



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

44th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION

House of Commons Debates

Official Report
(Hansard)

Volume 151 No. 124
Thursday, November 3, 2022

Speaker: The Honourable Anthony Rota



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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 3, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

REQUIREMENT OF ROYAL RECOMMENDATION FOR BILL C-290—
SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the point of order raised by the member for Mirabel regarding C-290, an act to amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, which stands on the Order Paper under his name.

[*English*]

In my statement of September 26, 2022, on the management of Private Members' Business, I expressed concern about Bill C-290. At the time, I encouraged members who wished to make arguments about whether or not the bill requires a royal recommendation to do so. The member for Mirabel, the member for New Westminster—Burnaby and the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader did just that in points of order on September 28, October 21 and October 25, 2022. I would like to thank them for the information they shared in their statements.

[*Translation*]

In his point of order, the sponsor of Bill C-290 explained that clause 5 of the bill stipulates that chief executives must provide support to public servants who make disclosures. He said that this support is not of a financial nature, but instead includes information, referrals, guidance and advice, and would not entail any new expenditures.

In addition, regarding the proposed amendments to the definition of “public servant” in subsection 2(1) of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, the member said that, since the act already includes provisions on contract employees in the public sector, adding these employees to the definition does not mean the bill needs a royal recommendation.

The member for New Westminster—Burnaby agreed with the bill's sponsor. In his intervention, he noted that nothing in Bill C-290 indicates that the support provided to public servants who make disclosures must be financial in nature. He further remarked that amending the definition of “public servant” as the bill

proposes would only prevent the withholding of a payment or the termination of a contract.

[*English*]

As for the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, he said that the bill's inclusion of former public servants and those retained under contract would expand the scope of the public servants disclosure protection regime. For this and other reasons, the parliamentary secretary argued that Bill C-290 should be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

As stated in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, on page 838, “Without a royal recommendation, a bill that either increases the amount of an appropriation or extends its objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications is inadmissible on the grounds that it infringes on the Crown's financial initiative.”

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

The Chair has carefully examined Bill C-290. Currently, section 42.2 of the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act prohibits some forms of reprisal against contract employees, including payment withholding and contract termination. The new definition of “public servant” proposed by Bill C-290 would, among other things, allow for the payment of compensation or the reimbursement of expenses or financial losses to contract employees who are found to have been subject to a reprisal following an investigation.

In the view of the Chair, the implementation of Bill C-290 would infringe on the conditions of the initial royal recommendation that accompanied the current act. Accordingly, a new royal recommendation is now required before the bill can proceed to a final vote in the House at third reading.

[*English*]

In the meantime, when the bill is next before the House, debate will continue on the second reading motion, and the motion will be put to a vote at the conclusion of the debate.

I thank the members for their attention.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(a), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 17 petitions. These returns will be tabled in an electronic format.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Bill C-228, an act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act and the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

I would like to thank our finance committee clerks, Alexandre Roger and Carine Grand-Jean; legislative clerks Philippe Méla and Marie-Hélène Sauvé; committee assistant Lynda Gaudreault; all committee staff, interpreters, services, witnesses and officials; and all members of the finance committee.

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NATIONAL FOOD WASTE AWARENESS DAY ACT

Ms. Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-304, An Act to establish National Food Waste Awareness Day.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table my first bill, which designates October 20 as national food waste awareness day. I thank the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford for seconding my bill.

This bill has a special place in the history of the office of Port Moody—Coquitlam, as it was researched by Yulia, our intern from Ukraine. Food insecurity is a reality, and her work was driven by a global concern.

Having a day to recognize the impacts of food waste on food insecurity will raise awareness, inspire change and contribute to meaningful solutions to make Canada's food system more secure. Sixty percent of the food produced in Canada each year is thrown out, and half of it is fresh, edible and nutritious food that could help feed four million Canadians, one million of whom are children who struggle daily with access to healthy food.

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

• (1010)

CANADA SHIPPING ACT, 2001

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-305, An Act to amend the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 (anchorage prohibition).

He said: Mr. Speaker, for years, communities in and around the Salish Sea have had to deal with the presence of large freighters using our waters for extended periods of time while they wait their turn in the Port of Vancouver. Today, I am pleased and honoured to introduce a private member's bill to address this issue by amending the Canada Shipping Act, 2001.

The bill proposes to introduce a new section, 23.1, to the act, which would prohibit the anchoring of large vessels in an area surrounding the southern Gulf Islands and the east coast of Vancouver Island. Any vessel contravening this prohibition would be committing an offence and would be liable to a fine of up to \$100,000.

The coastal communities in this area are frustrated by years of inaction from the federal government. These anchorages were established on traditional territories without the free, prior and informed consent of local first nations. If the federal government values these same waters enough to establish a national marine conservation area, then they also deserve protection from being used as an overflow industrial parking lot. This bill would do just that.

I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, for being my seconder.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the first report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, presented to the House on Tuesday, March 1, be concurred in.

In May 2019, the veterans affairs committee published a report entitled "Moving Towards Ending Homelessness Among Veterans". Then, after two elections and two Parliaments and more than two full years later, with no government response to that report, the veterans affairs committee published another report, again entitled "Moving Towards Ending Homelessness Among Veterans", in June 2021. In between that time, a motion was also moved in the House of Commons, in June 2019, indicating that the House should affirm that it wants to end veterans' homelessness, with a date of 2025 to see it end.

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It seems to me that we have a government that continues to talk and talk, but absolutely no action has happened from 2019 until present. We are talking more than three years later and we still have no action. We are still moving toward ending homelessness among veterans and it does not seem like we are moving very quickly. It does not seem like the Liberal government is moving very quickly. In fact, I do not think it is moving at all. That is why we are seeking to move concurrence in this report today.

I will mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

We have a government that received a very thorough report about the need to end homelessness among veterans from a parliamentary committee. It gave no response, and two elections later there is still nothing happening. That is why the report was moved by the veterans affairs committee and we are discussing it today.

Again, it just seems like under the government, we keep hearing it is going to do things. We keep hearing announcements in press releases, but there is never any action. The veterans who served this country made sacrifices, and in some cases very significant sacrifices with very significant physical and psychological injuries. They were prepared to serve this country at a moment's notice. They did serve this country and have suffered injury as a result. We have a duty and the government has a duty to ensure that we care for them. We must ensure that their needs are taken care of.

We have heard that we probably have in the neighbourhood of 5,000 veterans in this country who are homeless. That does not sound like we have a government that is caring for them and ensuring their needs are met. There should never be reports of a veteran being homeless or needing food. I know there are many food banks dedicated specifically to veterans out there in this country. That should never be the case, but under the Liberal government, it just seems to be getting worse and worse, with no action being taken. The Liberal government is failing the veterans who gave this country what we have today.

When veterans go to Veterans Affairs because they are in a crisis or have needs, they are met with layers of bureaucracy and endless wait times and processing times for their disability applications and pension applications. A service standard is required to be met, and that standard has not been met in seven years, not once since the Liberal government took office. The last time the service standard was met was in the last year of the previous Conservative government.

The Liberal government has even failed to meet its own internal service standards. What we are seeing now in many cases is that two years is not an untypical amount of time for veterans to wait for service. They say that the average wait time is 43 weeks to get an application processed for veterans' benefits.

• (1015)

In many cases, veterans are waiting two years, and there are even cases where applications have taken as long as 10 years to get processed. This is clearly not a government that takes ensuring veterans are cared for very seriously.

There have been a number of reports that have indicated such to the government. The Auditor General has indicated it in a report. The Parliamentary Budget Officer has indicated it in a report, and the veterans affairs committee itself has indicated it in numerous reports. The recent Auditor General's report said the government's "actions did not reduce overall wait times for eligible veterans. The department was still a long way from meeting its service standard. Implementation of initiatives was slow. Data to measure and improvements were lacking." In other words, it is failing on every single measure.

It is even more concerning that less than half of first-time mental health-related applications are being processed within the already lengthy 16-week period provided. The Auditor General calls that a significant deterioration of the processing times of the previous Conservative government. We are talking about mental health crises in some cases.

What is happening instead? Instead, Veterans Affairs employees are suggesting to veterans that maybe they should consider assisted suicide. We have heard about the case that has been in the media, and we heard about it at the veterans affairs committee, where assisted suicide was offered to a veteran who did not ask for it. This veteran was in crisis and went to the government looking for help, and it was suggested to the veteran that maybe he should consider killing himself. Even when he said no several times, this Veterans Affairs employee continued to pressure him to consider it.

The comment made, according to testimony from another veteran at the veterans affairs committee, from this employee to the veteran was that accessing assisted suicide would be "...better than blowing your brains out against the wall." Can anyone imagine that one of our veterans had that happen to them?

What is the Liberal government's response? It is not much, actually. It seems like it is trying to cover its own butt. Essentially, it tries to deny responsibility. When the minister was at committee, he continued to defer the responsibility for this to his officials. He seems to be completely removed from the operation of the department he is responsible for.

I forgot to mention that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

There was no apology offered to this veteran and no indication that anything was being done. Veterans Affairs said it was going to provide some training, but it could not give any indication when that would happen or how that would happen. I certainly did not leave feeling assured, and I know the many veterans across this country I have heard from certainly did not feel assured that the government was not going to do anything to ensure that it would never happen again.

We have often heard a saying from veterans, which is "Deny, delay, die", the triple d's. That is really what veterans feel they get from Veterans Affairs. They get denied the services they need. There are delays in processing times, and now they are being told that maybe it would be better if they just died. We seem to have a minister who is asleep at the wheel. Our veterans pay the price for that. Things are just so backward right now.

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Veterans and their families served this country. They sacrificed for this country, and we owe it to them to ensure they are getting the services they need. We owe it to them to ensure they are not left out in the cold, and that is actually what the government is doing. The Liberal government is actually leaving veterans out in the cold. There are 5,000 homeless veterans in this country, and the government is leaving them out in the cold instead of ensuring their needs are protected.

There have been parliamentary reports, PBO reports, Auditor General reports and reports from the veterans affairs committee, but the government is doing nothing to make sure our veterans are cared for.

• (1020)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the shadow minister for Veterans Affairs, for bringing this issue forward to the House today. I would like to draw attention to a not-for-profit organization in Ontario called Ruck 2 Remember. It has been doing things for over 15 years, but just this year it conducted its road to recovery march as part of the Legion's operation: leave the streets behind program. It did the whole Bruce Trail, from Tobermory right down to basically Niagara Falls, which is over 900 kilometres, this summer.

I want to pay tribute to Lino and Joey, who are the two people who did it all. I had the privilege of joining them for a little over 10 kilometres in my riding. I also want to thank the member for Flam- borough—Glanbrook, who joined in as well for part of the march. I did inform all MPs whose ridings are part of the trail to get out there.

I am drawing attention to the volunteers, veterans and phenomenal Canadian citizens who are standing up for our veterans. I would like my hon. colleague to elaborate on why it is so important for the Liberal government to do more to get our veterans off the streets.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank the member for his service to our country. That is something the Liberal government has failed to do in its actions. I am glad he highlighted there are so many groups. He mentioned one in his riding, but there are so many groups across the country that are picking up the slack. They are filling the needs the Liberal government is not ensuring are being filled. I am proud of so many Canadians who are doing just that. However, they should not need to do that. The government should ensure those needs are being provided for.

I will give an example. I mentioned earlier the training needed for employees at Veterans Affairs to ensure we never have another instance of suggesting to a veteran that maybe they should consider assisted suicide. There is an organization called Wounded Warriors, and it has the ability to provide that training tomorrow. The government is aware that could be the case, but it is not engaging in that.

This is a situation where the government is not doing enough to serve the needs of our veterans, and Canadians and organizations across this country are having to step up to make sure veterans have their needs filled. They are paying for veterans to get the mental health supports and physical supports they need. The government is not doing it, so people are stepping up across the country to make sure it happens.

• (1025)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, is the member aware of the fund we created back in 2018, which is the veteran and family well-being fund? It is a very, very important fund. It did not exist prior to our government being elected in 2015. Many organizations right across the country have taken advantage of that fund so they can continue to help veterans on the ground.

I know many Legions benefited from it, as well as homes for veterans groups and VETS Canada. There are many organizations right across the country, and probably in his riding, that are creating new and innovative ways of supporting veterans on the ground. The government is working with organizations and partners. I am wondering if he is aware of that and what he would like to share with the House concerning that program.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the fact that the Liberal government likes to make announcements, put out press releases and try to pretend like it is doing something. That is what we have seen from the Liberal government. This is another great example. It makes announcements about all kinds of money it is going to put into Veterans Affairs, but it does not spend it. A report just came out this week about almost a billion dollars in lapsed funding this year. That is money that was set aside to spend on programs for veterans that the government did not spend.

