country. That is what the government has done. We see programs like the ArriveCAN app that waste \$54 million, which is just a drop in the bucket of some of the other scandals the government has had. The Liberals have managed to use these issues as a way to divide Canadians and to further line the pockets of their Liberal friends. That is a problem.

That is why we have this motion on the table today to get the Auditor General to look at the performance of the app. It is a simple motion. I hope the member will be supporting it.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the opening line of this motion says, "That, given that (i) the cost of government is driving up the cost of living," and I just want to drill into that a bit.

I have done some research. In the OECD, which is made up of 38 countries, the average inflation rate is 10.2%. The inflation rate in Canada at the same time is 7.6%. Of the 38 countries, a very healthy majority are conservative governments, including the U.K. The U.K. has had a Conservative government for the last 12 years, and its inflation rate is 8.8%. Hungary's inflation rate is 13.7% and it has a very right-wing government. Poland's inflation rate is 15.8% and it has a right-wing government.

Where does the member get his data or rationale for the statement "the cost of government is driving up the cost of living," when just about every right-wing government in the world has inflation exceeding what ours is in this country?

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**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Mr. Speaker, when we look at how much money the government has borrowed and how much money the government has printed to be able to buy up government debt, that is creating inflation. This is creating the issue of Canadians not being able to buy more goods, because the value of our dollar is worth less. This was a decision the Government of Canada in itself made on its own. This is one of many issues going on, but the more the government continues to borrow and spend above its means, the more Canadians are going to have to pay for that. Regardless of the program the government puts in place, Canadians are still going to be paying for it either directly or indirectly.

One of the worst silent or invisible taxes is inflation. We see the way it has gone. For example, back in May the average mortgage in Canada was \$800 more in the span of only six months. I cannot even imagine what it is now.

[Translation]

**Ms. Andr anne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about seniors. As the critic for seniors, I obviously paid very close attention to that part of his speech. Seniors' groups in my riding and elsewhere in Quebec have talked to me about the ArriveCAN app. They were, perhaps, disproportionately affected by it.

I would like my colleague to comment on how we can really help seniors. He also spoke about inflation and the carbon tax. That is not what seniors in my riding are asking for to deal with inflation. They are asking for an increase in the old age security pension, the way Canada has of helping them, for all seniors, including those between the ages of 65 and 74.

[English]

**Mr. Jeremy Patzer:** Mr. Speaker, seniors in different areas of the country have different issues that are impacting them. For example, in Saskatchewan, if there was no carbon tax, their pensions, OAS and GIS would go further. There are lots of other initiatives that would help seniors. As far as the motion goes, seniors were writing to my office throughout the pandemic. They were vaccinated and met all the requirements, but they were still forced to quarantine for 14 days. This meant they had issues getting their prescriptions and getting to medical appointments. I had one guy, for example, who needed surgery on his eye, but his driver, who was his wife and happened to be an American citizen and a permanent resident of Canada, lost her ability to drive him to that appointment. They did not know what to do. There was a big issue there.

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the esteemed member of Parliament for Kings—Hants, which is in the beautiful province of Nova Scotia.

To appreciate the need and benefits of ArriveCAN, it is important to understand the context of where we started. At the onset of the pandemic, monitoring health measures at the border was a paper-based process.

In early 2020, the government implemented, through orders in council, strong border measures to slow the introduction and transmission of COVID-19 into Canada. We went from a few thousand travellers requiring additional health measures at the border per

year, really per day, to millions of travellers being tested. The existing system was not operationally sustainable for the magnitude of COVID-19.

I would like to add that the measures that we introduced and the measures the provinces introduced were meant to protect Canadians, meant to protect their health and safety. This was the number one and most important priority for any government in Canada, but was also meant to allow for the building of capacity within our health care system.

When we think about asking people to wear masks, asking people to physically distance, asking people to stay home, and asking owners of restaurants who invested their lives and sweat into building their businesses to shut down, it was not done haphazardly. It was done with the intention of making sure that Canadians were kept safe and sound during the pandemic. It was the right thing to do. With that, it was the right thing to do to introduce the ArriveCAN app.

To implement the emergency orders, we collected contact information from travellers. This was initially done in paper form. Information was shared with provinces and territories to identify travellers quarantining in their jurisdictions. It was also exchanged with local law enforcement to inform them in their day-to-day operations and was used to contact travellers to verify their compliance with quarantine requirements.

Before ArriveCAN was launched, it was a cumbersome process at the border. Further exacerbating the process was the need to collect forms using biohazard protocols, as this was the period when there was suspicion that the virus could live on paper.

In the early days, shipping paper forms across the country, digitizing and inputting information into existing systems could take upwards of 14 days. It is within this context that ArriveCAN was created in the spring of 2020 as a joint initiative between the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency.

Without ArriveCAN, border services officers would have needed to ask each traveller health questions and review their documents. By using the app, travellers saved approximately five minutes each time they crossed the border. The app was downloaded more than 18 million times, and allowed more than 16 million travellers to expedite their border crossing.

Now that vaccine mandates and other health requirements have been removed, the advance CBSA declaration feature of the app can be used voluntarily to make customs and immigration declarations in advance. This continues to save travellers time at participating airports.



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I do hope to see this form of advance CBSA declaration in an app be used for all travellers entering Canada, specifically Canadian citizens, to expedite their process through airports, such as Pearson airport. I use Pearson airport on a regular basis as do many of my colleagues, as I see them there on Sunday evenings or Monday mornings.

The budget allocated for ArriveCAN is \$54 million by March 31, 2023. The budget breakdown can be found on the CBSA website.

As the science evolved, so too did our technology. Initially, ArriveCAN was simply a digitized version of the paper traveller contact information form that travellers were completing upon arrival to Canada.

Collecting information remotely prior to a traveller's arrival minimized the number of questions that the border services officer had to ask each traveller. This speeded up processing times and also limited the exposure of officers to each traveller, protecting the public safety of individuals working for CBSA and various partner agencies

In a public health crisis, time and information are critical. With the paper forms, we had actionable information on day five to eight of a traveller's quarantine. With ArriveCAN, we accelerated that to useful data within 48 hours.

• (1535)

The decision to make an ArriveCAN submission mandatory for all air travellers in November 2020 and all land travellers in February 2021 further facilitated PHAC's ability to administer border measures, with the goal of mitigating the importation and spread of COVID-19, again to protect the public health and safety of Canadians.

As border measures evolved quickly to respond to the omicron variant, so did ArriveCAN. Travel history data was used to identify recent arrivals from countries of concern. PHAC was subsequently able to contact those travellers individually by email and phone, ask them to test and place them in necessary quarantine. This response would have been impossible without the ArriveCAN app.

Like at other points in history, the need to take timely action drove innovation. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the development of a more efficient process to manage large volumes of health data. The purpose and value of ArriveCAN to manage public health measures at the border cannot be understated. Again, it was to protect the safety and health of Canadians.

ArriveCAN is a tool that evolved with the pandemic, adopting changes with each new order in council. It improved the quality of the scientific data PHAC collected, which supported decision-making based on science and allowed the crucial exchange of information with provinces and territories. Without ArriveCAN, Canada's ability to administer the border measures put in place to protect public health would have been significantly reduced. We needed a more streamlined digital approach to manage, track and protect our borders during the largest health care crisis we have faced in nearly a century and have seen in our lifetime, and that was the ArriveCAN app.

It is important to understand that ArriveCAN is not a just an information-sharing app. It is a secure, transactional app and web tool that used the internationally recognized SMART health card standard to verify proof of vaccination. ArriveCAN improved data quality and enhanced our ability to verify compliance rates under the Quarantine Act.

The budget includes far more than the creation and launch of the app itself. The cost to develop and launch the original version of the app in April 2020 was approximately \$80,000. To ensure Canada's COVID-19 response remained effective, the Government of Canada made regular adjustments to border measures, informed by scientific evidence, available data and international travel patterns. Support for these adjustments required 70 updates and upgrades to ArriveCAN. Each of these had to be developed and tested prior to launch to ensure the app was up to date and secure.

To that end, the total budget for ArriveCAN also includes all the necessary work to operate, maintain and upgrade the app over the last two years. It also covers the work done by Service Canada employees at the call centre, who answered over 645,000 calls and helped travellers during the pandemic. Again, the app, much like all the measures that were brought in during COVID-19 and that are ongoing, was meant to protect the public health and safety of Canadians.

Given the urgency of the pandemic, the app needed to be developed as quickly as possible. The CBSA had to use several professional services contracts for the development and maintenance of ArriveCAN based on their expertise. All contracts and payments were made in accordance with the Government of Canada's policies and directives. This included safeguards to ensure the private information of Canadians using the app was protected, which was fundamental.

In conclusion, as Canada continues to recover from the pandemic, the CBSA will continue to work hard to make technology available at the border to help speed up travel and enhance the safety and security of Canadians. I hope to see the ArriveCAN app and iterations thereof used in CBSA pre-clearance for travellers coming through airports in Canada, particularly Canadian citizens, to speed up the process of clearing customs and immigration via CBSA.

• (1540)

**Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a two-part question for the member opposite.

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The first part is about the fairness of the app. There are many Canadians in my riding, such as seniors, who do not have Internet, email or access to the app. More importantly, I have an Amish community, which does not use phones, does not have Internet, does not drive and does not vote. They are now facing a quarter of a million dollars in fines as a community. Does the member think that is fair, or is it discriminatory against those Canadians?

As to the second part, he talked about the efficiency of the app, why it cost \$54 million and its effectiveness. The Ottawa bureau chief of The Globe and Mail said the day before yesterday that when he was going through customs, where there were huge line-ups, he asked about the ArriveCAN app and the long lineups. The border officer laughed and said the app is irrelevant so he should not bother using it. Does the member have anything to say about that?

● (1545)

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for his concerns with regard to the usage of the ArriveCAN app.

We want to make sure that the experience of all Canadians using the ArriveCAN app is efficient, quick and smooth. Obviously, there are travellers who need assistance, and assistance was available for travellers requiring it, if they needed it.

I have elderly parents. They travelled during the time when COVID-19 was here and when the app was in use, and we did assist them with that. It was very efficient and smooth for them, including for my 87-year-old father, who had the app on his smart phone and utilized it. It was a good experience.

[Translation]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoy watching my Liberal colleagues trying to defend the ArriveCAN app today. I do not know if my colleagues travelled a little during the time that this app was in effect and saw how seniors in particular grappled with this complicated app or how border services agents tried to help people. What a waste of time. That said, I agree that some measures had to be implemented. I am not disputing that.

I would like to ask my colleague a question. Are the people who developed the ArriveCAN app at a cost of \$54 million part of the same group who were awarded contracts for Roxham Road and who are part of the Liberal Party's entourage? I just want to know if there is a relationship between these two groups.

[English]

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to attempt to answer the question by the hon. member for Drummond. My interpretation may not have been working. I am not sure if it is just mine or that of other colleagues. I did not get the interpretation, but I think I understood the question.

With regard to the cost of the app, which many members have asked about, we can look at the full cost and operation of the app over the two years, with the many upgrades, the service call centre, the adjustments that were made, the number of professionals involved, the storage of data and so forth. Obviously, given the mea-

sure that was introduced, we cannot look at the microcosm of just the app itself.

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there have been a bunch of very concerning irregularities around the ArriveCAN app. I think most Canadians were pretty shocked at the overall dollar amount for development and maintenance, which was \$54 million. When the CBSA produced a list of contractors involved, there were companies on there that claimed they did not do any work on the app and were quite surprised.

To my friend across the way, do these irregularities, in his mind, not warrant an audit to get to the bottom of how much money this cost, who got the money, what the procurement process looked like and whether it was appropriate? Does he not agree that is appropriate?

**Mr. Francesco Sorbara:** Mr. Speaker, look, having transparency and accountability in how every level of government is spending money is imperative for taxpayers, including the taxpayers in my riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge.

I know that all of the processes and procedures were followed by the Government of Canada in the procurement process for the app. If members would like to go to the CBSA website, there is a breakdown of how the monies were spent with regard to the ArriveCAN app, and, for that matter, with regard to all of the measures that were put in place during COVID-19, which was an extraordinary period of time in our country and the world's history.

[Translation]

**Mr. Kody Blois (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as always, it is great to see all my hon. colleagues here in the House.

I want to begin by taking a few moments to reflect on the past two years, which have been very difficult for all Canadians and for countries around the world. We fought COVID-19 and we won, but I would like to remind all my colleagues and all Canadians of the enormous uncertainty that existed on March 12, 2020. I remember that day very clearly. I was back in my riding, and the Prime Minister stood behind his podium and announced that COVID-19, a novel virus, had arrived in Canada.

● (1550)

[English]

We did not know a whole lot about the virus, and when we look at the last two years, we see the uncertainty that it presented but also the work we did collectively in an international sense. The government worked to help provide and procure vaccines that would be available for Canadians. We made sure they were protected against the novel virus, and the fact that we are able to gather again in this chamber two years later is quite remarkable. It has been a challenging time.

[Translation]

I think it is important to compare our response to that of other countries, like the United States, our neighbour to the south. The number of people who have died from COVID-19 there is about 10 times higher than in Canada.

[English]

Let us think about that. I believe roughly 60,000 Canadians died as a result of COVID-19. Of course, we still have COVID-19 here in this country. We are in a much better place, but it still exists.

When we talk about the way the government responded, I will take our response 10 times over. Let us think about that. It is not just about statistics; it is about people's lives. There would have been 600,000 deaths in this country had we followed the way of the United States. When we look at the way the government helped support individuals and businesses, which were being asked to take on health measures and protocols to stop the spread of COVID-19, there has been tremendous spending over the past two years.

Regarding inflation, because the text of the motion today talks about some of the affordability challenges that Canadians are seeing, I will reiterate what I said before in the House: It is a nuanced issue. Part of it is a result of the dislocated supply chains we have seen, which are still working their way back from COVID-19 and from the disruption we have seen. Some of it has been because of major weather events around the world, including right here in Canada. I will name three of them.

Mr. Speaker, you are from Nova Scotia and we all watched hurricane Fiona with concern and the way it impacted our communities in Atlantic Canada, particularly in Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island and western Newfoundland. We can think about the droughts that we were seeing in the prairie provinces last year during harvest season, and the atmospheric rivers that impacted British Columbia. Those are three examples just in our own country where there was massive disruption and an impact on critical infrastructure that, of course, then impacted the supply chain. That is part of the reason we are seeing some of the inflation.