The government has certainly been accused many times, and rightly so, of spending far too much money, but one area where it should never save money is on our veterans. When there is money that has been put out there for veterans, when there is almost a billion dollars in lapsed funding sitting around while veterans' needs are not being filled, that is not providing service to veterans and their families. That is a press release designed to fool the Canadian public into believing the government cares when it clearly does not care about veterans or their families.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his concern for the well-being of veterans. It is indeed very important.

I would like to know whether my colleague is aware that claims from francophone veterans take much longer to be processed than claims from anglophone veterans. I get the impression that Bloc MPs are the only ones who care about this. I hope that is not the case.

I would like my colleague's opinion on this scandalous situation that makes no sense and has been denounced by my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague on the delays in service for francophone veterans.

[English]

There is no doubt. It has been very clear that francophones are, in fact, receiving even worse service than anglophones.

I will condemn that, but even more importantly, I will condemn the fact that the government is leaving veterans out in the cold. It is leaving them to wait for two years, in many cases, to even get their benefit applications processed. That is completely unacceptable, and the Liberal government should be ashamed of itself for the way it is treating our veterans and our veterans' families.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion for concurrence on the report on veterans homelessness that was presented to the House of Commons.

It is really appropriate this Veterans' Week, in advance of the country coming together, to salute and honour our veterans and their families that have given so much and sacrificed so much for our nation, not just fighting for democracy, the rule of law, human rights and freedoms around the world but peacekeeping as well.

This weekend, I know many members of the House will be attending Remembrance Day ceremonies in the lead up to Remembrance Day. I look forward to being at the Lefroy-Belle Ewart Legion and Sandycove Acres for their Remembrance Day services, as well as Cookstown. I will be there to honour and respect those who served our country, those who continue to serve our country and, more important, their families. Oftentimes, it is forgotten that families serve as much as the members who serve. In all of the discussions we have, we have to realize that.

The issue of veterans homelessness has been a pervasive problem for many generations of successive governments. Seemingly, we are not doing what we need to do to solve the issue of veterans homelessness.

Oftentimes this issue becomes a problem during the transition out of services. I happen to believe that transition out of our Canadian Armed Forces, for whatever reason, medical or otherwise, needs to happen the first day a person signs on to be a member of the Canadian forces. It has to be a process, not a process that is an end process at the time of transition but it has to be an ongoing process to prepare veterans for that transition.

Often veterans are not prepared for a transition and that is often the reason we find our veterans in a homeless state. We expected a study to be released in the summer, talking about veterans homelessness, how pervasive it was and how nothing seemed to be done.

I agree with my hon. colleague from Banff—Airdrie that the Liberals are going to stand and talk about throwing millions and millions of dollars at a problem, which seems to be what they do, but it is doing nothing to solve this pervasive problem.

The problems in Veterans Affairs, like backlogs and disability claims, are not money problems; they are process problems. Whether the Conservatives are in government or the government of

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the day, we need to find the will to deal with this processing problem.

In every study that is done, every stakeholder, advocate, family member and every veteran who comes forward, along with the defence ombudsman and the veterans ombudsman, will say the exact same thing. In my experience in listening to these professionals and those who are directly impacted by this problem, it is a process problem and the processes have to be fixed. It is not a money problem.

Groups out there are doing tremendous work, as my hon. colleague from Banff—Airdrie said, to help veterans and their families not just transition, but deal with the existing homelessness issue. There are a lot of solutions out there. There are a lot of partners we can work with to solve this process issue to ensure that veterans and their families are looked after as they transition out of the military.

In my time as the veterans affairs critic, I had the opportunity to meet with the Veterans Transition Network, Wounded Warriors Canada and VETS Canada. Another one I was really fascinated by was a non-for-profit organization called Homes for Heroes based out of Calgary.

I had an opportunity to meet with Dave Howard, who is the president and co-founder of the Homes for Heroes Foundation. One of the things he talked to me about was the need to not just work with municipalities to find areas where we could build transitional housing for veterans and their families, but also the need for government support in that regard.

● (1030)

I want to highlight as one example of many that veterans' advocates are proposing. The program is called "The Path to Recovery". The goal of the program of the Homes for Heroes Foundation is to assist veterans with reintegration into civilian life. The first step is to provide them with housing, somewhere to be safe, secure, warm, a place to keep their personal belongings and to take care of their personal needs, a tiny home in one of these villages it is building and proposes to build. It has several proposals on the books, but is having a difficult time finding the funding for that. The idea behind it is to create a veterans' village, a community of understanding what veterans and their families are going through as they transition out of the military.

One of the challenges is that 5,000 veterans are homeless. These numbers are as of 2015, but I suspect would probably be similar to this day. I have talked to advocates right across the country like Don Leonardo and the organizations I highlighted before. The last place veterans need to be is in a shelter. They need to be among themselves, with veterans who understand and are going through very similar situations. Therefore, I would encourage the government to use any aspect or avenue it can to support these types of organizations that understand the needs of veterans and their families and to resolve the issue of homelessness by building communities of veterans who can work together.

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With respect to some of the other aspects of this, the projection is that each village would provide 5,000 to 9,000 bed nights per year for veterans experiencing homelessness. There is a whole plan. I would encourage the government, if it has not met with Dave and the Homes for Heroes Foundation, to make it a priority to talk them about their vision and goal toward helping veterans and their families as they transition.

It is a broader problem right now that is not just affecting veterans and their families; it is the state of the economy. We are all aware of the inflation and affordability crisis that is facing Canadian families and businesses. Veterans and their families are dealing with the same situation as everyone. The cost of groceries and housing has made it unaffordable. We add to that the challenges they are facing with disability backlogs and claims, oftentimes waiting up to two years for claims to be processed. Despite the fact that the government has thrown millions of dollars at the problem, it has not solved the problem because it is a process problem. Families and veterans dealing with transitional and mental health issues and occupational stress injuries do not need the process to be as cumbersome as it is.

I know the government has, to some degree, started to look at the presumptive benefit claim process, and I would encourage it to look at more. I have said this publicly before, and I believe I have said it in the House. When people file their taxes, if there is a rebate coming back, Revenue Canada will often deposit that into a bank account within 10 business days, yet veterans and their families that are transitioning out of the military face a cumbersome process of delays as a result of claims and benefits that are attributed to service. We need to create a presumptive benefit claim process where-in if veterans file a claim with Veterans Affairs, we presume it to be attributed to service and they should be entitled to the money and benefits they deserve in their service to our country.

There are simple processes that can solve not just the issue of those benefit claims, but also the issue of homelessness. I would encourage the government to heed the advice and recommendations of the committee, after listening to stakeholders from right across the country, those who are in the trenches, who are working to help veterans, the social agencies and veteran agencies, and to work to solve this problem, especially now given the affordability and inflation crisis that Canadians are facing and which veterans and their families are disproportionately facing to a great degree.

• (1035)

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for mentioning so many local organizations that are working so hard to keep our veterans in a safe place.

I wonder if the member would comment on the fact that London, Ontario is the first city in Canada to attain functional zero veterans homelessness status and how important it is for all levels of government to work closely with communities and organizations that are getting the work done, so whatever process is put forward actually works.

• (1040)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes an important point. It is a place that we should all aspire to be, that there is zero veteran homelessness.

It is not just the stakeholders that are involved. Not only does the federal government have a role to play, but all levels of government have a role to play when it comes to the example I gave earlier about Homes for Heroes, ensuring there is proper zoning to allow for micro housing, tiny villages that could be built within built boundaries of municipalities, and dealing with zoning issues to ensure that those types of things happen.

I agree with the hon. member that it is not just the federal government that has a role to play, it is not just advocates and stakeholders that have a role to play, and they are doing great work as it is across the country, but all levels of government. The will to help Canada's veterans should be universal among all levels of government and among every Canadian.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear the member for Barrie—Innisfil speak about Homes for Heroes. This is an incredibly ambitious project that is being led by individuals who genuinely care about making housing available for veterans.

He indicated some of the challenges that they face. However, one of the biggest challenges they face is finding land and very quickly getting this land rezoned for the purposes that they need.

I know that the provincial government came into Kingston and, basically, from an order from the minister, rezoned the land without going through the city council process. I know he would be very familiar with it, having had experience on Barrie City Council. Quite frankly, it expedited the process to start moving it forward much quicker than waiting the year or year and a half that the planning application process normally takes.

I wonder if the member could comment on whether he thinks that is a good initiative for the provincial governments to be doing and if he would encourage the provincial government to do that in more areas throughout the province.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the issue of veterans homelessness, the issue of affordability and attainability among housing stock for Canadians needs to be addressed.

If we talk to the Canadian Real Estate Association or the Ontario Real Estate Association, as I have, they talk about the cumbersome process with respect to zoning and development applications. That needs to be done by municipalities to ensure that the process is expedited so we are building houses.

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Young people across the country feel that they have been let down in many ways or lied to in terms of hope and opportunity. I would actually say that young people are despondent right now in the sense that they will not be able to afford a home like their parents did. This needs to be done throughout the entire process, the zoning process, the municipal, provincial and federal process. However, the federal government does have a role. There is excess real estate that could be repurposed to help not just veterans, but the homelessness and attainability problem in general.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it really speaks to me when a colleague talks about projects for veterans. In Quebec City, the “repos du soldat” veterans’ housing project has been delayed for primarily administrative reasons.

With respect to financing to help veterans, there is a \$20.9-million infrastructure program to end veteran homelessness. That is very little, considering that the monarchy receives at least \$67 million year, on a recurring basis. I believe that our veterans deserve more than one-third of what the monarchy gets.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, as I said at the onset of my discussion today, a lot of money gets thrown at the problem, but it is the processes that really need to be streamlined, filtered and expedited so that the money gets to where it needs to be and the effect of that money is realized when it comes to homelessness among veterans.

• (1045)

The Deputy Speaker: Now is my normal public service announcement, where I remind folks to keep their questions and answers short so everybody gets to participate in this debate.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am profoundly honoured today to provide a government response to the first report from the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, entitled “Moving Towards Ending Homelessness Among Veterans”. It is especially important to note that Veterans Week starts tomorrow, and, leading up to Remembrance Day on November 11, we will be commemorating those who have done so much to safeguard our democracy.

For generations, Canadians have gone to military service for reasons that can be both unique personally and remarkably similar all at once, most notably the common desire to protect and defend the values that they and their fellow Canadians believe in.

More than 650,000 Canadians bravely served in World War I. During the Second World War, over one million people from Canada and Newfoundland would enlist for service on battle fronts all over the globe. Thousands more Canadians would serve in Korea, the Persian Gulf, the Balkans and Afghanistan. Here at home, members of our military have responded to natural disasters, like major flooding and devastating ice storms. Of course, they have been counted on during the COVID-19 pandemic, most notably tending to our seniors, including veterans, in long-term care facilities.

Today, one in 60 Canadians is a veteran. It is our responsibility to meet their needs in post-service life and to commemorate and remember their incredible service and sacrifice.

Many former members were released from the military without needing any major assistance. Their transition was for the most part smooth, and from one day to the next they were able to move on to a new chapter in their lives. However, for others, the transition from a career in the armed forces to post-service life is much more difficult, owing to any number of factors, including dealing with physical and mental injuries that limit post-career employment opportunities, experiencing financial instability that makes it hard to make ends meet, or having difficulties adapting to a life that is far less regimented than what a former member is accustomed to.

The consequences can be devastating, with homelessness being one of them. The government’s position on veteran homelessness is clear: One homeless veteran is one too many. Of course, the issue is much more complex than that. As the report notes:

Homelessness likely affects between 3,000 and 5,000 veterans, or between 4.6 per 1,000 and 7.7 per 1,000 of the nearly 650,000 veterans living in Canada.

Therefore, there is quite obviously a problem. It is one we know we can address and prevent with a determined and coordinated effort.

Before we can even seek to address homelessness, we have to know exactly what it is. Let me spell it out. Homelessness is a symptom of a failed or challenged transition process. It is an outcome of a system that lacks the right supports at the right time and one in which gaps exist. Most obviously, it is a grave concern that impacts a person’s overall well-being.