There is also the war in Ukraine. We have talked about this at great length. The war continues, and it is causing supply chain issues because there has been difficulty in being able to move critical grains to international markets. Let me go on the record and say that I have deep concern about Russia's newest proclamation that it is not going to recognize the international accord to continue to move grain from the ports of Odessa in the Black Sea. That has had an impact on energy security and is also driving prices higher.

We also need to think about the demographic situation. In western countries, populations on average are getting older. I do not know if it has been tabled yet today, but I believe that at some point this week the Minister of Immigration is going to table a levels report. I hope this government will be ambitious in drawing new Canadians to our communities, because this is extremely important for the replenishment of our communities and for us to have the necessary workforce.

With respect to the workforce, there were almost one million unfilled jobs in the last quarter of 2021. There are market shortages in

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labour, and that is driving wage costs higher, which is then having a continuing nuanced effect.

The last cause is the pent-up demand that individuals have. Maybe some of us in the House and Canadians at home want to travel during the winter months and have the opportunity to go away. That was not available previously, so there is a lot of pent-up disposable income. That is also driving some of the inflationary pressure we are seeing right now.

We need to be clear. The next 18 to 24 months are going to be difficult. The Minister of Finance has alluded to that. Certainly the projections, whether they be from the Bank of Canada or some of our private financial institutions, are talking about the prospect of a recession.

Let me speak to interest rates. It is important that we as members of Parliament respect the independence of the Bank of Canada. Certainly the member for Carleton did not do that during his leadership campaign, but it is important that we do so. I want to highlight the fact that the Bank of Canada's interest rates are going to play an important role here, but we are still going to see some stickiness with inflation, in part because of the things I just mentioned. Whether it is the war in Ukraine or the decoupling of supply chains from places like China and Russia, those things are going to keep prices a bit higher. We need to be mindful of that and set an expectation for Canadians in the days ahead.

• (1555)

[Translation]

I expect that the fall economic update, which will be presented by the Minister of Finance on Thursday, will propose some prudent fiscal measures. Indeed, given the current situation, the government needs to maintain some financial strength in order to address the issue of affordability for all Canadians.

[English]

I respect the fact that this government has walked a line in responding and trying to be proportional to the challenges we are seeing. It is not necessarily the best fiscal policy for the government to spend a lot of money when the Bank of Canada, on its monetary side, is trying to bring down interest rates. With credit to the Minister of Finance, we will see what happens on Thursday, but I expect hopefully that will be the case.

Let me say three things that I think are going to be extremely important for us as parliamentarians to encourage and for this government to take up in the days ahead in relation to what we are seeing.

The first is regulatory reform. I talk about this often. There are things we need to be able to do that do not cost money, but that can help drive economic growth and improve public service delivery, whether those are policy changes or legislative changes. As the chair of the agriculture committee, I hear often about little things that this government can do and what we can do as parliamentarians to help drive that innovation and investment that do not require government spending. That is going to have to be an important part in the days ahead.

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I spoke a lot about Ukraine. Let us look at the way it delivers digital government. It has been tremendous. It uses what is called the Diia app. It has the ability to access its government records online using an app. It is transforming the way in which it is providing government services. I think we need to have the same conversation in Canada about how we can drive that forward, how we can find efficiencies in the public sector and how we can drive innovation to better public service delivery for Canadians, and also look at efficiencies on the fiscal side of the ledger.

The final thing I will say in the 45 seconds that I have left is with respect to interprovincial trade. I have heard the radio commercials in my home province about premiers asking for more health care funding. That is a conversation that we know will happen between the Minister of Health, the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister and the premiers, but at the same time, the premiers need to be part of the solution with respect to finding the money to support long-term sustainable health care.

One way is to reduce and eliminate interprovincial trade barriers. It is easier right now for wine producers in our region of the Annapolis Valley to send their products to France than it is to Ontario. We are in the 21st century. Why is that still the case? A Senate report suggested that 2% to 4% of GDP can be achieved if we actually focus on that. Premiers need to be part of the solution. If we are going to bring money to the table, they need to do that, along with their own health care.

I am going to finish there. I look forward to questions from my colleagues.

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**COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE DOCUMENTS RELATED TO NATIONAL MICROBIOLOGY LAB**

**Hon. Mark Holland (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a memorandum of understanding, signed by the House leaders of all recognized parties in the House of Commons, to create an ad hoc committee of parliamentarians to examine documents from the Public Health Agency of Canada relating to the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg.

Canadians deserve to see MPs working in collaboration on important issues that require a responsible approach to transparency and accountability. I want to thank my fellow House leaders and colleagues for their work and support in this important process.

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**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

**OPPOSITION MOTION—ARRIVECAN APPLICATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about everything but ArriveCAN. We are here today to talk about why the government wasted \$54 million on this application.

In my riding of Sarnia—Lambton, Canadians were refused entry into Canada. It was not because they were not vaccinated, but be-

cause they did not have ArriveCAN filled out. They were told they were going to be charged \$6,200 each, and this was after the World Health Organization had already said that we should be eliminating these border measures and the mandates. It was a violation of their charter rights.

Would the member admit that the Liberals violated the charter rights of Canadians?

• (1600)

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, no, I will not admit that, nor do I think this government has violated any charter rights.

I know the member opposite was appointed the shadow minister of civil liberties, I believe, by the member for Carleton. Let me say this, as she did make reference to the World Health Organization. It was the work we did internationally, along with the provinces and territories, to respond to the pandemic that made sure there were vaccines in place and there were measures there. I already mentioned there were 60,000 Canadians who died as a result of COVID-19. This was a serious virus. We responded in the manner that it had to be done. I would not take the approach of the United States, where 10 times the number of deaths happened.

We stand by our record. We stand by the way we responded to a very nuanced situation and the fact that we can stand here two years later confidently with Canadians protected, the majority of whom have been vaccinated.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I am surprised to hear him brag about the economy, when in the cases of ArriveCAN and Roxham Road there seem to be some questionable contracts to look at, to say the least. He talked about the economic statement. While the government is giving money to companies, the minister is already telling Canadians that they will have to tighten their belts. It is a double standard for businesses and individuals.

After the pandemic, there are systems where people need help. There is the issue of health transfers that we put in as a condition for the economic statement, help for seniors 65 to 74 who are once again being ignored by the government, as well as the whole issue of employment insurance. I think that despite the tough times that are coming, it is definitely not the time to be making cuts in these areas.

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**Mr. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of elements to my colleague's question, but as for health transfers, I agree with the proposal to help the provinces and the territories and to work with them. In the meantime, Mr. Legault and all the premiers across Canada need to work on reducing interprovincial trade barriers and increasing GDP in Canada with sustainable programs and funding. Transferring money for health without an economic plan, without ensuring that the funds are sustainable, is problematic.

[English]

**Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP):** Mr. Speaker, one of my concerns with today's motion is the first line, which asserts, "the cost of government is driving up the cost of living". This runs counter to a recent paper from the University of Calgary. It was found that in Canada, since the second quarter of 2021, three-quarters of inflation has been driven not by government spending but by supply-side challenges, for example by disruptions in food crops internationally.

Can the member for Kings—Hants comment further on this?

**Mr. Kody Blois:** Mr. Speaker, that is what I was getting at in my speech. I used a portion of my speech not even to necessarily address the provisions in the text, because I find it a bit ludicrous that it has been brought forward.

Let me speak to the member's question. When we look at inflation, it is nuanced. It is not necessarily as a result of government spending, but it is because of a lot of external factors that are happening around the world: the war in Ukraine, climate change and demographics.

That is an important observation the member has made, and I agree with him.

• (1605)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough—Kawartha, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

It is always an honour to rise in the House of Commons to represent my constituents of Peterborough—Kawartha. Today we have put forth an opposition motion. For those who are watching at home or starting to get interested in politics, opposition motions are so important. Every day the Liberals get to decide what is important, and we know that they are not choosing what is really important to Canadians.

With an opposition motion, the Conservatives can use our voices to speak for Canadians. I will read our opposition motion that we put forth today. We will have a vote after this, and we are asking the Liberals, NDP and Bloc to support us on this motion to pass it. The motion says:

That, given that,

- (i) the cost of government is driving up the cost of living,
- (ii) the Parliamentary Budget Officer states that 40% of new spending is not related to COVID-19,
- (iii) Canadians are now paying higher prices and higher interest rates as a result,
- (iv) it is more important than ever for the government to respect taxpayer dollars and eliminate wasteful spending,

the House call on the Auditor General of Canada to conduct a performance audit, including the payments, contracts and sub-contracts for all aspects of the ArriveCAN app, and to prioritize this investigation.

This is a very important motion. Today in the House, I heard members from the Liberal side of the House say the motion is too broad and it deals too much with the cost of living.

When the Liberal government in charge is responsible for spending Canadian taxpayers' money and is wasting their money when we are in a cost of living crisis, it absolutely is pertinent to this motion. The ArriveCAN app cost \$54 million and we do not know where that money was spent, because it was only supposed to cost \$250,000. Canadian taxpayers deserve to know.

This motion is extremely important as we look at the complex issue of the cost of living crisis. There are people who cannot afford to buy bread or eggs and the government is wasting money. Really what this comes down to is mismanagement of funds, possibly corruption, but we do not know. That is why we are calling on the government. If we do not have accountability, how do we get to the bottom of it? If we do not ask the right questions, we cannot get the right answers. Canadians do not have trust anymore. We need trust restored so that we can help the people.

There were 1.5 million Canadians who used a food bank in March. That is the highest number ever recorded in Canadian history. In one month, 1.5 million people accessed a food bank. One in three of those were children.

This past weekend I went to the grocery store to get some essentials. Like everyone else, I noticed the outrageous cost of food. The cashier said to me that at least three people a day tell her that they are going to have to use a food bank. We live in a G7 country.

I like to think that everyone in the House cares. I do. I really think that everyone is here because they want to serve and that is why they took this job. However, some days it is hard to believe that because of the wasteful spending and the lack of acknowledgment of an app. Just admit that it did not work, that it was a waste and we need to fix it. Let the Auditor General do it, learn from it and move on. Restore trust.

I was former shadow minister or critic for tourism, and I took so many calls about this app. I have one constituent who was featured on *Global National*. Her name is Katie. Katie works in the States but she is a Canadian citizen. Katie went across the border. Some of the stats will show us what happened to Katie. Her story was featured on *Global National* with the ArriveCAN app.

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• (1610)

She was one of the 10,000 people who were impacted by the glitch of the app, but no communication was ever made to Katie. None. This is just another epic fail in terms of the accountability of the Liberals. She was told she was going to be fined up to \$1 million. She was not just getting an email; she was literally getting acosted. She was receiving threatening messages every single day.

I do not know how one measures the damage to Katie's mental health. She was threatened with being imprisoned for up to three years. She was threatened with admission into a federal quarantine facility. The worst part is that she was threatened with never being allowed back into her own country.

There is so much wrong with this app. Conservatives kept on telling Liberals it was not working. We felt like parrots. We were saying it was not doing whatever they thought it was supposed to do. We talked about the backlogs at borders and at Pearson. Canada established this reputation whereby people had zero travel confidence to come to Canada, because of the ArriveCAN app.

I travelled from Germany, in March I believe it was, and the anger from the people on the airline at how poorly Canada was run was embarrassing. They said the ArriveCAN app was disgusting. We cannot even begin to calculate the lost revenue this faulty app created. I do not know what tools we would use to calculate this.

The tourism industry before COVID was a \$105-billion industry. It is up to only \$80 billion at this point. We have lost so much money because of this app.

The member from Kingston loves to heckle me, and he has come in to distract me. I have said it before and will say it again: If you don't want to listen to me, leave.

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I sincerely apologize to the member if she thought I was heckling her, but I was actually talking to my colleague. Obviously I was talking too loudly, and I will try to keep it down, but I certainly was not directing anything at her.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I thank the member. I am also going to remind the member not to speak directly to members when they are in the House.

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Speaker, the member's record in the past has not been so kind, so I appreciate it.

The magnitude of the fault of this app extends so far. When we think about a little convenience store that benefits from somebody crossing the border to come visit their parents, that benefits from tourism, how do we calculate that when that person did not get to cross the border because the Liberals doubled down in August and made it only digital. Seniors, anybody who did not have a smart phone, or anybody who did not want to download the app could not use it. If that is not discriminatory, I do not know what is.

I do not know how many seniors came into my constituency office and said they did not know how to use the app and asked me to help them. Then, when we would do it together, it would work. We will hear Liberals say that it worked fine, and I am sure it worked fine sometimes, but that is not good enough when we have a whole industry at stake. That is not good enough when we are supposed to

be helping Canadians restore travel confidence. That is not good enough when people are wrongfully fined and quarantined. This happened to 10,000 people.

This is absolutely an important motion we should all be open to, because why are we elected? We are elected to serve our constituents, to serve Canadians. Why are we elected? We are elected to be accountable. If there is a \$54-million app and the government does not know how it was paid for, then we owe it to Canadians to find out why.

Again, please let us get the Auditor General to conduct an audit, including the payments, contracts and subcontracts for all aspects of the ArriveCAN app, and to prioritize this investigation.

• (1615)

**Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been trying to clarify something with respect to this motion, because I have been getting different and conflicting answers from Conservatives and the NDP today. The very first clause in this motion, the first “whereas” clause, says “the cost of government is driving up the cost of living”.

What we heard the Leader of the Opposition say today is that he was referring to the fact there are more public servants now, more public sector jobs, than there were before the pandemic. He was essentially criticizing those public sector jobs. The NDP seems to claim it has to do with subsidizing oil, which is what the member for Courtenay—Alberni said. I am wondering if this member can clarify for me item (i) of this motion, where it says, “the cost of government is driving up the cost of living”. Is that indeed talking about the fact that there are more public sector jobs now than there were prior to the pandemic?

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Speaker, what we need to focus on is that when we look at food bank users in that statistic that I referred to in my speech, which was 1.5 million in one month, the highest ever recorded, it was also in conjunction with the highest employment rate. People are working, and they still cannot afford food.