Each of these points brings up some tough questions that we must ask ourselves. What do we know about homeless veterans? What leads them to end up without a home? What are the key factors? What do we not know? Who is leading the research in this area? What have our partners found out? Where is the latest information on the issue? Who offers what services? Whose are the most innovative and effective? How do our allies approach veteran homelessness, and what can we learn from them?

These are questions that are constantly asked, and we are working with allied countries, community organizations, the homeless sector, veterans groups and federal partners to address and understand them. As more is learned about the issue, we will be able to do even more to identify and help our veterans.

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● (1050)

One way is through public consultation and stakeholder engagement. Last week, the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion hosted three national round table events on veteran homelessness.

Participants included a veterans organization, a homeless sector organization and a veteran who themselves have experienced living without a home. They talked about identifying gaps and barriers for diverse groups of veterans experiencing homelessness, the impact of COVID-19, the best practices, and how different sectors can work together to find solutions.

They explored a number of themes related to veteran homelessness. Some of the themes are as follows: ensuring veteran housing supports, for example, through rent supplements; making wraparound services available in conjunction with affordable and safe housing, to ensure a personal route out of homelessness; integrating mental health, addictions counselling and other health and medical services into supports for our veterans; having better data and data-driven approaches to veteran homelessness; increasing awareness of available programs and services for veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness; and coordinating across sectors, government departments and levels of government to prevent and reduce homelessness.

We have also worked in collaboration with partners such as the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness in addressing homelessness among veterans to provide all Canadians with a safe and affordable home.

The government itself has also taken several steps to address this issue. Over the last two years, we have invested over \$100 million to launch a new veteran homelessness program. In partnership with community organizations, it will provide wraparound services and rent supplements to veterans experiencing homelessness.

These investments show how important this issue is for our government, and they add momentum to our efforts to address homelessness. Veterans experiencing homelessness have unique circumstances that require unique supports. We are always seeking to work with outside organizations and other government departments to ensure that veterans have a safe and affordable place to live.

Veterans Affairs also supports homeless and at-risk veterans in other ways. These include the VAC assistance service, which provides free psychological support for veterans, former RCMP members, family members and caregivers. The service is free and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by simply calling the toll-free 800 number that can be easily found on the VAC website.

Veterans experiencing homelessness or who are at risk can also obtain assistance through the veterans emergency fund, which provides prompt financial supports to veterans, their families and survivors who are facing an unforeseeable financial emergency that is threatening their health and well-being. It can cover essentials such as food, clothing or mortgage payments, medical expenses, and expenses required to maintain safety and shelter. The emergency fund exists to provide financial assistance to veterans and their families quickly and without complicated eligibility requirements and approval processes.

For longer-term help, VAC will refer applications to other resources and other internal and external programs to assist our veterans. We also have the veteran and family well-being fund, which provides supports to organizations that are coming up with new and innovative ways of improving the well-being of Canadian veterans and their families. In 2018, over 60 organizations across the country received more than \$25 million through that fund.

● (1055)

Thanks to the new increased funding in budget 2021, the well-being fund awards \$8 million a year until 2023-24. This year, we have funded projects to support veterans and their families during COVID-19 recovery, including those experiencing homelessness.

The Homes For Heroes Foundation is a good example of an organization that has benefited from this fund. Earlier this year it received \$250,000 to go towards the Calgary veterans village and another \$315,000 each to similar projects in Halifax and Winnipeg. These villages give veterans access to affordable and innovative housing as they transition into life after service. Not only that, but they also have access to the resources, training and counselling that can help them live independently in the long term. We also awarded Homes For Heroes \$712,000 in 2021 to hire a national coordinator to oversee the operation of its national expansion plan.

Fredericton Homeless Shelters is another organization that has received support from our veteran and family well-being fund. In 2020 it was awarded nearly \$60,000 to support its homeless veterans pilot project, which identifies veterans in the Fredericton area who are experiencing homelessness. It gives them temporary shelter and access to services and supports that will help them find long-term housing and bring more stability to their lives. For example, it helps them access doctors and specialists, find a job or go back to school.

This is the type of baseline assistance that makes life easier, not just for veterans, but for everyone. The Fredericton Homeless Shelter also received \$40,000 in 2021 for its “from crisis to home” project and \$75,000 in 2022 for a project called “continuum of care for veterans”. These are the kinds of projects that the government created the well-being fund for; ideas that can change the lives of veterans in Canada.

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It is tragic to think that anyone who served our country in uniform could one day end up homeless. On any given day, members of our Canadian Armed Forces can be anywhere in the world, putting their lives on the line for the safety and security of Canadians. They go where they are sent, and they do what they are told to do for our country. By the time their careers are done, some may sail into the sunset, while others land in more choppy, difficult waters.

As a government, we are fully committed to every Canadian who has worn the uniform, whether they have served for decades or were honourably discharged early in their careers. All deserve a safe and affordable home in which to live after they are released, and this government will continue to do everything it can to ensure that all our veterans receive the support they need and have a home to live in.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention and for his service on the veterans affairs committee, which we work on together.

The member talked about the existing military being shipped overseas, and how they could be called upon at any time, and he recognizes that we have an issue with housing for veterans. Could the member make any comments with regard to the pressing issue that existing military members have in trying to find housing at this point in time, and what the Liberal government is doing about that?

• (1100)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his work on the veterans affairs committee, which is very important.

I spoke about some of the partners we have on the ground, which are very helpful, and I mentioned Homes for Heroes and tiny homes. This summer I had the opportunity to visit tiny home villages in Edmonton and Calgary, Alberta. Some funding has been allotted to support veteran homelessness in Halifax and Winnipeg, as well some great work that is happening in Fredericton and in London, Ontario, where we are working toward zero homelessness.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. Unfortunately, I agree with very little of what he said. His speech paints a very rosy picture of the assistance provided by the government.

My colleague sat on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs when it analyzed the situation and when the report containing nine recommendations was tabled in 2019.

Would he agree that three years later none of these recommendations have been implemented?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question and for his outstanding work on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. I also want to acknowledge the work we have done to address the situation for francophones, for whom things seemed to take longer.

A unit has been dedicated to francophones to ensure that progress is made on their files and that they will not wait longer

than anyone else. We are also hiring more francophones and bilingual people.

With respect to many of the recommendations that were made in the reports, we are developing programs to support these veterans.

I am very proud of our government. Much of the \$11 billion it has spent has been invested in programs to enrich the lives of veterans and to help them.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I serve with the member on the veterans affairs committee, on which I have served for many years. I was there when the first report was tabled and then retabled to get a response from the government because it did not get a response due to the election in 2019.

It is too bad that we are not seeing the numbers change. There are 5,000 veterans, it is estimated, who are still without a home or a safe place to be, and those are the people who served our country.

The Auditor General was very clear in her report. One of the biggest challenges is that there is no correct data to identify the places where there are shutdowns of services. When we look at the system, services are not being delivered and we do not know why because the data does not tell us why. That seems like a big concern.

Will the government invest in making sure that the data is there so we can identify the bottlenecks and serve veterans much more effectively?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent work. She has been on the veterans affairs committee for four or five years and has been doing some excellent work on that front, which is very important.

Our government, as I indicated in my speech, has invested monies to create programs. One of the programs is the mental health program, in which we invested \$140 million. What is important about that program is that it is an immediate program. That means that while veterans are waiting for their applications to be processed, they receive services from day one. That is an immediate program, so there are no wait times on that front.

We also created the office of women and LGBTQ veterans to support those veterans, in particular, though we are not talking about that.

Many of the wait times were created because the Conservatives, let us not forget, closed nine veterans offices that we reopened and fired over 1,000 frontline workers that we rehired as soon as we became government.

• (1105)

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate all of my colleagues in the House who sit at the veterans committee and do this important work.

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Some years back, I was a critic and I had a great opportunity to learn about what was being provided and what was not being provided. I was quite appalled at the situation we were in. The fact that we are focusing on housing in this report, and that we are doing a concurrence motion, gives us a chance to talk about the good things we are doing and about where there are still unfilled gaps.

One of the programs that I helped create was called Helmets to Hardhats. I wonder if my colleague is familiar with it. It was specifically to help veterans position themselves when they came back to get into the construction industry, which had tremendous needs.

Could my colleague comment on that program?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, there are so many programs and organizations out there helping our veterans. It is quite remarkable, but we should look at what we are going to be studying over the next few weeks or months, the veteran employment strategy. It is exactly in line with many of the organizations that my colleague mentioned that support our veterans. That is a key factor.

Some of our veterans have had challenges and this is an opportunity to help them along. I know of a number of private sector organizations now hiring cohorts of veterans. That is the type of thing that veterans need to continue in life with opportunities. This is one way of helping them get back on their feet and supporting them as they are transitioning to civilian life.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my thanks to the hon. parliamentary secretary and other hon. colleagues in this place.

Yesterday, I spoke of war heroes who happened to be my constituents. I specifically mentioned retired commander Charles “Chic” Goodman, who served in France and Belgium and helped liberate the prisoner of war camp in the Netherlands. I mentioned he was near death. He died this morning.

The nurse placed a fresh poppy on his chest, next to his French Legion of Honor, an award he received from the French government for his service. He received many accolades from Veterans Affairs but not what he most wanted, which was that his wife, now a widow, would not face homelessness.

We must get rid of the so-called “gold diggers clause”. Please, will the hon. parliamentary secretary say the government is going to remove this unfair and absurd anachronism?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, that was an important question. My sympathy goes out to the family for their loss of the veteran she mentioned yesterday in her speech.

Our government has put forward \$150 million to study the data to see how we can best support the survivors of veterans who marry after 60. That report is being studied in the committee as we speak and recommendations will follow, which are so important.

Again, I want to thank the men and women who have served and continue to serve. I was in Dieppe, France, this summer to commemorate the men who were lost on the beach. I cannot share enough the emotions of the people of France, Dieppe, the Netherlands and Belgium feel toward the Canadian military. They thank us for their freedom and for their liberation. That is powerful. I was

so proud of them and proud of our men and women who have served and continue to serve.

• (1110)

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in his remarks, the Liberal member made the comment that one homeless veteran is one too many. I certainly agree with him on that, but it is everything that came after that which I disagree with.

He mentioned all kinds of dollar figures they are spending on studies and things like that. It is not a question of more money being spent on studies. This is a question of will. It is time for the Liberal government to take action instead of talking about the problem.

There are 5,000 homeless veterans and we have almost \$1 billion in lapsed funding this year. How much of that lapsed funding was in these programs? When will the Liberal government stop keeping our veterans out in the cold and take action to address this issue, rather than study it and talk about it?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, that question gives me an opportunity to share with the House and with Canadians what the former Conservative government did prior to 2015.

It is very important to note that it actually cut the budget on the backs of our men and women who served. In 2014, it closed nine veterans offices that were giving services and supports to veterans across the country. What did we do? We reopened them in the first year we were in government.

The second thing it did was fire 1,000 frontline employees, which caused a large backlog. What did we do? We rehired those 1,000 employees and we trained them as well.

When we talk about wait times it focuses on two things. There is the \$11 billion the government put to support veterans, which allows them to have up to \$2 billion per year in their pockets, and of course reversing the cuts that were made by the Conservative government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, allow me to crack a smile. I would like to start by saying that I will be sharing my time with my admirable and highly esteemed colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

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I have a little story to tell the House. In December 1908, an old man named James Daly was found unconscious at the entrance to a building in downtown Montreal. He was suffering from hypothermia and malnutrition. In fact, he was dying. He was brought to the Montreal General Hospital, where he was cared for by a man named Arthur Hair, who noticed a slip of blue paper in his coat pocket. Mr. Hair, a veteran, quickly recognized the type of envelope sent to soldiers discharged from the British army. He opened the envelope and found to his chagrin that the man in question, James Daly, had served for 21 years and fought in the Crimean war from 1854 to 1856. He had 21 years of service, two of them on the front lines.

Now this poor man was on the street. He had lost everything, except for a slip of blue paper attesting to his military service. He was practically a John Doe. James Daly died in the hospital. Horrified that James Daly would not be given a proper burial, one year later, Arthur created the Last Post Fund, an organization that is still active today and whose mission is to provide a proper burial for veterans with no financial resources at the time of their death.

Since 1930, many burials have taken place at the National Field of Honour, a private military cemetery in Pointe-Claire, on the Island of Montreal. More than 22,000 veterans are now buried there, including our cherished Léo Major. I visited the site last summer and it is impressive. I invite all members to go visit when they are in Montreal. It is an impressive place. I will go so far as to urge my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs to go see it. The cemetery was created after a homeless man was found dying on the street.