The government continues to waste money over and over again on programs that do not work and that do not get to the people who need them, who are constantly met with red tape. Unless we do these audits and hold the Liberals to account, why let them just waste taxpayers' money?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Martin Champoux (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I heard my colleague say in her speech that we have lost so much money because of this app, or \$54 million. I completely agree with her. That \$54 million is a lot of money for an app used for two or three years. That is too much money that could have been spent on other things.

*Business of Supply*

Last week, the Bloc Québécois moved a motion to get rid of an expense that costs us \$70 million every year. We were criticized for not getting our priorities straight. I do not really have any questions. My colleague may want to comment on that.

[*English*]

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Speaker, to my colleague's point, \$54 million may seem small when talking about a trillion-dollar debt. The comprehension level of the money that is owed in this country is not really conceivable to the average Canadian. It did not even work, and we cannot even calculate the amount of money that was lost because of its ineffectiveness.

We should be challenging the government if it is not stepping up. It should be offering to do this audit. We should not have to call on it to do this audit. That is the right thing to do. If the government is mismanaging Canadian taxpayers' money, it ought to be ready to take a stand on that.

**Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has been on my mind is whether any other countries around the world have something like the ArriveCAN app. I checked. At least among our peers in the G20, not a single one has an app like this, not Germany, South Korea, India, the U.K., South Africa or Japan. I will not name them all, but there are 20 of them.

The exception is Canada. We have this app that cost \$54 million, an app that Canadians did not need and cannot afford. Could my hon. colleague comment on the fact that we spent \$54 million on something that was apparently not necessary in the eyes of our G20 peers?

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Speaker, that is the question we need to ask. Why? Why does the Liberal government continue to say it is going to do something and make things better? Every time, repeatedly, since the Prime Minister has taken office, things have gotten worse. That is a great question.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of rising today to speak to the motion moved by the hon. member for Carleton and leader of the official opposition on the important issue of the Liberal government's wasteful spending. Rather than helping to combat the inflation crisis Canadians are experiencing, this government is fuelling inflation and making everyone's life more difficult. I would like to share some aspects of this motion with my colleagues.

First, the member for Carleton believes that the cost of government is driving up the cost of living. That is a fact. The cost of groceries has gone up by 11.4% in a year. That is the largest increase in 40 years. That means that some items at the grocery store will cost up to 40% more. That also means that mothers and fathers will have difficult choices to make at the cash register. They may have to decide not to buy certain items that week even though the kids want them. They will have to tell their children that they can only afford to buy those things once a month because they have difficult choices to make. That is today's reality. The cost of living is sky-high.

After having dropped, the price of gas is on the rise again. It is now almost \$2 a litre in Quebec. For workers in regions like mine, who have to commute and travel close to 60 kilometres every day to get to work, this money is coming directly from their pockets. They can no longer use it to feed their families. That is another really problematic situation. Now we learn that this government has decided to add new taxes. It wants to triple the carbon tax, which will have an even more damaging effect on consumers across Canada.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer told us that this government has torn through \$500 billion in inflationary spending. That is half a trillion dollars. I never thought I would use that term in the House. Canada's debt is now \$1 trillion. The government has spent half a trillion in the last two years. It claimed that this money was used to help people deal with COVID-19, to send cheques to citizens, families and businesses.

Yes, Conservatives supported those measures. However, we did not support spending 40% of that \$500 billion, or \$200 billion, on things that had absolutely nothing to do with COVID-19. The government created new programs and new spending that ended up boosting inflation in Canada. As a result, the family I was talking about earlier will have a harder time putting food on the table at the end of the month. That is the reality.

Members will recall the Prime Minister saying that interest rates would stay low for decades, that it was fine to borrow money, that the government would absorb those expenses on Canadians' behalf. Now Canadians are the ones who have to pay back their loans at interest rates that are higher than they have been in years.

What do the Liberals have to say to those Canadians? Will they pay their bills? No, they will not, contrary to what the Prime Minister said during his inaugural speech in 2015. That is the reality.

The third part of the motion says, "Canadians are now paying higher prices and higher interest rates as a result".

Yes, Canadians are paying higher interest rates. The government is going to pay higher interest rates. That means that a larger portion of the money that Canadians send to the government will be used to make interest payments because this government spent an incredible amount of money, money that it should not have spent, spending that could be described as wasteful, as in the case of the ArriveCAN app. Paying off this debt is going to cost more for everyone. That is the reality.

The motion also says, "it is more important than ever for the government to respect taxpayer dollars and eliminate wasteful spending".

*Business of Supply*

Who can be against that? If there is one person here who is against that sentiment let him or her rise immediately and explain how they can be against using taxpayer money better and eliminating wasteful spending. One of the best ways to do that is to investigate the government's wastefulness.

• (1620)

If my colleagues support the motion, it would mean calling on the Auditor General of Canada to conduct a performance audit, including the payments, contracts and subcontracts for all aspects of the ArriveCAN app, and to prioritize this investigation.

This app cost \$54 million, when it could have cost \$250,000. Certain invoices led us to believe that some companies had been hired. We heard about a \$1-million contract awarded to a firm that candidly admitted to the newspapers that it never worked on the app. That is to say nothing of how useless the ArriveCAN app is.

I will conclude my speech by saying that I urge all of my colleagues to support this motion.

• (1625)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to follow the Conservative Party's thinking on the ArriveCAN app. At one point, depending on who we talked to and who happened to hold the leadership of that party, the Conservatives were saying to shut the borders. Then they were saying to open the borders and then they were back on the theme to shut the border.

I would think they would recognize it was important to have the ArriveCAN app or something of a similar nature. Does the Conservative Party really believe that it could have implemented something that would have addressed issues of security, cyber-threats and these valuable data banks for \$250,000? Are the Conservatives really that naive?

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Speaker, since I got vaccinated, I had a piece of paper that I could have shown customs officers. That would have cost the price of a sheet of paper, and it would have allowed me to cross the border.

Instead, everyone had to enter their information in the ArriveCAN app, otherwise they could not enter Canada. I had an app provided by the Quebec government that allowed me to show my proof of vaccination. Instead, the federal government wanted its own app, because it just had to get involved, or rather it wanted to reward good Liberal friends by handing out more valuable and juicy contracts.

That is why the Auditor General needs to get to the bottom of everything pertaining to the ArriveCAN app.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable for his speech. My goodness, I never thought I would have the opportunity to ask him a question in the House, but today I do.

My colleague spoke a lot about the importance and the cost of ArriveCAN, the app that was created during the pandemic and represents a one-time expenditure. The Bloc Québécois does agree that this expenditure should be looked at, but it is a one-time expense.

I believe that we have already raised this issue with the Conservatives, but what I find fascinating is that, just last week, the Conservatives voted against our motion, which would have saved the government money every year. That \$70 million is not a one-time expenditure, it is an annual recurring one.

Is there a double standard? Could my colleague comment on that?

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question, which I am honoured to answer.

I hope that one day, I or one of my colleagues will be lucky enough to answer the Bloc Québécois's questions every day. What we basically want is to put a stop to waste and spending associated with unnecessary programs and to replace the Liberal government, so that there will finally be responsible people on the other side to answer all of the Bloc's questions.

[English]

**Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke a lot about debt and the debt that the country has incurred. This motion has to do with spending and how the government uses its money and what it is spending it on.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has a debt clock, which circulates through how much debt we are incurring. We are incurring about \$6 million a day, adding to our debt.

I wonder if the member could speak a little more to our incurring such debt at the pace that we are and how that is affecting our economy and the capacity of the government to be able to operate.

[Translation]

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Speaker, I could give many examples to show how, when the government keeps racking up debt, it loses some of the flexibility it has to offer real services to citizens. More importantly, it affects the ability of future generations to access government services because the price of that debt is going to keep growing. Our children and the children of all Canadians are the ones who are going to have to pay that debt. That is the big problem.

I just want to say one thing. According to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, we are adding \$6 million a day to the debt. That does not include the Prime Minister's \$7,000-a-night hotel bill. It cost at least \$14,000 for those two days.

• (1630)

**Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if we could rise above partisanship with regard to the motion before us, my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable would not be surprised to learn that I believe that, when it comes to public health measures, the onus is on the government imposing them. It is up to the government to justify whether those measures were effective from an epidemiological and public health perspective.



*Business of Supply*

Can my colleague admit that the ArriveCAN app did have its benefits in terms of public health and the fight against COVID-19? I heard in the debate that we are the only G20 country that had this type of app. I did not verify that myself, but can the member acknowledge that there might have been some benefits to the ArriveCAN app?

**Mr. Luc Berthold:** Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to see the benefits of ArriveCAN when there were already tools that had been put in place by the provinces. People could have presented vaccination status documents at the border. Everything was already in place. There was no need to create another app, another expense and another layer of administration to basically achieve the same objectives.

**Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that I will be sharing my time with my esteemed and valued colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot

One of the roles of government is to protect the public, particularly through border controls. In the case of a pandemic such as the one we have experienced, this is a matter of protecting the public from the spread of the virus within our borders.

Increased spread of a virus can put additional pressure on the country's health care systems, which have been compromised by inadequate federal transfers to Quebec and the provinces for the past 30 years, despite the constitutional agreements. Therefore, it was necessary to avoid putting more pressure on health care systems by protecting our people from anything that could be transmitted by travellers from here and abroad. That was part of the purpose of the ArriveCAN app: to ensure that travellers were not only vaccinated, but also tested negative before arriving in Canada.

Today, we are debating a strangely worded motion. I will read it:

That, given that,

- (i) the cost of government is driving up the cost of living,
- (ii) the Parliamentary Budget Officer states that 40% of new spending is not related to COVID-19,
- (iii) Canadians are now paying higher prices and higher interest rates as a result,
- (iv) it is more important than ever for the government to respect taxpayer dollars and eliminate wasteful spending,

the House call on the Auditor General of Canada to conduct a performance audit, including the payments, contracts and sub-contracts for all aspects of the ArriveCAN app, and to prioritize this investigation.

The motion's preamble lays out problems that people are experiencing because of inflation, but it also relates the Parliamentary Budget Officer's finding that \$200 billion in ostensibly pandemic-related spending was not necessarily related to COVID-19. Current inflation is not due solely to government spending. Other factors contributed to the inflation we are experiencing now.

Some aspects of the preamble simplify a complex inflationary reality into a single element. These aspects are followed by the motion itself, some of which is bewilderingly vague. In fact, upon rereading all the points of the preamble and the motion, one might first get the impression that the Conservative Party wants the Auditor General to analyze all aspects of pandemic management, which would be a monumental task if it were not done by subject. Fortunately, this is later clarified. The motion says at the end that the per-

formance audit relates to all aspects surrounding the ArriveCAN app. It is a pretty flawed motion.

Despite this, my Bloc Québécois colleagues and I are inclined to vote in favour of the motion. We are inclined to do so because it is important to know whether public funds were used excessively to create this tool, ArriveCAN. That said, I have serious questions about the Conservative Party's priorities. Yes, \$54 million is a lot of money, but it should be, in theory, a "one-hit wonder". Year after year, \$67 million is paid for symbolic monarchist functions, and the Conservatives voted against abolishing the control these monarchist functions have over the decisions of the people's representatives in the House and in all democratic chambers in Canada.

Basically, that is what ArriveCAN should have been. It should have been a screening and security tool at the border that border officers could use to quickly identify travellers that needed to quarantine, travellers who did not need to quarantine, and travellers that had to be turned away because they did not meet the criteria for entering Canada. If we take it one step further, ArriveCAN was also a way for Canada to save money. If members recall, before the app was created, travellers were required to quarantine in hotels reserved for that purpose. Of course, travellers had to pay for the room and their meals, and that did not come cheap, but the government had to find, train and pay additional staff to make sure that people were abiding by the quarantine requirements, whether at a hotel or at home.

• (1635)

Note that at the time, there were benefits for people who had to quarantine. For a brief moment, those benefits were provided to Canadian travellers returning from a trip who had to quarantine. It did not last long, thank heavens.

ArriveCAN should have been a screening and security tool, but also a way to save money by automating tracking and screening at the border to some degree. Some might gasp to hear me say that ArriveCAN was a means for screening at the border to ensure that travellers entering the country were vaccinated. The vaccination requirement raised eyebrows. Anyone who travelled before the pandemic knows that some vaccines, such as the yellow fever vaccine, and some drugs, such as antiparasitics or antimalarial drugs, are either mandatory or highly recommended for travelling to certain countries. The proof of vaccination requirement is not new in modern history. ArriveCAN would mean no longer needing to carry a vaccine record. People are less likely to forget their cellphone than a piece of paper.

The intention of ArriveCAN was to make life easier for travellers and border officers. Then again, as the saying goes, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

*Business of Supply*

I was reminded of this saying because I believe that the idea of creating ArriveCAN was really based on the need for border control that would not make life difficult for anyone. However, the testimonies I received by email and in person from travellers and border officers, and those received by many members of the House, tend to show that the application had significant flaws. The first is that border officers were never consulted on the creation and implementation of the app, and yet, along with the travellers themselves, border officers were the first to experience the repercussions of ArriveCAN.

Then there were the programming problems. Vaccinated people with a negative test received a message ordering them to quarantine despite the verifications by border officers. There were also the incredible delays that paralyzed airports. Those are just a few examples of the difficulties experienced. The app required 70 whole updates. In short, ArriveCAN is an imperfect app that is difficult and even impossible for some people to use, including those who do not own a cell phone. To top it all off, it was also a very expensive app.

Newspaper articles recently disclosed that, to date, the app has cost \$54 million. The committee received 2,000 documents related to ArriveCAN just last night. That does not include documents from the Canada Border Services Agency, which we are anxiously awaiting.

Once we have the documents, we hope to get to the bottom of this issue, because it is important. The problem is that the app cost \$54 million when it was originally supposed to cost only a few hundred thousand dollars.

Where did those extra millions of dollars go? Does the \$54 million include the development and acquisition of the app as well as the information documents handed out to travellers in airports here and abroad? Does it include advertising? Was there complacency in the management of public funds and peoples' taxes? These are just some of the questions I am asking, and I hope many others are asking them as well.

Of course, the issue is being studied by the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. However, we do not have the same means as the Office of the Auditor General, which will certainly be able to do a more thorough analysis to complement that of the committee. We must shed light on a good intention that turned into a nightmare for border officers and many travellers. There have been extraordinary cost overruns, and we believe it would be useful for the Office of the Auditor General to conduct an in-depth analysis.