I will get back to the subject at hand very soon. The point to my story is to show that, 114 years ago, homeless veterans were dying as John Does on the streets of Montreal. What upsets me is that, 114 years later, a 50-page report describes the same problem, which is even worse now than it was then.

When the report was tabled in 2019, homelessness affected between 3,000 and 5,000 veterans in Quebec and Canada. In other words, about one in 150 veterans ends up in this sad situation. That is undeniably shocking.

The study we are talking about is entitled “Moving Towards Ending Homelessness Among Veterans”, and it was done during the 42nd Parliament. A total of 23 members of Parliament, some of whom were veterans themselves, sat on the committee during that time. The committee held six meetings on this subject and heard from about 20 witnesses. Nine recommendations emerged from their work.

My colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, who is the Bloc Québécois critic for housing and has a great deal of experience in this area, is in a much better position to talk about the housing situation in relation to homelessness than me. I am thinking about the national housing strategy, of course.

The first recommendation in the report is as follows: “That Veterans Affairs Canada work in partnership with community agencies dedicated to helping veterans and establish ways for continual contact between the department and veterans, with the latter’s permission.”

• (1115)

Clearly, the department still has a long way to go. Yes, community organizations receive funding, but levels have stagnated and are far below the assistance and money necessary to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

I would like to share with my colleagues a small initiative that is of particular interest to me. Each year, in partnership with Montreal’s Accueil Bonneau, the Royal 22nd Regiment veterans association distributes hot meals, clothing and personal care products. Naturally, they do it for people experiencing homelessness. Last year, they served almost 800 meals. It is a wonderful initiative, but much more needs to be done. That is where Veterans Affairs Canada fails to walk the talk. It is unfortunate, but shelters and hot meals are only a band-aid solution for a far bigger problem. It will not address the root cause of homelessness, I agree.

I am convinced that preventive measures are needed to address the root causes, including improving services offered during the transition from military to civilian life, hiring more case managers and reducing wait times between requests for assistance and intervention, especially when it comes to the veterans emergency fund. There is a fair amount of money available, but the fund is very complicated. It is not easy for veterans to fill out the documents needed to access it.

There is also the issue of access to mental health services for veterans and their families. We need to comply with the 16-week service standard when it comes to applications for disability benefits. Also, I cannot help but mention the need to offer equitable and quality services to francophones. Veterans Affairs Canada needs to address the problem upstream, but they appear to have difficulty doing that.

Need I remind members that a veteran who is waiting can become a veteran who gets fed up? Veterans who get fed up can find themselves on the street or at the end of a rope. There is a reason why the suicide rate is so high among veterans, and there is a reason why the homelessness rate is also high among veterans. What is especially disappointing in all this is that, of the nine recommendations made, recommendations that are relevant, logical and based on veterans’ needs, none have really been implemented.

I know I am running out of time, but I just have to add to something my colleague said earlier. There is a wonderful initiative to support veterans called the “Repos du soldat”. This non-profit organization was registered in 2018 and has been struggling to get the Department of National Defence to hand over a parcel of land. Instead, a few years ago, National Defence agreed to allow an English-language school to be built on that land. That is rather odd.

We look forward to getting an answer on this, because the project would mean an additional 90 housing units in the Quebec City area, along with space for health care professionals, including psychologists. This project is being led by Ms. Pelletier, the wife of a veteran suffering from severe post-traumatic stress disorder. We are still waiting for a response to the letter that two Bloc Québécois members and I wrote to the Minister of National Defence about the matter. We have not received a response.

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I am out of time, but I had a lot more to say on this subject. As a final comment, I will just mention that I would like us to be able, at some point, to make recommendations in these committees that will not be shelved or put on the back burner. This is a perfect example of what we are dealing with. Out of nine great recommendations, not one is actually being implemented. It makes one wonder what the members on these standing committees are actually doing.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the work that he does on behalf of veterans. I know we all care very much about this particular file.

I have to ask if the member is aware that there is a dedicated unit for the issue of francophone veterans who are coming back. There has been a significant increase in support in francophone areas, as well as a dedicated unit. Is he familiar with that? What are his thoughts on that dedicated unit, if he is aware of it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Of course I am familiar with that, Mr. Speaker. For the past three years, I have been fighting so that francophones can get the same type of services as anglophones. The unit was implemented in Montreal, but it is not being managed properly, so the response time for French applications is much longer than for English applications. Francophones have never been treated equitably in that regard. The resource is there, but the results are not.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his wonderful speech and his comment. He is always very interesting and, more importantly, he cares a lot about veterans.

Speaking of veterans, I would like to say hello to my father, who is a World War II veteran and who is 99 years, two months, two weeks and two days old today. At that age, one basically starts counting the hours.

My colleague mentioned that this report includes nine recommendations. Unfortunately, recommendations often get ignored.

What does my colleague think is the first recommendation that should be implemented? Which one does he think is most important?

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question.

I must say that delayed responses are an appalling source of stress for families and veterans. Again, these delays are worse for francophones than for anglophones. That would be the first point.

Some may say that this is a bit far removed from homelessness, but it is not. Homelessness is part of a process. In order to address it, we need to tackle issues earlier on and find a way to adequately meet francophones' needs. I think that would be my main recommendation or where the focus should be.

• (1125)

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his very important speech. We

have worked together on the veterans committee for years and I really appreciate his dedication, especially to francophone veterans.

Earlier this year, we were honoured to go with the minister to some important places. We went to Vimy Ridge and we went to Menin Gate. Those are places where there is such a deep respect for the men and women who served Canada and who served in those places during times that none of us can imagine. What concerns me is that we hear this long-standing history of Canada failing veterans. We continue to have over 5,000 veterans today who are without homes.

Why do we appreciate their sacrifice, but we do not see the government, or the past Conservative government, recognizing what needs to happen for veterans?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, whom I hold in high regard, by the way.

That is a question that I obviously cannot answer. There used to be a slogan that went something like “if you're curious about life, enlist”. People laugh, yes, but I often think of it in committee. One of the questions that both my colleagues and I regularly ask the witnesses we meet is whether they would still enlist if they could do it over again. Things happen a certain way in the military. There is a tremendous amount of respect for people in the military. When people leave the military, their lives change drastically in terms of support, respect, and so on.

Mr. Denis Trudel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today about the important issue of homelessness among veterans.

I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, who is doing a wonderful job on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. He worked on the report and the recommendations. What a shame it is that most of the report's recommendations have yet to be implemented. It is a real shame.

I will approach this issue from another direction. When we talk about homelessness, it is difficult not to talk about housing. Ultimately, what we want is to get people off the streets and into a home. We want to give them a roof over their heads. Unfortunately, it is clear that we are not taking care of our own in Canada and Quebec.

I am pleased to rise so close to Remembrance Day. Today is an excellent day to talk about this issue. I would also like to pay tribute to certain people.

In my riding, an entire ecosystem of assistance for people experiencing homelessness has sprung up in recent years. It is amazing. Take the Halte du coin, for example. My friend Nicholas Gildersleeve launched this initiative during the pandemic.

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During the pandemic, it became clear that there were Montrealers who were fleeing the city for the area around the Longueuil metro station for reasons that appear to be pandemic related. They believed that there was a serious outbreak in Montreal. They were leaving Montreal and congregating around the Longueuil metro station. There was a risk of a major outbreak and a possibility that the virus would spread outside the community of Longueuil.

The people who work with the homeless and are involved in housing issues immediately sprang into action. Gilles Beauregard of Table Itinérance Rive-Sud did an incredible job. Everyone banded together as part of an ecosystem that cares for people. I should also mention Marlène Harvey of La Casa Bernard-Hubert, a men's shelter that offers six-month stays, and Sonia Langlois, who is doing a fantastic job with L'Antre-temps, a shelter for homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 21. When we think of homelessness, we often picture older people. There are older people experiencing homelessness, and that is a problem. Unfortunately, young people also end up on the street. They run away from home, they get placed in foster care, they run away and end up in the street, and there are organizations devoted to helping them.

I would like to give a shout-out to Lucie Latulippe at L'Abri de la Rive-Sud and to Chrismène Joseph at the Centre de support médical et d'assistance sociale de Longueuil. These are people that I know and love.

I went to the Halte du coin, which is a resource with a high social acceptability threshold; in other words, they accept everyone. It is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week. People come in and no one asks questions. Meals are served during the day. I went to help serve the meal and wash dishes one day, and I saw something that I found deeply troubling. People can come to eat, 50 meals are served, but, unfortunately, there is not enough room. This problem is related to what we are talking about today. There is not enough funding to deal with homelessness. We are not helping people enough.

The resource has 20 beds in the summer and 30 in the winter. Winter is coming and it is a serious problem.

They serve 50 meals without any issue; 50 people show up and are fed. It happens in a former church that has been turned into a support centre for the homeless. That is quite remarkable. It is a wonderful resource. However, there is not enough room for everyone. There is not enough room to house everyone. There are around 50 seats at suppertime. After the meal, the people leave, go outside, smoke a cigarette or a joint. As we know, homelessness can be related to drug use. After the meal, the space is turned into a place to sleep. The tables are replaced by beds.

When I left the resource, everyone was there outside, about 50 of them. Unfortunately, not all of them would be able to get in. They were all waiting to spend the night in a warm bed, but there is not enough room. We are not providing a place to sleep for our own. We do not care for our homeless veterans in this country. That is a big problem.

• (1130)

Ultimately, the way to address the issue of homelessness is through housing. That is also noted in the report. Unfortunately,

Canada is failing in its duty to house its citizens. The system is not working at all in Canada.

The national housing strategy was launched five years ago with much fanfare. The goal was to spend \$72 billion. We were told that people would be housed. When the Liberals talk about the great \$72-billion strategy, they never mention the fact that it includes the money that cities, provinces and organizations will invest. It is not all federal money.

Five years on, Scotiabank estimates that Canada has a shortfall of 3.5 million housing units. Moreover, Canada has the lowest number of housing units per 1,000 people of all G7 nations. That is scandalous. We saw this week that Canada is one of the worst countries in the G20 in terms of fossil fuel investments, which is a downright scandal. All the Liberal ministers keep going on and on about the sustainable economy and the ecological transition, yet Canada is the second-worst country in the G20 in terms of public investments in fossil fuels. That in itself is shameful.

Canada's record on housing is also shameful. There are 424 housing units per 1,000 residents. Canada is the worst country in the G7. That is appalling. Last week, we discussed Bill C-31. My Liberal and NDP friends think they are resolving the housing crisis with Bill C-31. People are being sent a cheque for \$500. How much will be required next year?

Not a single housing unit will be built with Bill C-31. Two weeks ago, during the Nuit des sans-abri, an event that raises awareness of homelessness, I met with friends who work with the homeless in Longueuil. When I talked to them about Bill C-31, they were devastated. How many millions will be spent under Bill C-31 without a single home being built?

We need to build homes. According to a study by Scotiabank, 3.5 million housing units must be built over the next 10 years in Canada to meet the demand. Midway through the national housing strategy, 350,000 units have been built and 60,000 been renovated. That adds up to about 100,000. Can we call that a roaring success? No, it is a total failure.

That is not to mention the other problem we have right now. There is a need to build more social housing, more housing that people can afford, and that is the important part. However, last month, a problem arose, a problem associated with the pandemic, rising construction costs and the labour shortage. Projects funded by the government will not be able to move ahead due to a lack of refinancing.

It is easy to understand. Some projects that were funded under the rapid housing initiative or the national housing co-investment fund a year or two ago will not move ahead a year later due to rising costs and the labour shortage.

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Once the builders break ground on a project, it becomes clear that, to complete the 55 or 70 units, another \$1 million or \$2 million is needed. It is a serious problem. These are good projects funded by the government that will not see the light of day. There are many of these projects in Quebec and it is outrageous that we do not talk about it.

Furthermore, midway into the strategy, while the government keeps boasting about spending money, only 30% of the funds have been spent. I said earlier that there is a shortfall of 3.5 million housing units in Canada. An economist at the CMHC told me a few weeks ago that, in Quebec alone, if the market is left on its own, 500,000 units will be built. The market alone will build 500,000 units, but 1.1 million would be needed to meet the needs of Quebec alone. That means we need 600,000 more. One way or another, the government must help. It must intervene in the market to build those 600,000 units, but that is not happening.

That is not all. Over the last 10 years, according to my friends at the Réseau québécois des OSBL d'habitation, Canada has lost 600,000 affordable housing units, units that middle-class people could afford. Those units are now being sold on the private market and have become unaffordable for the average person.