● (1640)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat surprised after posing a question to a member of the Conservative Party regarding the necessity of having the ArriveCAN app. When I posed the question, the member answered, in essence, that a piece of paper would have sufficed, that people could provide a piece of paper at the border and that is all that was necessary.

I am wondering if the member can provide a response to the same question I asked a Conservative member previously. Does she believe it was necessary to have something like an ArriveCAN application at the border? Does she support the need for that app?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, before the pandemic, travellers sometimes needed proof of vaccination against diseases such as yellow fever to enter certain countries. That is still the case today. There was no little cellphone app at the time.

Was the ArriveCAN app strictly necessary?

The answer is no. The government could have used other tools that have been available for a long time.

[English]

**Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines “accountability” as “the quality or state of being accountable”, and further says, “especially: an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions”.

Does the member not think the Canadian public is expecting us to be accountable for the money that was spent on the ArriveCAN app? Who is better than the Auditor General to look into that?

I would also like her thoughts on how the present Liberal government has been lacking in accountability over the past seven years.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Mr. Speaker, let us never forget that everyone in the House, everyone working here, is paid with taxpayer dollars.

That is why, as with any family budget, it is important to be accountable to the people who place their trust in us and whose taxes pay our salary, pay for this place and pay for all the services they then get back.

Demanding transparency and oversight is therefore perfectly legitimate, and the Auditor General of Canada is perfectly positioned to do that.

**Ms. Andréanne Larouche (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for her speech. I would like to hear her thoughts on one aspect of our Conservative colleague's speech.

When we talk about inflation and the risks ahead for the coming months, the issue of central bank independence is crucial. Questioning this independence poses a risk for the economy, which will go through a difficult period.

*Business of Supply*

It is not just me who is saying this, but also the economist Gérard Fillion, who lives in my region. I send him my greetings and I hope he has a wonderful paternity leave. That said, I would like to hear what my colleague thinks.

• (1645)

**Mrs. Julie Vignola:** Mr. Speaker, the last thing we should be doing is brazenly interfering with the inflation and recession control measures that were put in place precisely to keep the government out of it, regardless of which party is in power.

The central bank has a role to play, a role that must be independent. All members of the House and all governments, regardless of political stripe, must respect this essential mandate, respect the fact that it is independent. We like that word in Quebec.

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion moved by our official opposition colleagues requiring that the Auditor General audit the payments, contracts and subcontracts for the ArriveCAN app.

I will reiterate what my Bloc Québécois colleagues said earlier. It is quite rich to make a link between, according to the wording of the Conservative motion, the money funnelled into ArriveCAN and general inflation. I find that rather rich, and I think that we will agree on that. Unfortunately, it is perhaps the Conservatives' rhetoric that is inflated.

The Bloc Québécois will nevertheless vote in favour of the motion because it supports the objective. The money spent on implementing and managing the ArriveCAN app must be scrutinized.

The Standing Committee on International Trade, of which I am a member, conducted a study on the ArriveCAN app. We were able to receive a good number of witnesses, including the customs union, who explained to us how disastrous the situation was, especially in the context of a labour shortage. The customs union told us that customs officers were already having a hard time completing regular tasks and the imposition of a new task, digitizing one more document, was really problematic. In a situation where Ottawa did nothing to fix the customs labour shortage problem, it certainly was reckless to make the ArriveCAN app mandatory.

Last summer, I was able to replace my colleague from Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères at the emergency meeting of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to call for an inquiry into the delays at the airports, an inquiry that would force the Minister of Transport, who has to be responsible, to come testify. We saw last summer how disastrous travel management or travel in general was from beginning to end. From issuing passports to chaos at the airports, Ottawa did not consider that after two and a half years of pandemic, people might, and I mean might, just have a slight hankering to travel somewhere.

What happened was not pretty. Members will recall that we heard from children who had to wait 24 hours. Sometimes those 24 hours are double the time spent on a long flight to go to certain parts of Asia. Twenty-four hours is a long time.

Our transportation industry did not receive the support provided to the industry in the United States and Europe. From the outset of

the pandemic, a change in ministers was needed to get things going. There were many irritants, made worse by the fact that carriers are not required to refund tickets in the event of flight cancellations.

When a citizen fulfills their part of the contract, that is takes their hard-earned money and purchases a ticket, it seems to me that the minimum standard would be that they obtain the service they paid for. There is a loophole in the act in that regard. In the United States and Europe, it is not complicated. If a carrier refuses to provide a refund, they are fined. The air passenger bill of rights also does not apply to federal ports and airports. That is another major problem.

The situation was clearly made worse by the fact that Ottawa consistently refused to disclose a plan for lifting restrictions, a detailed plan, a plan that set out a step-by-step process for lifting restrictions and explaining the reason for each step. A plan is about predictability. Perhaps we could have avoided all that chaos had we had a plan.

For us, the use of the ArriveCAN app was mandatory, but other countries in the world took different approaches. For example, in Europe, people had to complete an online declaration at home before their trip. Let us be clear. The debate about ArriveCAN is not a debate about providing proof of vaccination at the border. It is about something else. We could always make arrangements to debate that issue if we wanted to, but this debate is not on that subject. Citizens did not need to use that app to show proof of vaccination at the border.

This summer, I heard from people who had to quarantine for 14 days because they failed to answer certain questions on the ArriveCAN questionnaire. Perhaps an 85-year-old woman might not be entirely comfortable with technology. Could that be the case?

• (1650)

ArriveCAN needed to be suspended. We are very happy that it is now optional.

Now it is time to take stock, but we know that the Liberals do not like investigations and research into how they award contracts. We have seen this time and time again. ArriveCAN was supposed to cost \$80,000 to develop. In total, it ended up costing \$54 million. That is quite something.

In fact, the customs union believes that the money spent on ArriveCAN would have been much better spent—and may I say that is an understatement—on equipment for border crossings or hiring staff because the government was already asking customs officers to manage ArriveCAN forms as well as work overtime. How does an \$80,000 target turn into a \$54 million invoice?

*Business of Supply*

The process of awarding contracts was chaotic. The company that was awarded the contract, without a call for tenders, is called GC strategies. It is a company with only two employees. The two partners, Kristian Firth and Darren Anthony, already had numerous partnerships with the federal government, including the COVID Alert app that turned out to be completely useless.

The company says that it worked for TD Bank, CBC, the City of Ottawa, the LCBO and several federal government services. The partners act as intermediaries: The government provides them the requirements, then GC Strategies finds the necessary subcontractors to meet the requirements, but the Canadian government is in charge of project management, scope, budget and cost control. GC Strategies also uses a residential address and the company earned a commission of 15% to 30% according to the evidence that its officials provided in committee.

The Canadian government contacted them directly and they are not the ones who approached the government for this project. GC Strategies billed the government \$9 million over the course of two years for all the work done for ArriveCAN, but that amount was for time, material and the commitment. The profit margin was 15% to 30%, or somewhere between \$1.3 million and \$2.7 million.

GC Strategies says it always met the government's deadlines and never missed a deadline even though it made 150 updates in two years.

In response to a question from my colleague from Beauport—Limoulu who asked how many contractors worked for GC Strategies, the company responded that the size of the team varied over time between 17 and 18 people and 25 to 30 people.

A bunch of questions remain unanswered and the government is responsible. It has to be accountable. The government is supposed to be accountable to Parliament, a victory of the patriots of 1837-38. It has to prove how an app like ArriveCAN went from an estimated \$80,000 to develop to a final cost of \$54 million. The contracts, the payments and the outsourcing all have to be looked at by the Auditor General. It is a matter of basic transparency.

• (1655)

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that, throughout the debate, whether one is a New Democrat, a Bloc member or a Conservative, members seem to think that those of us in the Liberal Party do not believe in accountability. In fact, the very subject matter is going to one of our standing committees. It is being discussed and debated, and questions will follow. The CBSA is doing an internal review, and a report will ultimately come out of it.

Does the member believe that it was necessary for the government to have an ArriveCAN app in the first place, or is he like the Conservative members who said that we did not really need it and that a piece of paper would have sufficed when travelling through the international border?

We are talking about the safety and health of Canadians in all regions of our country. Would the member not agree, at the very least

in principle, that there was a need for a program, and if not this one then one of a similar nature, or does he concur with the Conservatives that a piece of paper would have sufficed?

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, I realize that our hon. colleague often uses the strategy of opening up a bunch of topics of discussion and then asking an unrelated question, making it hard for us to respond to all the arguments he was putting forward.

I will respond to the first point. When it comes to transparency, my colleague from Winnipeg North said that opposition members claim that the Liberals do not seem to believe in accountability. Forgive me, but if it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it is a duck. We know the Liberals hate being scrutinized. They voted against a motion that would have directed the committee on which I sit to study the ArriveCAN app. That answers the first question.

Next, the member asked if the app was necessary. There were other models. Why was this not discussed in a transparent way? The objective at this point is more about determining why this app cost much more than it should have. That is the question.

[English]

**Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, prior to the last election, basically the exact same government was in power. We on this side of the floor, as the opposition, called on it to share the scientific background and all of the evidence that verified its decisions in regard to COVID, and it stymied us on that. Today we are calling on it to explain to us why this ArriveCAN app was so important.

I have asked it for the metrics of how many people were coming across our borders with COVID, and I did not get any information on that. What is the member's view on the need for the government to come clean on its metrics?

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable. When the government implements a measure, it has to be able to justify it, cost it, support it with data and findings. It has to be able to say which aspects worked well and which ones did not; to state that the pros outweigh the cons, or in the opposite case, that adjustments will have to be made. When we are not privy to that information, we no longer have a responsible government in the House. Unfortunately, that is the sad reality in many other files.

*Business of Supply*

I can say that I, too, asked some officials similar questions when the committee I sit on was conducting a study, and we did not hear answers that were any more persuasive. Of course, it makes no sense. The Conservatives and the Bloc obviously did not have the same views on the lifting of various restrictions. However, we always agreed that the government had to provide a plan. To debate proposals and the lifting of measures so it would all be predictable and to avoid the chaos that occurred last summer, we must have before us all the facts and there must be transparency.

[English]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this whole ArriveCAN debacle has raised the issue of decisions about whether to outsource contracts to the private sector or have Canada's public service do the work itself, and there are some really strong concerns about the way in which that part of the procurement process is happening.

Does the member agree that there needs to be a much larger view of this problem, and does he support the work we are trying to do to get to the bottom of that process?

• (1700)

[Translation]

**Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, I am also more than willing for us to look more closely at how contracts are awarded. Some rather serious mistakes were made.

We are members of the Bloc Québécois. For awhile, in Quebec, we had what were called public-private partnerships under a Liberal government, and the results were rather scandalous in many respects. Of course, we can look at that and debate it. I have no problem with that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before resuming debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York, Taxation; the hon. member for Bow River, Health; the hon. member for North Island—Powell River, Health.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon. I will have to interrupt the member in about 14 minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Kyle Seebach (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, \$1.3 trillion is where Canada's national debt is now. It is more than double what it was a few years earlier. The Liberal government has more than doubled all the debt that every prime minister in the history of this country has ever accumulated. What has that led to? It has led to the inflationary crisis, the cost of living crisis and a whole host of other issues.

I know what my colleagues in the Liberal Party will say. They will say that they spent this money during the pandemic because they wanted to take care of Canadians. However, there is a small problem in that. It is very clear that 40% of that spending had nothing to do with the pandemic, and they cannot get out of it. This is clear and unequivocal, so they cannot say that they spent all of this money just because of that.

The “arrive can't” app is a great illustration of exactly the kind of spending this government engages in over and over again. It throws money at things without a care or concern for taxpayers. Whether the money is well spent or not, it is just going to spend.

When we look at where we are right now, the Prime Minister said very clearly many times that we took on this debt so that Canadians would not have to, and interest rates would be low for a very long time, so it is not going to affect the fiscal capacity of this country. Well, guess what. He is wrong. I know that is not a surprise, as he is wrong about a lot of things. He is also wrong to not think about monetary policy.

When we talk about where Canadians are today, they have massive credit card debt. Actually, right now Canadians have \$171 billion of HELOC debt. What is HELOC debt, and why does that matter? HELOC debt is a home equity line of credit, and they are at variable interest rates. Therefore, as interest rates rise, their payments rise, and the ability for Canadian families to make ends meet declines. What we end up with are all the challenges Canadians are experiencing right now, whether it is making ends meet, heating their home, or dealing with the cost of living and inflation.

The Liberal spending binge has caused untoward damage for Canadians, and there has been an other effect as interest rates have risen. The Prime Minister said, in effect, for Canadians not to worry. He said that interest rates were not going to go up, so when we borrowed all of this money, everything would be fine. There was nothing to see there.

Well, guess what. We now spend more money servicing the debt in Canada than we do on the Canada health transfer. I will let that sink in for a minute. When we hear about the issues that are going on in hospitals across the country, and we hear about it all the time, we are spending more to pay interest on the debt than we are on the Canada health transfer. That is the shameful, embarrassing legacy of this government.

Then the government does things like spend \$54 million on the “arrive can't” app. Why do I say the “arrive can't” app? It is because it does not work. We know that it does not work. Ten thousand Canadians were put into quarantine wrongly, and I was one of those 10,000 Canadians. I returned home. I was vaccinated. I got my green stamp on my passport, and guess what. The phone calls started the next day telling me I was to be in quarantine.

I said, “No I am not. I am vaccinated. I have done every thing right, and I was told that I was cleared at the border.”

• (1705)

The phone calls kept coming. Sometimes there were 15 phone calls a day to verify that I was at home. I am a big boy. I can take it. I dealt with it. Imagine older or vulnerable Canadians going through that. They would not just say that it is nothing to worry about. They are going to be incredibly traumatized by that experience. When I talk about the “arrive can't” app, that is a great example.

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If that were the end of the story, it might have been terrible but not terrible. When I finally did get in touch with someone to speak with someone, the advice was, “Don't answer the phone. We can't take you off the list. It's impossible.” We have more than double the national debt and people have been wrongly put into quarantine and the answer is, “Don't answer your phone.” The phone just keeps ringing 15 to 20 times a day.

I had the real concern that at some point they might say they have to send a police officer, because that happened as well. Imagine the waste of resources across the country as a result of police officers going to enforce quarantine orders because the “arrive can't” app could not do the one thing it was supposed to do.

They might say not to worry because it is fixed and it is all good, that the “arrive can't” app is now fine, but guess what? On Twitter just yesterday, someone we all might know, Robert Fife reported long lineups at Pearson to get through customs. The \$54-million “arrive can't” app is supposed to expedite processing through customs but the officer laughed and said the app is irrelevant so not to waste time filling it out.

We have an app that does not work. We have an app that puts people into quarantine when they should not be in quarantine. We have people then subjected to dozens of phone calls, virtually harassing them to be in quarantine when they should not. It does not work and it cost \$54 million. What we have heard since then very clearly is that this could have been done for \$80,000. If that was the end of the story, that would be bad enough, of course, but it is not. The story just keeps going. There are contractors and subcontractors who are listed as having been paid for the app. They said, “We did not get paid. Why are we on this list?”

I cannot explain properly how terrible that is for Canadian taxpayers, Canadians who are suffering through an affordability crisis, to see the cavalier and callous spending of their hard-earned tax dollars by the Liberal government. The Liberal government does not apologize. It would be one thing if the Liberals got up and said, “We messed up. Canadians, we're sorry. We know this thing was a thousand times more expensive than it should have been. We've learned our lesson. We're going to fix it,” but they do not. Liberals just ask us, “What is wrong with you? How dare you criticize this. This app was designed to save Canadians. You did not want to save Canadians.” The kind of hyperbole the Liberals are engaging in quite frankly is shameful. They should be apologizing to Canadians for this absolute debacle. Of course, we know they will not.

Now we get to the gist of this motion, which is to have the Auditor General come in and audit this. Let us get to the bottom of it. If the Liberals cared about Canadians, if they cared about taxpayer money, if they know they did not do anything wrong, they would say, “Fantastic. Let us have the Auditor General come in.” We have to remember that it was the Prime Minister who said “We will be open by default.” To have the Auditor General look at this program, the Liberals will say, “We are not going to do that.”

• (1710)

That is an interesting definition of open by default. It is the kind of behaviour that the government has repeatedly engaged in. I ask myself and I ask Canadians who are watching today, what do the

Liberals have to hide? Why are they afraid of an independent officer of Parliament coming in and looking at the books?

The Liberals say there is a committee and the committee could look at it. Sure. The Auditor General has far greater ability than the committee to analyze this. I go back to what are the Liberals afraid of. They are afraid of exactly that. The Liberals know they cannot filibuster the Auditor General. They know they cannot win votes to not have documents released at committee with the Auditor General. The Liberals know the Auditor General would get in there and find every embarrassing gaffe, every contract and subcontract that should never have been awarded, and it is going to be an absolutely awful day for the government.

The Liberals will stand up and argue all kinds of semantics, that we do not need to look at this, that they would have a committee look at it, or that we should not look at it because it was designed to save Canadians' lives and therefore it should be above scrutiny. None of this makes sense. When there is nothing to hide, the government should be open by default. That is the mantra of the Prime Minister who leads the government.

I do not understand why we are here. Why are we debating this motion? It should have passed with unanimous consent. After the Conservative leader rose to give an impassioned speech about this, with a unanimous consent motion, the Auditor General would have been looking at this, and we would have the answer in no time.

Instead, the Liberals are going to try to delay. They are going to try to find a way to win this vote in the House of Commons. Maybe they will be able to do that as part of their coalition. Maybe they will make some kind of an amendment to the costly coalition agreement, so they can survive scrutiny from the independent officer of Parliament.

Actions speak louder than words. The Liberals' actions in not just saying that we are going to have the Auditor General look into this speaks volumes about what they know the Auditor General is going to find how terribly run this program was, and how embarrassing it is going to be for the government.

Why will the Liberals not just vote in favour of it? Let us have the Auditor General look into the dirty dealings of this contract.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:14 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion.

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

The hon. member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

• (1715)

**Ms. Michelle Ferreri:** Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded division.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 2, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

**Mr. Chris Bittle:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to attempt time travel. I believe if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

### FOOD DAY IN CANADA ACT

The House resumed from October 4 consideration of the motion that Bill S-227, An Act to establish Food Day in Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this bill. I would like to announce at the outset that the Bloc Québécois agrees that the first Monday in August should be designated food day in Canada.

There are a lot of interesting things in the bill's preamble. I think they are worth mentioning. First, it says that sovereignty is dependent on the safety and security of our food supply. It is important to keep that in mind. If we cannot feed ourselves, we cannot defend ourselves and survive.

It also states that strengthening connections from farms to tables of Canadian cuisine contributes to our nation's social, environmental and economic well-being. The closer we can bring production to the consumer, the more we will reduce the environmental impact. This cannot be done for everything, and we are not talking about extreme measures here, but it must be done as much as possible.

The next point, support for local farmers, is music to my ears. We have to provide adequate support to the people who feed us. We cannot expect them to cope with the vagaries of annual production alone. Just a few minutes ago, I was talking to a farmer who explained to me that all the extra precipitation this spring had a devastating impact on the entire season; it was so long ago that people have forgotten. Farmers had to redo their drainage to prevent future flooding. There may be years when there is not enough water. That

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kind of instability and unpredictability are reason enough for us to take good care of our people.

The last part of the preamble states that the people of Canada will benefit from a food day in Canada to celebrate local food. That sounds great to me. As I said, we support the bill.

In any conversation about agriculture and agri-food, food sovereignty is bound to come up. We hear that expression a lot. It is a bit overworked and gives people the impression that we are trying to be entirely self-sufficient. That is not the idea. It might be better to talk about food resiliency than food sovereignty. The idea is to ensure that we can feed our population and that farming remains a viable occupation going forward. That involves a number of factors.

I will start with temporary foreign workers. Everyone knows that our agricultural production is now dependent on this essential and valuable workforce. It is also a great way to redistribute wealth around the world. When these workers return home, they take a good income with them and a different kind of wealth and drive. It is a win-win situation. For us, it means production can continue. Otherwise, the crops would remain in the field.

However, we have to smarten up. We have been saying for years that this is not working. Quebec has asked to have full management of this program to make it more efficient, so that only one level of government manages it. I think this is a good idea. I invite Parliament to consider this option very seriously. In the meantime, there are things that can be done, like improving processing times. Why does it take so long to renew a permit? When the same worker has been coming back for 12 years, why are all the security steps repeated? It is completely ridiculous and appallingly inefficient.

I am talking about agriculture because the debate is on a food day, but there is growing number of sectors that are using foreign workers, including the entire tourism sector. We need to facilitate these operations. We need to acknowledge the state of the employment market in Quebec and Canada, this shortage that is affecting us, and recognize that we need these people. Let us be effective. Let us welcome them. It is a win-win, as I was saying.

The second point I want to address is succession planning in agriculture. I look at the governing party across the way. The Speaker does not want me to address them directly, but I am looking at them and asking them when they will adjust Bill C-208, which was democratically voted on in the last Parliament and crossed every stage, including the Senate.

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● (1720)

Members know that the Senate is not my favourite institution, and the senators I know are also aware of that. However, it is part of the process. The bill was approved everywhere and it must be implemented. Officially, it has been, but the minister and the government have raised some uncertainty about the transfer of these family farms that is causing significant harm to our Quebec businesses.

I have said it many times here in the House: Financial advisors recommend that our farmers wait before transferring their family farm because they are concerned about the amendment that the Liberal government wants to make.

The new alliance is like a majority government. They can do anything. I am therefore asking them to shed some light on this so that we can see what is happening and where things are going. This this law has been passed and we will not allow it not to be applied. Our next generation of farmers is important.

We spoke about our local production and feeding people. I would be remiss if I failed to mention supply management. Every time I rise, I have to mention it at least once, and I am going to talk about it again.

It is a great system that allows self-regulation within markets, and it costs nothing. These folks are not going to come up to us and ask for subsidies, because they are self-regulated and the system works perfectly. All the Canadian government has been doing for these people for the past ten years is hurting them by giving foreign countries access to these markets, which were working very well.

The principle behind supply management is about controlling the entry of goods. If the entry of goods is not controlled, it does not work. When nearly 20% of the market, for example in the dairy industry, comes from abroad, if our local producers reduce their production in a particular context, for example COVID-19, if foreign countries continue to bring in the 20%, then control no longer works. I will say it again today: We are dealing with a government that appears set on gradually eliminating this system because it does not have the courage to assume the political cost of making that decision.

We are hearing lofty words. The government says it will protect supply management, there is no problem and no more concessions will be made. If that is true, then the government can readily vote as it did the last time. I again congratulate the government and I invite it to start over. The last time, it voted in favour of our bill. If not for the unnecessary election in the midst of a pandemic, the law would probably be in effect already. Therefore, I am asking that we deal with this quickly, because it is an important sector.

The motion also mentions the environment. People increasingly want to eat healthy and organic products, but this does not exclude other products and other techniques. I believe that we must pay attention to our organic industry. Paying attention means continuing to identify foods that have been genetically modified, even with the new techniques.

As we know, there was a minor controversy recently. The Bloc Québécois does not oppose innovation, but is in favour of trans-

parency. People must be able to choose what they eat and they need the relevant information when they eat something.

We are talking about local production, but of course we engage in international trade and will continue to do so. One thing we should do is implement reciprocal standards. Why do we allow products in if they do not meet the standards that apply to our own producers?

Something about that does not make sense. Why are we not making it possible for our consumers to know exactly what they are buying?

I challenge my colleagues to figure out where the chicken in the frozen chicken pot pie they buy at the grocery store tomorrow comes from. I challenge them to give it a try. It is not easy. Appropriate food origin labelling requires traceability. Some companies have come up with interesting innovations in that respect.

● (1725)

My colleague on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans is also working on this. These are great ideas.

I see that my time is up. I therefore invite all my colleagues to joyfully and happily pass this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would just like to thank my hon. colleague for raising the issue of supply management, which is very important to Nova Scotia producers. I invite my colleague to come and visit us any time.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

[*English*]

**Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is such a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill S-227, a private member's bill to establish food day in Canada. I cannot think of another topic that brings us all together in the House and across the country more than the idea of food, particularly at this time of the evening, perhaps.

Reading through the bill, it is very simple, but it speaks, first of all, to the people who produce our food and to the farmers in our communities whose labour results in the foods we enjoy.

Thinking about that and about northwest B.C., this incredible region that I am so honoured to represent in this place, brings to mind for me the conversations and visits I have had with food producers over the past months and years, people like Lindsay and Janik at Robin Creek Dairy in the Bulkley Valley. They are a second-generation dairy-farming family, and they are finding a way to make that work for their family.

One of the things I noted at their farm was a robot in their barn that cleaned up cow manure. This is a quite a spectacular bit of technology. One would have to see it to believe it.



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It is not just them, but also Daybreak Farms in Terrace. Kieran and her mom have taken over the operation of an egg farm that has been in that community for a long time. They have a plan for the modernization of their farm. It is important food security for a region that has only one commercial-scale egg producer. They produce about a million eggs per year, and they have a plan to expand that significantly.

I think of Ken Shaw. Ken is a college professor in Prince Rupert who also has an urban farm called Rainbow End Farm. Prince Rupert is a tough place for agriculture, but he is making it work in a corner of the city up against the rail tracks, growing vegetables and donating over a thousand dollars of produce a year to the local food bank.

I think of Farmer Cam. I cannot remember his last name, because everyone simply knows him as Farmer Cam. Farmer Cam's Foods is his little farming operation, growing vegetables on the bank of the Skeena River, just outside of Terrace.

All these people are part of the vibrant local foods sector in the northwest of British Columbia: so many growers, so many farms and so many people who are pouring their heart and their energy into this act of growing the food we all enjoy.

I also think of the people who transform these foods, these products, into incredible meals. I think of Dai Fukasaku in Prince Rupert, a chef I got to see the other day. Dai has created a renowned menu with local seafood caught in the waters just off Prince Rupert, some incredible meals that he is preparing and that are really putting his restaurant on the map.

I think of Chef Giulio, over in Daajing Giids, on Haida Gwaii. Chef Giulio, with his restaurant Gather, is combining his knowledge of traditional Italian cuisine with the wild foods and unique tastes of Haida Gwaii.

Finally, I think of Meg Roberts at Rustica Woodfired Bakery, just outside of Smithers, whose handcrafted sourdough and other baked products are looked forward to by everyone in that community. Meg has done an incredible job of not only providing her amazing baking but also fundraising for local initiatives, like the Cycle 16 bicycle trail between Telkwa and Smithers.

I think of all these people.

Looking at the bill and reading through it, it also speaks to this idea of farm to table. In northwest B.C., local food is about more than farm to table. It is about forest to table. It is about sea to table. It is about river to table.

What this bill brought to mind for me are some of the truly unique foods of the northwest, tastes that are found in few other places around the world. Our leader, the member for Burnaby South, was in Skeena—Bulkeley Valley just two days ago. We had the opportunity to attend a traditional Wet'suwet'en bat'lats in Burns Lake, 400 people who came together to honour family members who passed a year ago.

• (1730)

At that feast, one of the foods that was served was niwus. Niwus is made from the soapberry, a tiny berry that grows in northern B.C.

The Wet'suwet'en whip these berries with their hands and it froths up. It is hard to describe the texture of this food. It has an amazing taste. It is quite bitter. I am not sure if the member for Burnaby South will be eating much more of it in the future, but one never knows. This is one of the foods that is so special and comes from the region that I call home.

I am also reminded of some of the other wild foods I had a chance to eat, such as smoked sea lion or tibun, which is harvested by the Nisga'a people. It is a really unique food. I am thinking of Nicole Morven, who provided me a jar of canned tibun this past year, which I had a chance to enjoy. There is also eulachon or candfish, these oily fish that are so special to the Nisga'a, the Tsimshian and the Haisla.

About a year ago, in February, I had an opportunity to get out on the Nass River with Gerry Robinson, Mansel and Curtis. We were sitting in the middle of the river in this little boat under a crystal-clear blue sky waiting for these tiny fish to fill a long net they had put out. It was a special experience. Of course, the eulachon are rendered down for their oil, their grease, which is such a valuable commodity among first nations in the northwest and up and down the B.C. coast.