● (1135)

Not only is new housing not being built, but the units we helped build, units that were affordable or that the market built over the years, are no longer affordable for average folks. There is a lot of work to do.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the passion of the member. There are not a lot of people in this room who can get more vocal than I can at times, but he is certainly one of those members.

He brought up a lot of interesting and I think debatable points about affordable housing. This government has done a lot, and even though he says that nothing has been done and nothing has been built, that is simply not the case. I can reference my riding, where a number of projects that have been funded by the federal government are now open and housing individuals who are in need of affordable housing. I will say that unfortunately, and I was listening closely, I did not once hear the member talk about the actual issue, which is affordable housing for veterans.

There has been a lot of good discussion today from all sides of the House. I have heard the Conservatives talk about Homes for Heroes, and I have heard many other discussions about housing veterans. I wonder if the member would like to reflect specifically on housing the veterans who are in need right now and to depart from the more general topic of homelessness and focus on veterans.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, my colleague seems to expect me to applaud the government's actions, which I certainly will not do.

When it comes to housing, I dream of how they do it in Vienna. A few weeks ago, I was in Laval for a conference about housing

organized by the mayors of Longueuil and Laval, both of whom are very focused on social housing. I applaud their initiative.

During the conference, we heard from the former mayor of Vienna. One hundred years ago in Vienna, people realized that they needed to do something about housing, probably because that is when veterans were returning after the First World War. People realized that the government would have to invest in providing housing for people. In Vienna, 62% of all the housing units are social housing. The city builds real communities, with bike paths and organic shops. It is extraordinary. I have seen pictures. That is my dream.

The thing is, it takes the kind of will on the part of the government that we are not seeing right now.

● (1140)

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert for his speech, which shows that he cares about our veterans. In his opinion, why did the CEO of Vets Canada state the following earlier this week:

[*English*]

“A lot of them have expressed that they don't feel valued, they don't feel important.” She is referring to veterans. “These are men and women who put their lives on the line for our country, so I think we owe them a lot more than what we're providing.”

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the statement that my colleague just talked about. When we talk about housing for people, we are talking about all vulnerable populations in Canada. Veterans are very important, but there are also women who are victims of domestic violence and people with addictions, who are often veterans.

That brings me to another point. Veterans have mental health issues, among others. People returning to civilian life suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. If we want to help people, the federal government must invest in health and make health transfers. There is a mental health epidemic in Quebec's hospitals. People are committing suicide in Quebec's emergency rooms. In the meantime, the federal government says that it will cut a cheque on condition that we do this and that. The federal government does not pay doctors, does not manage hospital, does not train nurses, but it wants to meddle in how the provinces manage their health systems. It is preposterous.

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his usual passion and for his service to his constituents.

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I wonder if he could comment on the delays in processing veterans' claims. This important issue has been raised by our veterans affairs critic, who is doing an extraordinary job. Although money has been invested to address this problem, it does not appear to have been resolved.

We are talking about homelessness, but when veterans are neglected, it causes them emotional and intellectual distress, which can lead to homelessness. We need to look after our people properly and with respect.

Mr. Denis Trudel: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is correct. It is a major problem.

The figures show that, in 2018, the wait time was 19 weeks for applications in English and 52 weeks for applications in French. That is outrageous.

In 2021, the wait time was on average 43 weeks for both anglophones and francophones. Service for anglophone veterans has gotten worse, and it has not gotten any better for francophones.

I cannot help but feel as though there is a certain level of systemic discrimination against francophones in this country.

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the amazing member for Edmonton Griesbach.

When I reflect upon this report, I remember back to 2019 when it was initially tabled. There was a sense of urgency from all parties in the House that this needed to be a priority for the government and action needed to be taken, so it is frustrating to be having this discussion again, knowing this report from 2019 was retabled by the committee, which had been waiting for a response from the government. The committee has now received that response. However, it still does not address the key issues. When we retabled this, I wrote clearly in the supplementary report that it has been a full three years, yet very little action has been taken on this critical issue.

I think also of how many veterans I have spoken to, how many veterans have come to the House of Commons to be a witness for us and how many veterans have sat at the table at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Many times they are asked if they would serve again, and they always say yes. What surprises me as well is how many of them, when asked if they would encourage their own children or relatives to serve, say yes.

When we look at the reality of it, about 5,000 veterans are homeless now, without a safe place to live and dealing with things most of us cannot imagine, and they are still there. Even though they are there, they would still serve our country again. Their commitment to service runs that deep. It is important we remember that when we have these discussions.

Their dedication to service is so profound, and our dedication to serve should, at the very least, match theirs. Our service to veterans, as parliamentarians, is to make sure they have the best services they can, that they are accessible and that they are not waiting a long, long time for them. We have to make sure that 5,000 veterans are not going to bed tonight without a safe home to live in.

When I think of this, I think of recommendation 3 of the report, which reads, “That Veterans Affairs Canada, in cooperation with Employment and Social Development Canada and organizations supporting academic research, continue its efforts to better understand veterans’ homelessness, taking into account the overrepresentation of women and Indigenous peoples.”

It is important to research this, but at the same time, we need to figure out what is going on and do actions. I talked earlier today about the work being done in London, Ontario, to collectively identify veterans in the community who are homeless and make sure they have a safe place to live. It is important we recognize this.

We know, sadly, that of those veterans who are homeless, the number of women and indigenous people in this population is really high, when all of us in this place know that are they are still a very small part of the forces who serve us. Why is that? We need to figure out why that is. We also need to acknowledge that sometimes these groups are marginalized groups within a larger group who are even more marginalized by our systems. It is important that research is done, and that we honour that.

I come back to something else I also mentioned earlier today, which is the fact the Auditor General, in their report, was very clear that Veterans Affairs Canada does not collect data in a way that allows it to identify where the problems are. When we have veterans who do not have a home, who are waiting for the services they need and falling through the cracks, and who feel a great deal of distrust for the ministry, the department and the people who work there, we also need to look at the fact that the data is not there to provide the information to correct the problem.

What we see continuously is money being poured in, but we do not know if that money is being spent effectively because we do not know where there are bottlenecks. We do not know where the blockages are that veterans just simply cannot get through. We do not know that, and that is on the government. It is on the government to fix this core problem.

● (1145)

I know that we can talk about a lot of exciting things that get people really upset, but having good data means better services to veterans. I am very firm that we cannot stop talking about how important this is because a lack of data means veterans are not getting the services they deserve.

Recommendation 4 specifically talks about a “partnership with other federal, provincial/territorial and municipal organizations concerned, and with the community agencies”. In my riding, I have 11 Legions across some of the smallest communities we will ever see. The Legions are cornerstones to those communities because they provide support and services, and they create a place where a community to get together.

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Those organizations want to do the work. We asked the government to take all of those stakeholders and make sure to work with them to implement an action plan, such as the national housing strategy, to actually get to the core and eradicate homelessness for veterans.

What we do know is that there are piecemeal investments under the national housing strategy in 2021. It really focuses on Edmonton and Ottawa, but it does not have any concrete plan to address this. That is a concern, and we know it can be done. Strategies can help veterans get into homes.

In fact, and I will say it again, on February 16, 2021, in London, Ontario they did just that. They did it. Built for Zero Canada, working with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness on the national effort to address the problem, monitors the progress of 12 participating cities. It endorsed London's claim that the city had the first Canadian community to attain the status of functional zero for veteran homelessness because the groups focused on the issue, gathered the relevant data, looked at community-focused solutions and did it.

This is a model that we could be implementing by working with communities, regions, organizations and municipalities to identify what is happening in their community and which veterans are falling through the cracks. This is important because veterans do not often complain if they are homeless. They are ashamed that they are homeless, as though it is their fault, and they do not step up to disclose it.

So many witnesses have come before us to say that often, when veterans are homeless, they will not disclose that they are veterans, so they do not even know how to connect them with those resources. They have shame and also a feeling that the department will not do anything for them. Those things need to be addressed. They need to be taken seriously, and we need to demonstrate for veterans that there are solutions and that, if they reach out for help, they are actually going to receive it.

Not too long ago, I had a family member come to speak to me about a veteran in their family. She is an indigenous woman. She spent many, many years serving this country, and now she is couch surfing. She is living on the edge because how she left was not a good way to leave. I do not have permission to share what happened to her, but it was not a good thing. She left in desperation for her own safety from the military.

Now she is sleeping on couches, and she has so much need, but no matter how much her family loves her and no matter how much they reach out to her, they cannot get her to ask for the services because she no longer trusts the system. We need to look at that. We need to own that in the House and stop pointing fingers. We need to start saying we are going to stop doing that and we are going to start serving veterans.

In closing, I want to talk about recommendation 7, "That Veterans Affairs Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police...sign a memorandum of understanding to make RCMP veterans eligible for the Veterans Emergency Fund under the same terms and conditions as Canadian Armed Forces veterans." We have heard from the president of the RCMP Veterans' Association that this has not gone

into place. However people have served this country, we have to show them that, on the other side of their service, they will be respected enough to get the support they deserve. I am here in the House asking for that to be a reality because veterans have served us. We had best serve them back.

● (1150)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the member for North Island—Powell River's intervention was quite insightful. She really hit the nail on the head with her comment toward the end which talked about how there are many veterans out there who just do not know that services are available to them. I think the government needs to play a stronger role, quite frankly, in getting in touch with these veterans.

I know that in my riding of Kingston and the Islands a few years ago, there was an effort one Sunday morning, which I believe was happening throughout the country, where we went out into our communities, specifically to the areas where we knew homeless people were living, to get in touch with veterans. For starters, it was to try to locate them and account for them, but it was also to help them become aware of the services that were available.

I wonder if the member could comment further on where she sees opportunities to reach out to veterans, in particular those who are not aware that services are available to them, so we can give them the services they deserve, and which the government should be providing them.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, one of the key things we have heard from veterans repeatedly is that the transition period moving from service into their role as veterans is fraught with problems. The information back and forth is fragmented. They often carry the large load of trying to figure out how to make the system work. Therefore, the orientation of what services are available is not clear and is not done the way they need.

When we think about serving people, one of the best and important things we can do, especially when we are in a seat of government, is to listen to people who go through those transition processes, hear where the problems are and fix them. It is not to blame veterans for not being able to ask for help, but to understand that we need to provide better help. That transition period is absolutely key. If the trust is not built there, then veterans will not feel comfortable to come forward to say they need assistance.

● (1155)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague.

The government is responsible for making the relevant information available to people leaving the Canadian Armed Forces. I very much enjoyed my colleague's answer.

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I would like to give her a few seconds or minutes to talk about a project in London, Ontario, that wiped homelessness off the face of the map. I am extremely curious. Who financed the project? How did it start? What organization is responsible?

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I did note the organization and what its name was earlier. What was so important is that the stakeholders and the municipality came together to say it was an issue they wanted to address. By bringing everyone together within that community, they identified I believe about 20 veterans in their area who were homeless. They then actively created strategies collectively.

One of the things we know, especially when we sit here in a federal seat, is that we are big and we cover a huge country, but local solutions make the most sense because local people know how to work collaboratively, so it is important that, as the federal level of government, we always look at ways we can support the people on the ground. If those resources are not given to those organizations, then the actions cannot be taken in a meaningful way.

I am glad London could do this, but I think it is very important that the federal government steps up, supports these kinds of programs and looks at models that work so we can do what we must do, which is get veterans into homes.

Ms. Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is tragic that the Liberal government has not responded. Although the Conservatives have moved this motion today, it was the former Conservative government that was responsible for cutting supports to veterans. Now we have a crisis where people who sacrificed of themselves are living on the streets. I know the NDP has offered solutions. I wonder if my hon. colleague could discuss some of those them.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, very briefly, the NDP has again recommended that we need more non-market housing. At the end of the day, what we need to deal with the housing crisis across the country is housing that is actually affordable, not defined by corporations but defined by people's incomes.

Mr. Blake Desjarlais (Edmonton Griesbach, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for a remarkable speech, one that hits on the very important aspects of today's debate.

Today, we are talking about veterans and it is always an honour for me to recognize the contributions of veterans and also the veterans who are present in the House. I want to thank them for their service.

What we are seeing across Canada today is truly deplorable. We are talking about homeless veterans, something that should never have been a topic in the House. It is to the extent that nearly 5,000 former serving members, who make up a part of about 630,000 veterans across the country, continue to live through this every day.

We are seeing veterans on the front lines of poverty. Whether it is my community of Edmonton—Griesbach or Powell River or Winnipeg, indigenous women and other vulnerable groups hit the intersection of this crisis. When we are talking about veterans, the barriers they feel are immense.