I could go on and on to talk about sea urchin or spawn on kelp. The Tahltan elders have what I think might be one of the most unique delicacies in northern British Columbia, which is the part of the moose called bum guts. That is exactly what it sounds like. It is quite an interesting delicacy that I challenge members in this place to try it the next time they are in Tahltan country.

Talking about these foods that are so important to indigenous nations in northwest B.C., the idea that comes to mind, which I hear raised so many times by my neighbours, is one of indigenous food sovereignty, the idea that indigenous people should have the tools and the agency to protect, manage and harvest the foods that they rely on. This is a concept that is embedded in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Article 20 speaks to the right "to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence".

On the topic of food sovereignty, I think of Jacob and Jessica on Tea Creek Farm in Kitwanga. This operation is doing such important work, not only growing local food but training local indigenous people in many of the skills around food production. In their first year of full-scale operation, they have trained over 84 local indigenous people and have been awarded for their work. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization named them 2022's Canada food heroes. They also won a Land Award from the Real Estate Foundation this past year.

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These are all very important things to talk about with regard to local food and the things behind Canada food day. I must say that I have often been skeptical of bills that proclaim special days. I know many of them have been brought forward in this place and they have certainly raised very important issues, but when we talk about indigenous food sovereignty and local food production and when I listen to the messages that I am hearing from local food producers and indigenous leaders, I believe what they want more than anything for us to be doing in this place is passing bills that create real change for them, that support local food production with investments in infrastructure, and that support indigenous food sovereignty with legal changes that give indigenous nations more control over the resources and foods they require.

Should this bill pass, I hope that at least one day per year, and we need much more than that, we will have a chance to move forward those important initiatives.

• (1735)

**Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise to bring the voices from Chatham-Kent—Leamington to the chamber.

When I started farming professionally some three and a half decades ago, I am not sure if I would have personally supported a measure like the one we are debating today. I would have thought it unnecessary.

I live on a home farm, and I am a third-generation farmer. When my father began farming, everyone was either from the farm, had an uncle on the farm or had a personal farm connection. Today, it is much different.

We often hear of the 80-20 scenario, where 80% of a product or service is delivered by just 20% of a population, those who are providing that service. With food production, farming in particular, if we go back and look at census data, 2% of our Canadian population are farmers. Under the census, that means they produce more than 7,000 dollars' worth of farmed goods per year. In reality, half of 1% of our farmers produce 85% of the production grown on our farms.

If we look in the chamber, there are 338 members. With table officers and others, there are around 400 people on a full day. The means two people would be the represented population.

I do celebrate this day and the opportunity to speak because it provides us an opportunity to educate people and talk about local food. More importantly, we can talk about the whole food chain.

I want to credit Senator Black for his leadership in the Senate and my colleague from Perth—Wellington for shepherding it through this chamber. I also want to credit Anita Stewart from Wellington County who pioneered the first Food Day.

The member for Perth—Wellington said in his speech about a month ago, "Since that first Food Day in 2003, it has indeed grown into a wonderful celebration of the food our farmers grow and the food that all Canadians enjoy every single day, whether at their kitchen tables or at restaurant tables across the country." I add my voice to that celebration and that encouragement of local production.

I live in a part of the world where we have access to fresh fruits and vegetables produced locally almost 10 months, or even more than 10 months, a year, depending on the vegetable, because of our innovative greenhouse sector.

Our roadside markets are plentiful, with direct lines from the producer to the consumer, which is great. However, for much of Canada, roadside markets are not accessible all year round, especially in the winter. We all know winter is coming.

Canada is a trading nation. We produce so many good foods, but our coffee production and our orange juice production are not top-notch. We do not have access to it and, as Canadians, we cannot eat all the wheat, canola or pork we produce. We are a trading nation. We rely on food chain systems, both here in Canada, for our own domestic production, be it at our kitchen tables or at restaurants, and with our international trade.

I wanted to say that to lead into three points today. The first is that this day offers us an opportunity to enhance food literacy to our general population. We rely on this agri-food value chain to feed us year-round, and because, as I shared earlier, such a small percentage of our population has a true connection to the farm, food literacy has dropped in Canada.

This gives us an opportunity to describe how complex our food system is. Given that it is so complex, and given the times we are in, food is becoming more expensive. September's food inflation rate, year over year, increased 11.4%, and that is growing. Here in Canada compared to much of the world, we are still lucky as Canadians.

In 2020, 11% of our disposable income was spent on food. In 2021, in calculations by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, it was 10.7%. They declare that day one day earlier, on February 8, 2022, when the average Canadian has spent their percentage of disposable income to purchase all the food they needed for the year. I suspect that will be much later in 2023. That is unfortunate for many low-income Canadians.

Why are food costs rising? I can share that the food inflation rate has certainly outstripped general inflation, and yes, the commodity markets are strong. A lot of crops that are negotiated in price relative to the strong commodity markets have also risen at the farm gate. The costs to our farmers have outstripped the prices they have received at the field.

Fertilizer tariffs and shipping costs have sky rocketed. There is an exemption for on-farm gas and diesel, but there is the carbon tax and everything else. There is carbon tax when it is shipped to the farm and on the barns being heated, and the grain is still being dried this year.

• (1740)

I would implore this House to pass Bill C-234. I had the opportunity to speak to it earlier.

Make no mistake. Farmers are conservationists. The fact they need an exemption so they can compete with the rest of the world and reduce the cost of producing food is not a reflection of their ability as conservationists. I could spend a whole 10 minutes just talking about the advances that our farm community has made on that.

I want to touch on another cost driver, labour, which is affecting every sector of our economy. I hear that from our farm community. I want to celebrate the fact that Canada has a temporary foreign worker program. It is critical to so much of our farming sector and is also of great benefit to the host nations from where many of these valuable workers have come. It is one of our best foreign aid mechanisms, and many parts of the world are jealous of this opportunity. Again, I could spend 10 minutes just on that.

Another cost driver is obviously the borrowing costs to finance assets and the growing cost of crops, which is another thing our farmers are facing.

Farmers are often called the first step in our food value chain. This leads me to the third and final point that I wish to make today.

We often hear our food system being described as field to fork, but that is a bit of a misnomer. Farmers are not the first step in our food chain. I note that the bill's title refers to establishing a national food day, not a national farming day. I think it is rightfully titled. As farmers, we have so many suppliers that supply us with our crop inputs and everything from steel to bearings to financing. We are not the first step. I want to acknowledge that. In this food value chain we have in Canada, and actually much of the world, food manufacturers and processors are next, and then it is on to food distribution, whether it be the retail or the food service mechanisms.

We hear two statements being bandied about, "record retailer profits" and "retailer margins are not changing much in percentage terms", throughout the pandemic. Both those things have been in the news recently. Both of these statements can be true at the same time. Because the pandemic has shifted, somehow much of the food supply has come to our bodies more through home cooking and the grocery retail chains. The volumes being sold through retail have increased and food service has diminished. With increased volumes, even though the margins of our retailers have remained roughly steady within a certain range, between 2% and 4%, the profits have actually increased. Today we are in a state in Canada where we have an opportunity to address some of these mechanisms in our food value chain if we get it right.

What I am talking about is a grocery code of conduct. I had two excellent meetings last week with Restaurants Canada and Food and Beverage Canada. They mentioned labour availability as being

### *Private Members' Business*

their number one issue and talked about the temporary foreign worker program, but that is not where I want to go. Restaurants are telling me the very same things our farmers are experiencing. We have all gone out and noticed that the cost of restaurant meals has also climbed, but their margins are also shrinking because of the cost structures they are experiencing.

A grocery code of conduct actually gives us the opportunity to address some of the behaviours in the food chain, the fines, levies, listing fees, and the like, all those mechanisms that the value of our food production is being transferred from the food processors and manufacturers to the retailers. Manufacturers are spending on administrative costs and keeping an eye on that. Food retailers are spending on administrative costs in that mechanism.

The United Kingdom, Ireland and Australia have all gone down the road of a grocery code of conduct and have actually experienced greater profits throughout the transmission chain of food, the value chain. Most importantly, food costs for consumers have relatively dropped because costs have been stripped out of that system. That is the big point I want to make. Canada has an opportunity to get that right. I want to mention the 10,000 independent grocers across this country that are very critical to our rural fabric.

I know my time is quickly running out. I want to thank the sponsor of this bill.

I would just note that we have inflationary pressures driving up costs. We have an opportunity through a grocer code of conduct to address these inflationary costs.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Annie Koutrakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to support Bill S-227, an act to establish food day in Canada.

Food day in Canada will be the perfect opportunity for Canadians to celebrate our country's outstanding agriculture and agri-food sector. We can thank all those who work hard, from farm to table, to feed Canadians and the world's growing population.

[*English*]

We cannot talk about a food day in Canada without recognizing Dr. Anita Stewart, a trailblazer and true champion for farmers and local food, who passed away in 2020. Anita pioneered the idea to set aside a day each year, dedicated to Canadian food and those who produce it. She was inspired to take action when our farmers and ranchers faced the challenges of the BSE crisis, so she launched the tradition of the world's largest barbecue, for Canadians across the country to show their support.

*Private Members' Business**[Translation]*

Anita's mantra was, "Canada is food, and the world is richer for it." That is so true. The sector contributes immensely to our economic, social, health and environmental well-being. It provides one in nine jobs and contributes over \$143 billion to our gross domestic product. It also promotes food security at home and abroad.

*[English]*

We certainly saw this as we all navigated the stressors and worries of the COVID-19 pandemic. Farmers, ranchers and food processors stepped up, making sure our food supply stayed strong and steady in the face of their own challenges, such as labour shortages and transportation interruptions. A national day dedicated to Canadian food is also a good time to reflect on ways we can help Canadians who do not get the food and nutrition they need for themselves and their families, and to take action on other issues as well, like food waste and its impacts on the environment.

*[Translation]*

Food is a basic need for us all in order to survive and thrive. It brings us sustenance, it is a way to show our love for each other, and it is an expression of creativity and our diverse cultures.

Canada's food system is strong, and growing in exciting ways, but it is not perfect. In Canada and around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate-related disasters and Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine have exposed the most vulnerable parts of our global food system, highlighting the areas in which there is the most need for improvement.

*[English]*

Many families do not have enough food or are eating unhealthy food because they cannot pay for food. Northern and indigenous communities in Canada, particularly remote ones, are especially vulnerable to supply chain disruptions.

We also face the challenge of food waste. Every day, perfectly good food gets wasted and ends up in our landfills. This waste produces methane gas and generates a staggering 8% of all greenhouse gases emitted in the world.

The Government of Canada launched the "Food Policy for Canada" in 2019, with this vision for the future of food in Canada:

- (1750)

*[Translation]*

All people in Canada are able to access a sufficient amount of safe, nutritious and culturally diverse food. Canada's food system is resilient and innovative, sustains our environment and supports our economy.

Through the food policy, the government is investing \$60 million in the local food infrastructure fund, which supports community-based initiatives that increase access to food, and provide social, health, environmental, and economic benefits in communities across the country.

This fund is helping hundreds of local food organizations across Canada access the tools they need to strengthen their local food systems and improve accessibility to healthy food.

*[English]*

Some are purchasing new refrigerated trucks. Others are planting community gardens and installing solar panels. We have also delivered the \$330-million emergency food security fund to support people experiencing food insecurity due to the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, this funding has supported more than 7,800 projects across Canada, 1,800 of which are directly supporting indigenous communities.

As I touched on a few moments ago, food waste is a big problem in Canada and around the world.

*[Translation]*

Two years ago, the government launched the food waste reduction challenge, under the food policy for Canada, to fuel new ideas and creative solutions. The challenge invites innovators to submit solutions to prevent or divert food waste at any point from farm to plate.

Canada's food supply chain can take action on food waste by improving inventory management and exploring new uses for food waste such as animal feed, biofuels and new products.

*[English]*

The response has been outstanding. Since we launched the challenge in 2020, we received well over 500 amazing ideas to prevent, divert and transform food waste. It is no surprise that Canada is a leader in innovation. In every corner of our agriculture and food industry, we have farmers and entrepreneurs who are making a difference and helping shape a healthier future for families and communities here at home and around the world.

Globally, Canada participated in the United Nations Food Systems Summit, convened by the UN Secretary-General in September 2021.

*[Translation]*

The summit's vision is to launch bold new actions, solutions, and strategies to deliver progress on all 17 sustainable development goals, each of which relies on healthier, more sustainable and more equitable food systems.

This vision supports the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, to meet the challenges of poverty, hunger and food insecurity, malnutrition, population growth, climate change, and natural resource degradation.

As we look forward to this exciting and beautiful new tradition of food day in Canada, inspired by the vision and hard work of Dr. Anita Stewart, let us continue to buy, cook and eat Canadian products.

[*English*]

Let us take part in celebrations, enjoy locally made food and try new recipes using Canadian-grown ingredients. Let us seek out exciting cuisines from indigenous farmers and chefs, and from the so many diverse cultures that make up this great country. Let us recognize those behind the scenes, our farmers and our food entrepreneurs, who are working hard and putting forth their best ideas to solve some of the world's most pressing food security and environmental challenges.

We will all raise a fork to food day in Canada.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Caroline Desbiens (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to speak today, and I would like to say at the outset that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of this bill for several reasons. Obviously, designating the first Monday in August as food day in Canada is a good idea because, at that time, farmers will have just finished haying and the potato harvest is beginning. Thus, it is a very good time to have it. It is also an opportunity to address concerns that are often ignored, which is why such a day is so important.

As a society, we make the mistake of taking the agri-food and agricultural sectors in Quebec and Canada for granted. It would be a good idea to promote them more, to celebrate local food and local cuisine. The country is celebrated first and foremost around the table. It is the same all over the country, so this is a great opportunity to highlight that aspect of our happiness on this land.

Obviously, the pandemic has opened our eyes to serious problems with our food sovereignty, for example in our production chains. As a result, we have discovered that we are highly and seriously dependent on foreign countries for many aspects of our industries.

At the Bloc Québécois, obviously the agriculture and agri-food sector has always been a priority. In Quebec, we are constantly investing in food sovereignty, including by promoting our supply management system and ensuring it is protected. It is an indispensable tool for balancing our agri-food market and a system that is used as a model in several countries around the world. Canada may once again benefit from referring to Quebec on the matter. I do not mean that as a boast; well, maybe a little bit.

There are several ways to go about promoting food sovereignty in Quebec and Canada when it comes to agri-food. First, we need to secure our food chains by changing course with the temporary foreign workers program, for example. We need to make it easier for workers to access our lands. We could promote succession planning in agriculture, for example, by bringing into force Bill C-208 on taxing the intergenerational transfer of businesses because it is much easier for a farmer to sell to a stranger than to hand over his business to his own son, which is not right. The son invests in his

### *Private Members' Business*

parents' farm his whole life, but they are unable to hand it over because the way the taxation is done does not favour that. We need to help producers and processors innovate and become resilient to climate change. We need to protect critical resources and agriculture and processing facilities from foreign investments, including under the Investment Canada Act. We need to promote human-scale farms by encouraging buying organic and buying local.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute my riding's diverse and exciting agri-food industry, which produces berries, potatoes, ice cider, wine, beer, mouth-watering cheeses and organic pork and poultry on farms all over Île d'Orléans and along the Côte-de-Beaupré. Throughout my riding, from Beauport to Baie-Sainte-Catherine, our producers' reputation is well established. I could talk about them all afternoon. It would make my colleagues hungry. It is suppertime, after all.

Now I want to talk about an equally important aspect of the agri-food landscape: seafood. Surprisingly, it is easier to buy Quebec's products in the United States or in Europe than in Quebec. Are my colleagues aware that people in Quebec and Canada consume just over 10% of the seafood our fishers harvest and that 90% of the seafood Quebecers and Canadians consume comes from other countries?

That is appalling. As if that were not bad enough, the food safety and traceability standards that apply to fishers in Quebec and Canada, who export 90% of our resource to Europe and the United States, are significantly higher than those that apply to the imported products that make up 90% of the seafood we eat. We ship our high-quality products out, and then we eat lower-quality things from other countries. That is appalling; it makes my skin crawl.

• (1800)

Simply put, the quality of the food we eat in Canada is not as good as the food we export and that we supply to the international market. Quebecers and Canadians deserve better.

Following a motion that I moved for that purpose, my fine colleagues on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, whom I thank for their valuable contributions, and I began a study on labelling and traceability. Many observations were made, some of which were worrisome, others alarming, and still others encouraging. Many solutions, approaches and suggestions were also proposed. All of this resulted in the tabling in the House in June of a report entitled "Traceability and Labelling of Fish and Seafood Products". The government must urgently implement the committee's 13 recommendations and take real action, not just say that it has taken note of these recommendations, but actually take action.

If we want to know what we are eating and where it came from, we need better labelling and better traceability, from farm to plate for agriculture and also from boat to plate for the fisheries.

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Our local products deserve to be in the spotlight. If a chef describes a menu item as “St. Lawrence halibut stuffed with northern deepwater prawns from Matane, Quebec black garlic butter and medley of local Charlevoix vegetables”, people go crazy for it. If it is described as just “shrimp-stuffed halibut”, it is not as popular. That is why it is important to promote our local products and to make them available. I think that is crucial.

When people go to restaurants, they want to eat local, they want to taste locally caught fish. When we eat foods from Quebec and Canada, we appreciate our artisans' and our experts' skill. It sustains us to take pride in discovering the quality of the homegrown products available to us and the often distinctive and exemplary practices of our food producers. We know it will be fresh. We know it is from here. We know minimal food miles mean less pollution. We know our money stays here and helps our own fishers and farmers, who, in turn, spend that money here. Buying local is all about the circular economy, and it is good for everyone. It tastes good, and it is good for society, too.

I also want to talk about by-catch. I had a jarring experience that made no sense in terms food sovereignty, and I have yet to recover from it. Fishermen have permits to fish for shrimp, for example. If they catch some halibut, redfish or squid, they are forced to take the dead fish and throw it overboard, because their permit is for shrimp. It is terrible.

In the Gaspé, if someone wants to have some fresh, local fish, they are told it is impossible. The fish they are serving comes from Norway and the shrimp comes from China. I still cannot believe it. I want the House to be aware of this very important aspect. Perhaps permits could be expanded and made more flexible, so that fishermen with by-catch could redistribute it in the area.

The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans has done a lot of studies. We are completing a study on the right whale and are starting to realize that the expertise and knowledge of our fishers are not always truly taken into consideration. They are not always closely listened to, and yet they have concrete solutions to better understand the right whale.

In closing, everyone has to eat, so we might as well do so responsibly, taking into account our environmental footprint and the social and economic impacts of our choices.

Let us be proud of our local products, our producers, farmers, fishers and food artisans. Let us promote their products, within a balance of supply and demand, before opening up to foreign markets, which are necessary, of course, although they must not control our own supply or affect our market prices, since that would have a serious impact on our food sovereignty.

• (1805)

[*English*]

**Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I count it an honour to stand in support of Bill S-227, an act to establish food day in Canada.

With everything going on in our world, one thing that I think we all recognize, collectively, or at least should, is the absolutely critical importance of food security and energy security, which go hand

in hand. For any nation to have stability over the long haul, to be a beacon of safety and a haven of hope for many, as Canada is, it has to have tremendous potential for ongoing and lasting energy security and food security.

Tonight my remarks will be more focused on the food security aspect as it relates to this bill. I think it is wonderful that we have set apart a day and some time to reflect and highlight the importance of food and food security, and what it brings to our country and to the world.

Food security and the importance of food and proper nutrition is critical for our world. In fact, it has been reported of late that, any time the overall calorie intake of individuals drops below 1,800 on a national level, it could lead to civil unrest. In the spring, we saw echoes of that in Sri Lanka, and we are seeing it increasingly around the world.

We must get the food security question right. We must have the answer for that. I believe Canada is extremely well positioned to help answer the world's cry for safe, secure, nutritious and beneficial food and nutrition. We have got to get more Canadian goods to the world. We have to do that by making sure that the environment here in Canada is one that accentuates the opportunities for Canada's growers, producers and harvesters. I would add, it is not just the farmers we want to remember. Obviously, they are going to be the overwhelming lion's share of our focus, but it is also the fish harvesters on the coasts of Canada and throughout our country who help provide protein resources and fresh fish products to the world and here at home.

We must make sure that food security, those who produce our food and those who harvest our food are considered in our policy directives and in the deliberations of the House, and that we make sure that, any time we are looking at enacting new policies or regulations, the voices of those who literally grow our food, keep our land and harvest our food, are heard and are respected. We must make sure that there is proper consultation with those who are closest to our food production in this country, namely our farmers, growers and fish harvesters.

This day would provide all of Canada an opportunity to reflect. It would provide all of Canada an opportunity to say thanks for their ability to grow food, thanks to the producers for making it possible for us to eat on a regular basis, and to have good, pure, nutritious food grown right here in Canada. That day being set aside for Canadians to reflect is helpful, good and beneficial.

More so than just a day being set aside, what we need is a government in Canada that prioritizes those who actually grow and produce our food, making sure their concerns are being heard in this, the people's House, the people's chamber. I am blessed to come from an agricultural riding. I am very proud of Tobique—Mactaquac and the region I represent. I have a lot of farming country. We are known for our potatoes. We are known for a lot of great things. We have fruit growers and vegetable growers. We have people who grow grain products. We have so many who contribute to Canada's agriculture.

Products from our riding go literally all around the world. For that, I am so thankful for the farmers and producers in my region of Tobique—Mactaquac, who help feed not only the folks in New Brunswick and across Canada but also folks around the world.

• (1810)

I will close with this, and I can never adequately do justice to this man and his voice. However, members will remember the legendary Paul Harvey who is known for *The Rest Of The Story*. I cannot speak like he does nor with the eloquence, but I hope members will indulge me to briefly highlight some of the speech that made him famous. All of us will remember it. It even made a Super Bowl ad.

It reads:

And on the 8th day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, "I need a caretaker". So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat supper and then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board." So God made a farmer.

"I need somebody with arms strong enough to rustle a calf and yet gentle enough to deliver his own grandchild. Somebody to call hogs, tame cantankerous machinery, come home hungry..." So God made a farmer.

God said, "I need somebody willing to sit up all night with a newborn colt. And watch it die. Then dry his eyes and say, 'Maybe next year.' I need somebody who can shape an ax handle from a persimmon sprout, shoe a horse with a hunk of car tire, who can make harness out of haywire, feed sacks and shoe scraps. And who, planting time and harvest season, will finish his forty-hour week by Tuesday noon, then, pain'n from 'tractor back,' put in another seventy-two hours." So God made a farmer.

I thank God for the farmers.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** We will now go to the hon. member for Perth—Wellington for his right of reply.

**Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is indeed an honour to conclude the debate at second reading of Bill S-227.

The story of food day in Canada did not start in the House and it did not start in the other place where it was first introduced. The story of food day in Canada started in the dark days of the summer of 2003 when the agriculture industry, the beef industry in particular, was wrecked with havoc due to the BSE crisis.

In those dark days of the agriculture industry in 2003, one person stood up and said, "Let's do something positive." That one person was Anita Stewart. She celebrated the first food day in Canada back in 2003, and Bill S-227 now honours that legacy, commends the resiliency of Canadian farmers and celebrates everyone who con-

tributes to the world-class agriculture and agri-food system in Canada.

I want to thank the members who have spoken in favour of this bill during this debate, including the members for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, Chatham-Kent—Leamington, Tobique—Mactaquac, Berthier—Maskinongé, Skeena—Bulkley Valley, Vimy and Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix.

I want to especially thank Senator Rob Black for introducing this bill in the other place and the members for Wellington—Halton Hills and Guelph who also gave passionate speeches in this place about the history of food day in Canada, Wellington County's Anita Stewart and her lifetime of work to promote Canadian food. I know that her sons, Jeff, Mark, Brad and Paul, would be grateful to see their late mother recognized in such a way.

I am pleased to know that Bill S-227 has the support of so many members in the House, perhaps even unanimously, and I look forward to seeing this bill passed at second reading. I also hope members on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food will find a way to ensure that the bill passes with all haste when it comes to committee.

As I mentioned in the House, food day in Canada has been informally recognized in Wellington County, in some rural communities and in some large cities across Canada for nearly 20 years. We now have the chance and the opportunity to pass Bill S-227 in the House and formally recognize food day in Canada across Canada.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The question is on the motion.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

**Mr. John Nater:** Madam Speaker, I request a recorded division.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** Pursuant to an order made on Thursday, June 23, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 2, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

[English]

## TAXATION

**Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.):** Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to further debate the government's second carbon tax: the clean fuel standard. As I alluded to in my initial question, it would be unconscionable for the government to proceed with introducing a second carbon tax, one with limited efficacy, at a time when Canadians are facing incredible financial hardship. This is no game. It is very real.

I ask the hon. member to pretend for a moment to be a pensioner living in Atlantic Canada where most people use oil to heat their homes. This new tax will further increase the cost during a long, cold winter.

Perhaps my colleague could imagine being part of a family of four in downtown Toronto as they dread the weekly trip to the grocery store. Food inflation is at 11.4%. It is the highest in 40 years. Half of Canadians, me included, have only ever known this to be the highest in their lifetime. People are struggling to put food on the table and some are going without a meal. Canadians also worry about being able to make their rent payment or their monthly mortgage payment.

Can the hon. member please explain why the government would want to proceed with a second carbon tax that will increase household energy costs by up to 6.5%? That is an additional annual cost of \$1,277.

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a real privilege to stand in the House tonight to address concerns from my colleague.

I remember back to about a year ago when the member ran for the Liberal Party and I knocked on doors with him. He ran on a commitment to price carbon, and it was welcomed at the doors, as it is welcomed across our country. Canadians know that pollution should not be free. Canadians know that things like cap and trade, a price on pollution and, indeed, carbon pricing are a necessary foundation in a proper environmental platform.

At the time, the member was also proud of that platform, so I am not sure where he is going with this, but I am indeed really proud of the fact that for seven years now, our government has been putting forward real solutions and measures to help middle-class Canadians and those who have worked so hard to join them.

We have introduced and implemented measures that have helped grow the economy. We have created jobs and we have created a fair and more level playing field for Canadians across the country. We understand that rising prices, which we are seeing around the world, are also affecting Canadians across the country. However, high inflation is a global phenomenon. It is not limited to us here in Canada. It is mostly caused by the war in Ukraine and various other supply chain disruptions.

While it is not a made-in-Canada problem, we have a made-in-Canada solution to help those who need it the most. For example, now that Bill C-30 has received royal assent, individuals and families receiving the GST credit will receive an additional \$2.5 billion

in support. Over 11 million households will receive a doubling of that GST credit in the coming weeks. Actually, I believe it is this Friday.

Also, with Bill C-31 we are proposing to create a Canada dental benefit for children under 12, which will deliver \$1,300 over the next few years in supports so that families can pay for their kids to go and see a dentist. The bill also proposes a one-time top-up to the Canada housing benefit program, which already provides up to \$2,500 to Canada's most vulnerable and lowest-income families who are renting. This will increase it by \$500 and put that in the pockets of nearly two million renters who are struggling to pay their rent.

The member for Spadina—Fort York can certainly recognize the impacts these measures will have for Canadians in his riding. Many of them are indeed struggling to make ends meet, and these measures will help.

Later this week, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance will release the fall economic statement, which will lay out some of the steps our government will take toward a brighter future for our country.

When it comes to the clean fuel regulations and pollution pricing, I would remind my colleague of the importance of continuing to work on the green transition while doing everything we can to make life more affordable in this country.

I spent some considerable time in the riding of my colleague. The fact is, his constituents are concerned about the impacts of climate change. His constituents were disappointed when Premier Doug Ford cancelled cap and trade, and his constituents were relieved when the federal government stepped in with supports.

I just got off the phone with a constituent who had valid questions about the price on pollution. As I explained it to him, this is a backstop program for provinces that do not have a plan to fight climate change. Previous to this, the province of Ontario had a \$3-billion program. That was a revenue program for the province, called cap and trade, and unfortunately Doug Ford scrapped it. That is illegal. Every province and territory is bound by law to have a plan to fight climate change and to price pollution accordingly. The simple truth is that climate action is no longer a theoretical political debate. It is an economic necessity. Our government has a plan that will save the planet. It will create growth and make life more affordable all at the same time. We will continue to move forward with that plan.