I want to highlight some of the history of veterans affairs in Canada and my own experience with advocacy for veterans in the Métis community.

For a long period of time, Métis people have contributed greatly to the Canadian Armed Forces at home and overseas. I am reminded of the stories that veterans shared with me in September 2019, when the government and the Prime Minister apologized for the mistreatment of Métis veterans in Regina.

I was present at that apology and what I heard was the recognition that indigenous veterans were left behind. They served in World War II. Whether it was the Cree code talkers or the expert snipers from indigenous communities, they put their lives on the line, even when Canada did not recognize them. They knew that the fight for justice and the fight for freedom was one that we all share and one that unites each and every one of us as Canadians.

It is deplorable to think that, during World War II, this country was able to manoeuvre and make what was financially impossible materially possible. We were able to house, feed and clothe over one million Canadians during the war. Today, we are talking about 5,000 veterans who do not have those means.

This is a true matter of our nation's dignity, the treatment of those who put their lives on the line, the treatment of those who sometimes go ignored for their service. Today must be a day when we recognize their sacrifices, not just during their service but during the time that comes afterward. We just heard the New Democratic critic of veterans affairs describe the importance of veterans and the issues that they are currently facing in transition.

When we think about the services that the government should be providing for veterans, we often think of the other groups that are doing that work, the groups that are filling the gaps for veterans, the groups that are continuing to feed, house and clothe with barely any resources. I think about the Veterans Association Food Bank of Edmonton, for example, which started as a food bank and today has grown into a larger mandate of supporting veterans. When I toured that food bank, I met with veterans who are proud of the service they have contributed to our country.

What they are not proud of is the fact that Veterans Affairs and the government will not provide them that same level of dignity. They are a remarkable people, working and volunteering on behalf of veterans for veterans, who are doing this work in my city right now, helping veterans access those programs where Veterans Affairs will not.

We must ensure that all veterans have that access. These programs that veterans have been unable to access are truly part and parcel of how we look toward a better future for veterans. When they do not work, it is the opposite. It shows these veterans that the door is closed, not open.

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● (1200)

When I think about the tremendous work of veterans and their own contributions to communities, I think about the folks in my community who are volunteering at homeless shelters, even though they themselves face that same crisis. These are men and women who are contributing and want to contribute, but they also need to have their government contribute. We have the means in Canada as one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

To all of my colleagues in the House, I know that each and every one of us is dedicated to the prosperity and betterment of veterans. This should not be a partisan issue. Each and every one of us can recount our own family members, friends and neighbours who have served, and some continue to serve. These barriers should not be present.

As I said in the beginning of my speech, in Canada, when we had less wealth, when we had fewer people even, we were able to house, feed and clothe one million Canadians. Today, we must fight poverty, which is the challenge that is facing veterans and Canadians from coast to coast. We can, in fact, make a contribution to veterans that eliminates poverty. We can, in fact, do the work that makes the financially impossible materially possible. I am confident that, with members of the House, if we can see beyond our differences for the betterment of all veterans in our country, we can, in fact, house 5,000 veterans, we can clothe those veterans and we can feed those veterans.

There is no amount of money that is too much to ensure that veterans and their families are taken care of, because what they are offering is far more than what our country could ever give back. They are offering their lives, their families and their time. It is a huge sacrifice and one we cannot take for granted, one to which Canadians owe a debt. We can, in fact, eliminate poverty for veterans. I know we can do this if we are able to see veterans as the truly remarkable people they are, and not just when they serve but in our communities. They are our neighbours, our community members and the people who show up at the Legion and help out when they are asked to. These are real people. They do not, like many others, deserve to be homeless.

Canada is one of the wealthiest countries in the world. I know that, with co-operation from each and every member of the House, we can, in fact, eliminate poverty and we can eliminate homelessness. What better way to start than by ensuring that our veterans are housed, fed and clothed.

On this day of our debate, I hope we can continue to hear, through the contributions of all of my colleagues, about the importance of veterans, and not just in our communities but across the country. I also hope to hear of members' commitment to work across party lines to eliminate the issues of transition that veterans face today, to see the nuanced division and intersection between indigenous veterans and women veterans and to see that we need to do more.

I am confident that, if we do that, we will not have to return to this place and debate again the fact that we have homeless veterans, which is a true tragedy in Canada and one that we can eliminate. We can eliminate poverty.

● (1205)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the member for Edmonton Griesbach that we should allow nothing to stand in our way to house, in particular, these 5,000 veterans who are homeless.

It would be very easy to put money to this, and I do not think anybody in the House would disagree with that. However, as indicated by the member for North Island—Powell River who spoke before the member, one of the real challenges has to do with getting in touch with these veterans who are homeless. Quite frankly, many of them do not know that the supports are there, and we do not know where many of them are physically located because they are homeless.

I wonder if the member could comment on the position that perhaps the government should be taking to get the word out there and to try to get in touch. Is there anything that we can do beyond putting money towards something, which I know everybody in the House would agree we should do?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, there are existing community organizations doing this work.

My hon. colleague for North Island—Powell River gave an example related to the elimination of veteran homelessness in London. We know that partnerships with local communities and municipalities can provide the data that is important in helping us identify those veterans, offer better supports and at times fund support programs that are already in place.

The Edmonton veterans association, for example, hosts peer nights, where veterans come together, share stories and participate together. We need to invest in these solutions.

● (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is very aware of the issues facing the French language. The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, our veterans affairs critic, has taken up the fight and has often spoken about the major inequities between francophone and anglophone veterans, including the fact that francophones' files are shelved and nothing is done about them.

I would like to know whether my colleague also condemns this, and whether he thinks it is acceptable for there to be two ways of doing things in this country, the fast way for anglophones and the slow way for francophones.

[*English*]

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for bringing this important advocacy to the attention of the House.

It is important that we understand that, often in Canada's history, francophones have been discriminated against not only in veterans affairs but often in other social programs for which they are eligible. This is part of a systemic problem not only in this place but also in local legislatures across the country, which continue to grapple with the promotion and protection of francophones.

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I am in solidarity with the member from the Bloc Québécois who is raising this important point. Francophone veterans do deserve the same level of respect and access to programs that they deserve.

Mr. Alex Ruff (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know the NDP member is close to CFB Edmonton. Could he elaborate on how big of a challenge homelessness for veterans is in his own riding?

Mr. Blake Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague not only for the question but for his service as well.

Indigenous women and other minority groups are often the ones seen in Edmonton Griesbach in tents and on the streets throughout the community. What we do not often see is that some of these people are veterans. Some of them do not want to come forward and self-identify as veterans because of the shame associated with their living conditions. However, that is not their fault. That is the fault of the system that failed them.

What we see is that when that transition period comes there is a massive drop-off. It is almost like going off a ledge, where they seem to plummet and not find the support they need.

There is a grassroots movement across Edmonton. We have the Edmonton veterans association that has picked up the pieces to identify, house, clothe, feed, provide peer support and unite these veterans with community.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Lac-Saint-Louis today.

Normally, I am very critical of the opposition, the Conservative Party in particular, moving motions of concurrence like this. I usually feel as though it is an opportunity to try to slow down government legislation, but I am grateful the opposition moved this today. It is very important that we have this discussion as we lead up to Remembrance Day.

Quite frankly, I have learned a lot sitting here this morning while listening to what other members have had to say. Any opportunity we have to further educate ourselves on the issues that veterans are facing, in particular as it relates to homelessness, are opportunities we should take. I am more than happy to have the opportunity to speak to this.

I have mentioned that we are approaching Remembrance Day. The Tuesday morning after Halloween, my six year old started talking about Christmas, as young children do as they move from one festive day to the next one. I made a point of saying, "Frankie, I think it is better if we talk about Remembrance Day for the next 11 days before we get to Christmas. He asked me what Remembrance Day was.

That gave me an opportunity to explain to him about the men and women who had gone out to various parts of the world to defend the values we hold so dear and to give us the quality of life we have. His eyes completely expanded as he was absorbing what I was saying. Obviously, a six year old cannot understand the realities of war, the complexities of global and foreign affairs, and the struggles our country has gone through to give us our incredible

quality of life. Any opportunity we have to talk about this important issue is one that we need to have inside and outside the chamber.

It was referenced by the veterans affairs parliamentary secretary that one in 60 Canadians are veterans. We should stop and reflect on the number of individuals who have come from our country, and currently reside in our country, who have given that incredible quality of life. He talked about his recent trip abroad and about the people in the countries that Canada helped liberate many years ago through different wars. In particular, I think he was talking about World War II.

I was immediately reminded of my own family. I literally would not be standing here today had not been for the men and women who fought for our country. My grandparents on my father's side came from Holland and my mother's came from Italy. They moved to Canada in the 1950s from their war-torn countries. My grandfather, up until he passed away in the mid-nineties, would tell the story of the Canadians who liberated Holland.

My grandfather and grandmother owned a corner store in Hilversum, which is about 20 minutes north of Amsterdam. When the Germans moved into Holland and started to occupy it, he had to hide, as many men did during that time, from the Germans every time they would come through the country looking for men to work in factories.

As the war dragged on and the Germans started to run out of people to work in these factories and as it was becoming more clear they were struggling, they would walk into houses. They would bang on the front doors of houses in Holland, walk in and take men who would often not return home. My grandfather told the story of how he would hide from the German soldiers, as many other men would, to avoid being ripped from their families.

One day, he came out of hiding to see Canadian soldiers walking in the streets of Hilversum, literally liberating his country that had been under German rule for three years, I believe, by that point. They were liberated by Canadian soldiers. It was at that point my grandfather said that was where he wanted to live, in a country whose individuals had travelled across the world to defend values and freedoms.

• (1215)

As a result, my grandparents packed up their family and left their war-torn country with literally nothing but the idea and the dream of having a better life. They travelled on a boat, and my dad still has the ticket from that boat, to Canada, where they eventually ended up in Kingston. My mother's story is not much different, just from another European country at the time. As a result, I am the product of the decisions made by both sides of my family that allow me to be here today and to be in Canada.

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I say this because when we talk about Canada being a country that promotes peace around the world, we quite often get caught up in this idea and lose sight of what that really means. We get caught up in thinking that it means people who stood in the chamber, debated in the chamber, created laws and policies and engaged in diplomatic foreign affairs throughout the generations before us somehow created Canada's incredible reputation. I would argue that this has very little to do with the politicians who were in this room and so much more to do with the men and women on the ground, even today, representing Canadian values.

When I was on the defence committee, I had the opportunity to travel to eastern Europe to study Operation Reassurance and Operation Unifier, and nothing moved me more on that trip than when we were sitting with the chair of the defence committee for Ukraine. He asked if we knew why the Canadian brigade had all these other countries lined up to be part of it. He said it was because those countries had the option of joining the brigades of the United Kingdom or the United States, but they were not interested as they wanted to be part of Canada's brigade.

When we talk about Canada's leadership throughout the world, it is not the leadership, in my opinion, that comes from this room; it is the leadership of our men and women and how they engage with people in other parts of the world.

I say all this to set the premise for how we should be taking care of these veterans when they come back from serving our country. The member for Barrie—Innisfil, in addition to others today, brought up Homes for Heroes. This is an organization specifically geared toward helping veterans find stable places to live so they are not homeless. As many members in the House have said, it is an absolute travesty that there are 5,000 homeless veterans in our country, which I did not know before I heard it in the debate today, after the incredible sacrifices they made for us.

Homes for Heroes is doing great work, and I understand the federal government has been helping to employ people to engage in growing this organization and making the operation successful. I am very familiar with the organization because it recently established a location in the city of Kingston to house veterans.

One of the biggest problems with housing veterans and finding and establishing communities, like what Homes for Heroes is striving for, is ensuring we have the right pieces of land to make that happen.

Unfortunately, because of decades of processes that have been put in place to rezone property, it can become quite cumbersome for organizations that are quite feeble in their operations and do not have the resources that larger developers might to properly go through the process of rezoning land to create villages like what Homes for Heroes is doing. The federal government needs to continue to explore with its provincial counterparts how to expedite that process. In Kingston, the provincial minister was able to say that the province was going to put an end to the process.

• (1220)

Mr. Richard Bragdon (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Speaker, we all in the House share a great respect and a tremendous debt of gratitude for all those who have served our country, who

have fought and paid the ultimate price for our freedoms, not only our veterans but their families that carry such a weight along with those who serve and make those big sacrifices.