In conclusion, I would say that every single member, all 338 in the House, ran on a commitment to price carbon in the last election. There were a couple of versions of it, but it was a unanimous position—



• (1820)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for Spadina—Fort York.

**Mr. Kevin Vuong:** Madam Speaker, what my colleague did not read from the government talking points is direct research that analyzes the impact of the clean fuel standard. This research by Professor Ross McKittrick found that the net international effect of this is likely to be an increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

I want to ask my hon. colleague, who appears to be just as oblivious as the government to the harsh realities facing so many Canadians, if it would be possible to at least delay the implementation of the second carbon tax by six months. This is not a political thing; it is the right thing to do for Canadians who are struggling.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Madam Speaker, the hypocrisy from my colleague down the way is pretty stunning. In the last election he added his name to a ballot, ran for our party and, like all members in this House, ran on a commitment to fight climate change. To now use affordability as a wedge in that fight that we must collectively take on is rather shameful.

Our government is continuing to work day in and day out to make life more affordable for Canadians. We continue to be very open to good ideas. However, I did not hear any good ideas in my colleague's speech tonight.

On Thursday, the fall economic statement will provide further details of our plan to continue building an economy that works for everyone. Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and indeed in Spadina—Fort York, can count on us to continue supporting them through this period of global, elevated inflation, while also continuing our mutual commitment to protect the environment.

#### HEALTH

**Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be in Parliament tonight and to debate with my friend from Milton.

The member sometimes wonders where I am going with particular topics and I try to stay on topic to a certain extent. This one is a bit about health, and it is about what happened with PPE in the sense that when we got into COVID, there was a shortage. We had shipped PPE to other countries. We had destroyed our inventory and we tried to source PPE from China. That was problematic. Some of it that came was not of good quality and we could not use it. We had to pay a lot of money to get what we did get.

My point is this. We talk a lot about local supply chains. There are industries being developed in Canada where they are not using the plastic type that may have been seen in foreign ones. They are recycling material in Canada. They even have some carbon fibre in the material, so they are sequestering carbon fibre. We have innovative companies in Canada that are producing incredible materials that can be used in surgical suites in hospitals for surgical gowns and all the curtains. We have that innovation occurring here.

They are beginning to make some inroads into medical institutions to use it. It is washable. It is not thrown away in landfills like the one-use items that we import. This is the type of innovation that is going on in Canada with surgical gowns and surgical equipment.

#### Adjournment Proceedings

My suggestion for the government is that it pursue these types of products in Canada that we have innovated and can use. For the next situation that Canada has, the government needs to stockpile them. They need to be using them in medical situations now. That is one suggestion that I have for my colleague.

I have another suggestion. In my particular riding, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank operates with some farmers in my area. These are people who donate land and donate the time to get the land ready for a crop. They seed it, irrigate it and they harvest it. I was at an event recently and learned that they have 100 bushels of red spring wheat, number one. That is the best quality wheat and a fantastic crop.

I spoke to these great farmers who are volunteers and want to feed the hungry people of the world. During COVID, this was a growing concern. We have these volunteers around the country and in my riding. There are a number of these operations in Canadian food banks. As I talked to them, they were very concerned about the cost they were paying in taxes on irrigation. This is a challenge for them because there is no way to recover that cost with the government programs, but it is a great program for feeding the hungry in the world, which became so evident during COVID.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for giving me the opportunity to talk about our efforts to help Canadians live healthier lives.

[*English*]

Chronic diseases are critical issues for Canadians and for our health care system. That includes diet-related diseases, including obesity, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, and they are claiming the lives of more and more Canadians every day. These chronic diseases increase physical vulnerabilities and put Canadians more at risk.

As we have just seen these past two years during the COVID-19 pandemic, these diseases have far-reaching impacts on quality of life, not just for those Canadians living with these diseases but also their loved ones as well as health care systems.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

At the outset of my friend's speech, he mentioned that he sometimes meanders a little bit like a sinusoidal river, like a creek I used to paddle down, and I tend to agree. However, it is kind of a serious thing, because adjournment debates, late shows, are meant to achieve something. They are meant to allow me, as a parliamentary secretary, to come here to talk about an important issue my friend and colleague raised in the House of Commons and felt was not adequately responded to.

I appreciate sometimes, in the haste of trying to find some notes or answer a question on the fly, my answers might not always be perfectly adequate. We do not get to practise all of the answers. People get to practise a question. If they know they are up in 14 minutes, they can go in front of the mirror and practise their question. Indeed, we often see members of the opposition practising their questions beforehand, and that is good. It adds to the level of debate.

What does not add to the level of the debate is the abuse of the late shows. The adjournment debates are meant to do one specific thing. It is meant to provide a bit more integrity to this whole parliamentary system. I feel, in this case and in previous cases, members are choosing to abuse the adjournment debate system.

I am happy to come to have a conversation about any subject. However, to use the late show, we need to first indicate there is a specific question we would like more information on. I have two jobs actually. I think about it a lot. The nature of my work is divided in two a little bit. I am a member of Parliament, and I represent my neighbours in Milton, Ontario, but I also represent the government. I am a parliamentary secretary for two ministers on subjects I care deeply about, which are health and sport. I think they are connected, and I was very grateful when the Prime Minister asked me to serve in this dual capacity.

In order to do a good job on the second part of my job, which is to represent the government, I cannot just come to the House and tell members about all of my great ideas, where I stand or what the great people of Milton want to hear. I also need to do my job as a parliamentary secretary and represent the views and the position of the government. However, I cannot do that if I am not given a bit of a heads-up on what the nature of the question will be.

The member for Bow River had indicated that he wanted to talk to me today about front-of-pack labelling for ground beef. In the previous session of the previous Parliament, our plan was to provide more information to consumers on the foods they consume when they have higher levels of fat, salt and sugar. It is a good plan. Some members raised important concerns around ground beef, how it is a single-ingredient food that does contain a bit more fat. Most of the fat gets cooked off when we prepare it. It was a good, valid concern, so we changed the way we package and label ground beef.

However, that has nothing to do with the question the member asked. He asked me about plastics and the pharmaceutical industry, or how we dealt with that—

• (1830)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would like to confirm that the question that was meant to be answered more amply this evening was the one about packaging.

The hon. member for Bow River has the floor.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Madam Speaker, it was my presumption, because we had this debate the last time about that specific question, that was the last question. In the House, we had that debate here for the late show the last time, and I remember discussing it with you afterward. If you are still on that question, I have moved on, so—

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** I would remind the member to speak through the Chair. Those conversations did not happen with me.

**Mr. Martin Shields:** Madam Speaker, the member and I discussed this particular question. I asked about front-of-label last time, so if he is still on that one, that is good for him, but I have moved on from that one.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** This was on the list for Adjournment Proceedings, so we are following that.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member for Bow River has moved on from the question of front-of-pack labelling for ground beef. It is not an issue anymore because we do not front-of-pack label ground beef. We resolved it in the previous session. The member has moved onto a new issue.

Generally, in order to qualify for an adjournment debate, the member needs to ask a question in the House of Commons and then indicate that the question was not adequately responded to. In this case, the member is abusing the system. I would ask folks on the Conservative side to be more respectful of the adjournment debates.

My time is for members and I am here to discuss these issues with them. However, I would ask them to provide me with the opportunity to do a bit of research on the issue at hand.

## HEALTH

**Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am here today to talk about public health care. In this country, we are seeing public health care being undermined and falling apart in profound ways. I am seeing it fall apart in my riding in ways that I could never have imagined just a few years ago.

Before I talk about the specific issue, I want to take this opportunity to thank the health care workers, all the professionals, doctors, nurses and all the support staff around them who supported us through the pandemic.

We have heard all of the stats about having a high level of burnout. A lot of folks who were planning to work for many more years are retiring early because of the stress and because of those real concerns. I want to thank them and honour their work.

We also know that health care across Canada has reached a crisis point. For months in my riding, emergency rooms have been closing in Port Hardy, Port McNeill and Alert Bay.

For Canadians who do not know, Alert Bay is a ferry community on Malcolm Island. Receiving health care in its hospital is key because people cannot drive somewhere quickly. That is a major concern.

There have been multiple weeks of some of these hospitals being shut down and their emergency rooms being shut down all night long. I cannot imagine how terrifying it is for my constituents to know they do not have an emergency room around the corner if they desperately need it in the middle of the night.

In fact, in October, Port Hardy's emergency room was closed for 28 nights of the month. There were 28 nights with no emergency room facilities. The reason is a lack of staffing. There are not enough doctors, not enough nurses and not enough people to provide those essential services.

In this country, we are watching our national public health care system fall apart at the seams. I am here to plead for my constituents. I am coming before this place to ask the federal government to step up and start doing its part.

Whenever I think of universal public health care, I think of Tommy Douglas. He was voted the greatest Canadian because of his fundamental work in public health care and in making sure that was a reality in Canada.

We have heard the stories before the system was in place of people losing absolutely everything because they had to pay for health care to try to save the lives of loved ones. Tommy Douglas said, "I came to believe that health services ought not to have a price tag on them, and that people should be able to get whatever health services they required irrespective of their individual capacity to pay."

We know that Canadians believe in public health care. We know that any form of privatization promises only a return to everyday Canadians who rely on their individual capacity to pay for health care. I hope the government is going to stand against that.

I am tired of hearing that this is a provincial or territorial responsibility. This is a joint responsibility, one where we are seeing very clearly the premiers of every province and territory stand up. They are doing a collective ad campaign calling on the federal government to step up and pay its part. That is tremendously important. How often do all premiers agree so specifically on something?

Rural and remote communities across the country have been left behind. The federal government needs to step up and make sure there is a meaningful strategy for health care for communities like mine. They are desperately waiting.

• (1835)

**Mr. Adam van Koevorden (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and to the Minister of Sport, Lib.):** Madam

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

Speaker, I genuinely want to thank my friend and colleague for her sincere concern for the health care crisis in Canada, and I too wish to thank health care workers in my community of Milton, in the province of Ontario and across Canada. The burden they have shouldered over the last couple of years has been immense, immeasurable and unfair, and that burden continues today.

The pandemic is not over and the backlog ensues. People are counting on us as legislators to find solutions to problems, and today in the health committee we put the final touches on our committee report on the human resources in health care crisis. I am looking forward to it being tabled in the House of Commons, because I think it creates some really good recommendations for our government, as well as for the Minister of Health, whom I am very privileged to work with.

Obviously, the minister appeared a number of times, as did officials, doctors, nurses and representatives of the health care system across the country, and it is a good report. I am proud of the work and proud of the recommendations, and I am looking forward to seeing the outcomes from the meeting that is upcoming with the Minister of Health and all of the ministers of health from all of the premiers across the country.

However, the question today is about the human resource health care crisis. The current shortage of health workers has led to reduced hospital capacities. We have seen in some cases a complete closure of emergency rooms, which cannot happen in a Canadian town or city, and that is enhanced, as my hon. colleague pointed out, in rural areas. We know that people who live in rural and remote areas already have a harder time accessing health care, and now they are being hardest hit by health worker shortages.

Long-standing systemic challenges, which were exacerbated by the pandemic, have resulted in health workers managing high patient workloads, resource scarcity, fear for personal safety and unprecedented levels of burnout, absences and turnover. We have a health care crisis, because we have a health workers crisis.

From the beginning, our government has worked hard and hand in hand with provinces and territories in the fight against COVID-19. We provided them with an extra \$72 billion to support health systems and protect Canadians. That included a \$2-billion top-up just recently to the Canada health transfer to improve health care in Canada, including by reducing backlogs from COVID-19 and growing our health workforce. This will help to support the health and well-being of Canadians and those on the front lines of our health care system.

To support the mental health and well-being of our health force, budget 2022 also provided \$140 million over two years to the Wellness Together Canada portal, which offers free confidential mental health and substance use tools and services for frontline health care workers.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

As I mentioned, I live in Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario has been talking about the need to fund incrementally health care in Canada. We have been there very consistently throughout the pandemic and before. They are using some numbers I do not think are necessarily true, with respect to the percentage the federal government currently contributes to health care. I do think the federal portion of the Canada health transfer needs to go up. However, I think it would be irresponsible for us, as the federal government in Canada, to provide that transfer without listing some priorities and ensuring there are some targeted measures those provincial and territorial governments will ensure occur.

Canadians deserve to know these health care dollars are being spent responsibly, and as an Ontarian, when I receive hundreds of dollars in a rebate to my licence plate stickers right before a provincial election, which was right after that incremental \$2 billion went out to provinces and territories, I am concerned the provinces and territories are balancing their books. Having budget surpluses is not spending—

• (1840)

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

**Ms. Rachel Blaney:** Madam Speaker, it is very clear. What all the premiers across this country are asking for is an increase to the health care transfer. We can talk about the ties that should be put on there in terms of criteria, but we know that these hospitals' emergency rooms have been closed 28 days. There have been weeks of nights where, if anything happened, these people could not access an emergency room.

Rural and remote communities deserve better. We can talk about Quadra Island, another ferry-dependent island in my community. It has had no local paramedics for 11 days. In Campbell River, hospi-

tal labs for outpatients have been closed all weekend, sending people away to get the services they desperately need, and wait times are only increasing. This has huge economic impacts on rural and remote communities as well. How do these communities attract people when they know there is not an emergency room?

The government needs to listen to Canadians, listen to the premiers and start putting more money into those health care transfers now.

**Mr. Adam van Koeverden:** Madam Speaker, I agree that we have to increase the Canada health transfer. It is just not a matter of saying, "Here is unlimited money to spend on whatever you would like, including budget surpluses and \$500 cheques to millionaires," as they do in the province of Quebec. We need to spend that money responsibly and make sure it actually solves the problems my hon. colleague so eloquently pointed at this evening.

We all agree that the Canada health transfer will go up, but let us have a little look at the last couple of years and all the incremental funding we have provided, such as an investment of \$115 million over five years, with \$30 million ongoing, to expand the foreign credential recognition program and help 11,000 internationally trained health care professionals per year get their credentials recognized and find work in their field.

The list goes on. Our investments in the health care sector are vast, and they will continue to grow as the needs of Canadians continue to go up. We have to tackle this, and it is all about teamwork.

**The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Alexandra Mendès):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:44 p.m.)





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