One of the most tragic things that has emerged of late is about a veteran who was in crisis, experiencing tremendous trauma, and I am sure at a low point, needing help, reaching out for assistance, and was encouraged by a staff member of VAC to consider MAID as an option. That is a tragedy. This should never take place.

I would like to know what the government will do to address that and ensure safeguards are put in place so this never happens again.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I was unaware of this incident, although I have heard about it today in this debate. If I can accept what the member is saying to be factual, trusting that he has done his research, I will respond to that. I certainly do not believe it is anybody's business to discuss medical options with any individual other than the person's doctor and, in this case, somebody who is qualified to make comments to that end.

Do I believe that any staff member, as the member suggests, should be talking about such things? Absolutely not. It is absolutely horrendous if that is the case and there should certainly be an investigation into this by that individual's superior.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government has been setting targets for francophone immigration outside Quebec since 2004, but in all that time, it has never achieved those targets.

In its response to a committee report, the government admitted that there was racism within IRCC and, as a result, students from francophone African countries have been treated inequitably. In the matter before us today, it is pretty clear that francophone veterans are discriminated against compared to anglophone veterans.

Will the government admit, once and for all, that it does not care about the French fact in Canada?

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I will not admit to anything about which I am unaware of the details. However, absolutely nobody should be discriminated against in our country.

Routine Proceedings

In particular, when we talk about veterans, if there is one issue that all members of the House should be able to get behind is that the safety, security and supports for our veterans are of absolute paramount and we should spare no expense to ensure that is the case. We will always have different opinions as to how that should be done. I think we can work in a collaborative way to forge some kind of consensus on how we move forward with that.

To the member's question more specifically about discrimination, clearly I do not see a place for that. I do not condone it. I would certainly urge anybody who is in a position of authority to do something about that and look into it.

Ms. Lisa Marie Barron (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, even one veteran who is homeless is too many, yet we are here today debating and discussing the ways in which the government can move forward with solutions to ensure veterans are not homeless.

As a member of the Liberal government, what would the member propose should be changed today to ensure that veterans have barrier-free access to supports, so we are not leaving veterans on their own to sort this out, and that we are providing these supports for them.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, one thing the government should focus on actually comes from a comment I heard from a colleague of the member for North Island—Powell River. We need to do more to find out where homeless veterans are. The reality is that there are many homeless veterans out there, but we just do not know their physical location. We know they are unaware of a lot of the supports that exist.

I understand that we rely a lot on community and volunteer-based organizations to collect that data. I do not know the extent, personally, to which the government is collecting that data, but we need to work better at finding individuals who are homeless, veterans in particular, so they can be made aware of their supports.

The federal government, in my opinion, should be focusing on that in addition to everything else.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague on a fantastic speech, which I found very interesting, particularly the part about the history of his family and his parents.

Like all my colleagues here in the House of Commons, I am very thankful for what the members of the Canadian Armed Forces do for the well-being of everyone, the well-being of the country and peace in the world. Obviously, we are all deeply grateful for the sacrifices of these veterans, many of whom gave their lives to preserve, promote and protect our freedom and world peace.

I represent a community, Montreal's West Island, that has deep ties to the military history of this country and to veterans. It is not because we are better than others, but due instead to a very particular history in the area.

After the Second World War, there were a lot of veterans in the various cities and rural areas of the country. There were a lot of veterans in the Montreal area and many moved to the West Island.

Also, Ste. Anne's Veterans Hospital was built in 1917, if I am not mistaken. That hospital received veterans from the First World War who required medical care. The hospital still holds a prominent place in Montreal's West Island community.

The hospital was replaced by a new hospital in 1968, the highest building in the area. The building can be seen when you arrive on the island of Montreal. It can be seen from the village of Hudson on the road toward Montreal. That building, which is also a hospital, is well-known to everyone who lives on the West Island.

Attached to the original hospital was a centre reserved for those coming back from wars who were suffering from what is now called post-traumatic stress. That term was not used at the time. A lot of these people stayed on a type of campus attached to the veterans hospital, called Senneville Lodge. It no longer exists, as the hospital offers those services for veterans. In 2019, next to Senneville Lodge, the village of Senneville dedicated an extraordinary park on the Lac des Deux Montagnes now known as Souvenir Park. It is dedicated to our veterans, including those who spent much of their lives at Senneville Lodge or Ste. Anne's Veterans hospital.

On the weekend, a series of ceremonies will begin in my constituency to mark Remembrance Day. It will begin with an extraordinary ceremony that is repeated every year, which takes place at an exceptional site known as Heroes Park.

• (1230)

I would like to recognize the person who spearheaded the project, who had the vision to create that park. He is a friend and a fellow citizen, retired Major Richard Gratton. He served in Afghanistan and, when he returned, he worked for the Canadian Armed Forces at home. He held administrative positions. It is thanks to Major Gratton that we can mark Remembrance Day in Beaconsfield at Heroes Park, which pays tribute to the military and to all first responders, including law enforcement. The ceremonies begin on Saturday.

I would also like to mention that, although he is retired, Major Gratton works hard to help veterans, modern-day veterans, integrate. He works very hard for a foundation called The Trail.

The Trail's mission is to promote excellence by supporting veterans in crisis in Quebec and Canada. To date, the foundation has opened three service centres for veterans to help them in their transition and reintegration into society. There is a service centre in Mirabel, one in the Quebec City area and one in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce on the Island of Montreal. The foundation is currently working hard to open a shelter for veterans in transition on Montreal's West Island.

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The foundation is preparing a funding application under the veteran and family well-being fund, a program that has existed for some time but that was enhanced in budget 2021. The program works with community organizations.

Through that program, the government has been able to support groups like the Old Brewery Mission in Montreal, emergency transition services for veterans, the Home for Heroes Foundation, homeless shelters in Fredericton, the Good Shepherd Refuge Ministries in Toronto, Legacy Place, and many others.

I hope The Trail will be able to access the program's fund to carry out its extraordinary project of acquiring a shelter on Montreal's West Island.

Obviously, there is still a lot of progress to be made. That is why we have committees that conduct studies and make recommendations like the ones we are discussing this morning. This committee work sometimes leads to some very specific recommendations being made to the government. This gives the government the opportunity to create a road map to improve our country and, in this case, the services we provide to our veterans.

• (1235)

[*English*]

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the things my colleague mentioned was the committee, which I sit on, and the number of reports and recommendations. In this committee, we have reports from the ombudsman, the Parliamentary Budget Officer, our own committee and now the Auditor General, in addition to this report, which have all said the government has a failing record.

What is the point of having all these reports if the government is doing nothing about them? What is the government going to do?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, I am not a member of the government; I am a member of Parliament. I do not sit in cabinet. I share the objective of other members of Parliament, including those in the opposition, which is the goal of bringing attention to issues that the government needs to deal with.

I hope that through the debate we are having today and, yes, through the report, some good concrete action will come out. The government has many programs that are benefiting veterans, but as our Prime Minister has said, better is always possible. Governments can always do better and do more.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see my colleague's list of agencies that are helping seniors across Canada.

That being said, in Quebec City there is another organization: le Repos du soldat. It is requesting a parcel of land that belongs to the Department of National Defence, a department that gave land to an anglophone school in a city that is 97% francophone.

Why is an anglophone school in a francophone community getting preference over our veterans?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, my colleague raises a very interesting point.

Earlier I was talking about the Senneville Lodge, an asset belonging to Veterans Affairs Canada. A local association wanted to acquire the land in order to build seniors residences with a focus on veterans. However, there is a process to go through when the government wants to divest its assets. It is a rather objective and complex process.

In the case my colleague raises, I am not aware of how this unfolded. I am sorry, I cannot comment.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, earlier this year, I participated in a Vancouver Island motorcycle run for homeless vets, and the funds we raised were given to Cockrell House, Homes for Heroes and the Legion. I am just wondering if my colleague can offer some thoughts on why, with this problem and in this day and age, we are still relying on the efforts of individuals to raise funds to address this problem. Does he have any comments on that? This problem is so perennial but we are still relying on the efforts of individuals. With no resources of their own, they are trying to highlight this issue and do the work that governments should be doing.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, budget 2021 and budget 2022 did include some infusions of funding specifically to address the problem of homeless veterans, so yes, there is funding. I am sure there are areas where there could be more funding, but citizens step in even when there is ample government funding. We see it in the hospital sector, for example, where foundations are created because people want to help.

This is an important priority and it deserves a great level of government support.

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize the residents of the riding I represent, Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, for all the efforts they have put into Remembrance Day, which is coming upon us.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Yorkton—Melville.

There is no doubt in my mind that our military has a proud heritage, not only for service on the battlefield and for those times in peacekeeping, but also behind the scenes.

Many others in the House have shared their own personal stories of the exchange between Canadian military members and civilians, and I am reminded of my own mother, who was living in Scotland during World War II. She also interacted with Canadian soldiers who had travelled overseas. They had left their own homes and families and recognized the devastation in the war-torn country of Scotland, and they gave freely. They gave dolls, candy and food to those who were in need. This discussion about homelessness for veterans breaks my heart, as I know what Canadian soldiers have done on and off the battlefield.

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How then do we treat our veterans? Right now, the only word I can think of is “betrayal”. Just recently, our Canadian Armed Forces returned back from Afghanistan, and I think about the code and the honour they live by, and how it must be for them to know they left people in Afghanistan, interpreters and their families, and to feel that betrayal by their own country.

Our Canadian Armed Forces are under duress. Right now there is a housing crisis in the Canadian Armed Forces, and now we get a report about veterans who are homeless. As I said earlier, I am very passionate about this subject, and I am deeply wounded to be reading this report. There are 5,000 veterans who are homeless across this country, and that is just from this report that we have received. As we sit in this chamber, we get reports from the ombudsman; we get reports from our own Parliamentary Budget Office; we get reports from the committee and recently the Auditor General on top of this report, and it is clear this government has not done anything for veterans. It has failed veterans, according to the Auditor General.

I will read from a report on Veterans Affairs by the Auditor General.

[Veterans Affairs] actions did not reduce overall wait times for eligible veterans. The department was still a long way from meeting its service standard. Implementation of initiatives was slow. Data to measure improvements was lacking. Both the funding and almost half of the employees on the team responsible for processing applications were temporary. As a result, veterans waited too long to receive benefits to support their physical and mental health and their families’ overall well-being.

This was in a report from the Auditor General, and combined with all the other reports and the 5,000 veterans who are out on the street homeless, it is appalling. What is the government doing about this?

• (1245)

All we hear is about money being thrown at the problem, but no concrete solutions. I believe that politics is a performance-based industry, and if people do not perform, they should not be there. Seven years the government has been in power, and time and time again it has failed veterans and the existing military. The minister is asleep at the wheel right now. Leadership starts at the top. He should take ownership, take responsibility and start looking after our vets.

I could go on with quotes and I could go on with stats, but what good is it with a government that is not going to listen? This year so far, VAC has over \$921 million in lapsed funding. That is money that was set aside for VAC in the budget but was not used to support veterans. Money is not the problem. Someone has to pull their finger out here. Someone has to start getting the job done and start looking after our vets. There is a morale problem here, not only in the existing military but for people who have served.

We are on the verge of Remembrance Day, and when people take that moment of silence and bow their heads to think about the fallen soldiers, we need to think about those who have served and who are surrounding us now, and what we are doing for them. Money does not solve every problem. It is about getting the job done. It is about strong leadership, and it is about recognizing the problems.

I am very passionate about this. I am very upset about this subject. Again, I could rattle off statistics and numbers, but the consistency throughout this is that the government has failed its veterans. That is an exact quote from the Auditor General. What are we going to do? What does a committee do when it sits there and produces reports, and works together, as I do with my colleagues from the Bloc or from the NDP, across the aisle? It is a good committee; we have achieved a lot, but from there, nothing gets done. There is no recognition. Veterans are being failed time and time again.

I think about the soldiers who looked after my mother, who helped my grandmother, who fought alongside my grandfather in Holland to liberate a country that was not even theirs. They recognized that it was the right thing to do. The question I have to ask my colleagues is, what is the right thing to do for veterans? What is the right thing to do for our veterans? Who is going to lead the charge? Who is going to fix the problem?

Right now, the minister is asleep at the wheel, not doing his job. I am disappointed. Not only am I disappointed, but my fellow colleagues in the Conservative Party are disappointed. My colleagues in the committee are disappointed. Not only do we deserve better, but our veterans deserve better.

• (1250)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I cannot say there is a lot I agree with in the member's speech.

In my riding of Saint John—Rothesay, I was pleased that under the veterans connection to home program we announced over \$450,000 to identify and assist veterans.

I want to tell a little story about 2014, when I was not a politician and was really not involved in politics at all. I was watching one of the TV channels, and the then minister of veterans affairs, Mr. Fantino, had refused to meet with veterans on the Hill. I will never forget the response from those veterans. I dug a little deeper and found that was the government that cut call centres for veterans and made cuts on the backs of veterans.

Does the member opposite agree with what happened to veterans under the Conservative government?

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, again we go back in history here, with the Liberal government trying to paint its problems with the previous government and failing to take responsibility for the job it was elected to do.

The government that is in power has bragged about opening up offices, but the service has gotten worse. The wait times have increased. The number of issues that are brought forward has increased. The number of vets who are waiting to get served has increased.

The member should give me a real question.

• (1255)

Mr. Chris Lewis (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really appreciate my hon. colleague's compassion and his passion for this subject. I agree with basically everything he said in his speech.

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Would my colleague agree with me that a lot of the reason we cannot get more young men and women into our military is the lack of housing and the morale issue we face today? Is that not a certain driver of why we have such low rates?

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, sometimes, when I look at my hon. colleague, I feel like I am looking at myself.

Yes, the number one conversation I had at the 50th anniversary of the Snowbirds with some of the people who are presently serving was about the issues we are talking about when we are talking about the Canadian Armed Forces. I turned the question onto them, and I asked them what challenges they are facing. They said housing. Housing is one of the number one problems they are facing.

Governments do not build housing unless it is for the military, and it is not doing that. That is a big challenge that the government is facing and, again, doing nothing about.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Desilets (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague very much. I was very touched by his speech. It was one of his great speeches, and it is a real pleasure to work with him on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

I am reminded of something that happens every year. On November 11, we all go and lay wreaths and pay tribute to our veterans. Then the next day, we are back in the House, back in committee, trying to move things forward but not getting anywhere.

I am not saying that things were better or would be better under a Conservative government, but we have here a report with great recommendations and none of them have been implemented.

Would my colleague care to comment on that?

[English]

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, I would like to recognize my colleague and all his hard work and passion for getting good service. I will say that this committee would be better under a Conservative government, so I thank him for giving me that opportunity.

I know my colleague and I share the same feeling, because I shared it in my speech. We are disappointed. We are upset. We work so hard. We commit time to look after our veterans, and then nothing gets done. When we get reports back that nothing gets done, it feels like we are not being heard.

Those numbers, those vets, those stats are people. They are not getting the service.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, in a recent take-note debate on mental health, I spoke about our veterans, who have unique challenges that impact their well-being and mental wellness and that very few civilians face. They embody the emotional and mental toll of having been deployed to many theatres of war, sometimes for peacemaking or peacekeeping, where they and their comrades face peril, injury and death and where they participate in and witness violence that they cannot and do not want to begin to share with anyone outside of those who have also had that lived experience.

Too many have experienced mental, physical and sexual abuse from those they thought would be their mentors and have their backs no matter what. Many come home with physical and/or mental and emotional injuries after serving and they struggle to cope. They struggle on a whole other level as they start to realize they are failing in their relationships with their spouses and children. Many struggle with trying to fit into a civilian world, where, from their life experience and perspective, they have trouble finding their place.

Then there is a challenge that is so counterintuitive and disturbing to me that it grieves my heart and keeps me awake. It is the added injury that sanctuary trauma inflicts on so many of our veterans. Sanctuary trauma is what happens to the spirit and mind of veterans when they experience the failure of the government to fulfill its promise to take care of them and their families. This happens while they serve and put their lives on the line and when they choose to leave or retire or are released due to injuries that, in the mind of their superiors, prevent them from any form of continued service in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Having served now for seven years on the veterans affairs standing committee under multiple ministers and ombudsmen, everything from homelessness and mental wellness to seamless transition and the growing backlogs has been studied multiple times in different ways. Recommendations on top of recommendations have been made in reports that sometimes do not get the proper response from the government.

The recent report from the Auditor General reinforces the need for VAC to have clear paths and metrics to determine its outcomes. The bureaucracy is broken. Yes, buckets of money have been announced for veterans, but the processes in place are not capable of getting it out the door. Veteran Affairs Canada is broken, and veterans and their families are experiencing unprecedented levels of sanctuary trauma because of that.

Last night, I reached out to four individuals in very different veterans organizations that I deeply appreciate and that are part of those that are making a difference in combatting veteran homelessness.

Stephen Beardwood of Veterans House Charity said this to me:

If we only treat the symptoms but not the cause, we will have rows of housing with full bank accounts and no one spending the money or living in the accommodations. We have missed an incredible opportunity to change what causes homelessness. We need to change our approach. We must first start by greeting humanity with humanity, not bureaucracy and political solutions. I am hopeful one day soon we will embrace change as an opportunity to grow." He says in the end, "Imagine if instead of wading into the stream daily to rescue drowning victims, we instead went upstream and kept them from falling in."

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Alan Mulawyshyn, the deputy executive director of Veterans' House Canada, is actually in Toronto today at a three-day Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness conference, where they are having a veteran homelessness breakout sessions stream for the very first time. His words for me today were to remind Parliament of its all-party motion of June 2019, which set the goal to both prevent and end veteran homelessness in Canada by 2025.

Debbie Lowther, the CEO and co-founder of VETS Canada, emailed me last night to say:

[A]ll levels of government must come together in a non-partisan way and commit to addressing Veterans' homelessness. It's not enough to talk about the issue; we need action, not words. And we don't need more research. A big step in the right direction would be to provide sufficient funding to those on the front lines trying not only to confront the problem but to prevent it. Policymakers should consult these groups and Veterans with lived experience to ascertain the greatest needs. And listen to what they are told. The problem will only worsen due to the nationwide housing crisis and the rising cost of living.

Organizations such as VETS Canada are no longer recognized as specialized service providers according to the Auditor General's report. I cannot even understand this. I know Deb and VETS Canada well, and I cannot comprehend any good reason why they are not valued and validated by VAC.

• (1300)

Like the United States, it is time for Veterans Affairs Canada to have a catalogue listed of all of these amazing veteran-centric organizations, with veterans helping other veterans, so that veterans can reach out. They will choose the ones they know are the most effective in this country.

David Howard, president and CEO of Homes for Heroes Foundation, told me, "[D]eveloping solutions needs to come through partnerships between the municipal, the provincial and federal governments and at the same time private businesses and charity organizations like Homes For Heroes." He said, as we have heard today, that the Senate published a report stating there were 5,000 veterans experiencing homelessness across Canada, but he believes the number is closer to 10,000. I have to agree, because I am becoming more and more aware of the many homeless veterans in my province alone who are not getting the care they need.

He says traditionally our veterans do not self-identify. They are proud and are not using these services because they believe they are for women and children. This is more than just homelessness. It is veterans who are living rough, living in the woods and couch surfing.

He also says that a number of our vets are struggling to transition back to civilian life, and the Homes For Heroes program builds tiny home villages with wraparound social supports to address the problem. That means they are coming off the streets into a home, working with social workers and working on the issues that put them on the streets in the first place, and now they are finding a sense of belonging. They then transition out of the program, with the majority of them working full time, and move to permanent housing, making room for more veterans.

He says, "We are fortunate to have the support of Veterans Affairs, as they are a partner in supplying funding for our social workers." CMHC is a partner and is providing funding for builds, but

more is needed. He goes on to say, "I've been involved supporting our veterans for 25 years and we have an opportunity to eliminate the issue, but every day that goes by, the problem gets worse, and action is needed immediately."

He says it is a struggle to convince municipal and provincial governments to grant them land access for their projects, and also says they are struggling to find funds at the federal level, as the current government has not implemented housing for homeless veterans in its mandate. It is cheaper to house our veterans and have them work with social workers to move on and transition back to civilian life than it is to have these heroes, who stood on guard for us, living on the streets.

I will end my intervention today by reiterating what I believe Stephen, Alan, Debbie and David have said.

Imagine if instead of wading into the stream daily to rescue drowning victims, we went upstream and kept them from falling in. Who is serving whom and when? The government is not preventing them from falling in. The broken processes are pushing them in. The intentions expressed in the all-party motion of June 2019, which set the goal to both prevent and end veterans homelessness in Canada by 2025, must be honoured. All levels of government must work together in step with private businesses and charities to succeed.

In the case of the federal government's direct role right now, right here, it has a duty to consult, listen and implement what it hears from the lived experience of veterans' organizations, which veterans and their families are trusting, by providing sufficient funding that empowers them to do the work that, quite honestly, I do not believe and it clearly appears government cannot accomplish directly. It has a duty to consult, listen and respond to the lived experience of individual veterans and serving members. It has a duty to end the sanctuary trauma that has become increasingly harmful to our veterans over these last seven years.

I hear over and over again that we have the highest level of demoralization there has ever been in our Canadian Forces. There is a lack of willingness to even enlist, and veterans are being encouraged to consider options other than care. One comment was made in committee that they can access MAID in 90 days, but it is taking them over 265 days to get the care they need.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Louise Chabot (Thérèse-De Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech and for her years of work on the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

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I have been wondering about something and am hoping my colleague can enlighten me. Members sit on committees whose job it is to report to the government. We take the time to hear from witnesses and document situations. How is it that a report from 2019 that contains what I believe are very important recommendations can be left on a shelf to gather dust and now members are shaking their heads about how there are apparently some 5,000 homeless veterans in Canada?

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, as a new member of Parliament in 2016, I was dumbfounded when I went to the veterans affairs standing committee for the first time. A new report had been created in 2014 along those same lines, with all kinds of recommendations agreed to by the entire committee, yet there we were considering to restudy those same issues, and we actually did. I said that I was new but could not understand why we were not taking up the previous reports, looking at what recommendations the government agreed to, studying where they were at and why they were or were not accomplished, and moving forward with them.

I agree with the member that there is a lot of frustration when we study a number of these things over and over again. We hear the right answers from stakeholders and veterans organizations on these issues, but somehow they are not getting through.

• (1310)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member Yorkton—Melville for her passion for veterans. She has displayed that at committee for a number of years. I think we all are looking forward to getting back to our ridings and participating in Remembrance Day events next Friday, as I certainly am, and attending as many as possible throughout the day to honour our veterans, which we truly need to do and which the government has failed to do.

The member mentioned that she questioned why we see report after report but no action. It reminds me of one of the first reports I came across at the fisheries committee. Something was promised decades ago and was promised again a decade later, and the response from the department was that it would develop a plan to develop plans. That sounds like the government, which simply cannot even plan to put a plan together. I would like to hear the member's comments on that.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Madam Speaker, the member is basically echoing what we heard from the Auditor General regarding where the current government is in its ability to manage the business of providing for our veterans. Its systems are such that it does not know what is happening and where. Even when it has tried to follow something, it has not put the right metrics in place to truly determine what is happening, and I appreciate that. It is part of why I say the government has a role here, a very important role, but there are areas where I believe small businesses, charities and veteran-centric organizations, which truly understand the dynamics, are the ones we should be empowering to do this work.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is not enough time, so we will go to the vote. The question is on the motion.

[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.

The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

[English]

Mr. Alex Ruff: Madam Speaker, I respectfully request a recorded vote.

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

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PETITIONS

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have two petitions to table in the House today.

In the first petition, the undersigned recognize that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has been signed by 86 countries and ratified by 66 but not by Canada. They state that as a non-nuclear state, Canada is in the best position to comply with the articles of the TPNW and guide its allies and other nations toward a world free from nuclear weapons.

Therefore, they are calling upon the Government of Canada to sign and commit to ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to urge allies and other nations to follow suit.

• (1315)

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, in the second petition I have, the undersigned recognize that companies based in Canada are contributing to human rights abuses and environmental damage around the world. The people who protect against these abuses and defend their rights are often harassed, attacked or killed. Indigenous people, women and marginalized groups are especially under threat, and Canada encourages but does not require companies to prevent such harms in their global operations and supply chains.

The petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to adopt Bill C-262, which is an example of human rights and environmental due diligence legislation that would require companies to prevent adverse human rights impacts, require them to do their due diligence and require meaningful consequences for companies that fail to carry this out and report on adequate due diligence.

I am pleased to table both of these petitions today.

*Routine Proceedings***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 768 to 770 and 772.

[Text]

Question No. 768—**Mr. Damien C. Kurek:**

With regard to the statement from the Canada Border Services Agency that approximately 10,200 travellers received quarantine notifications in error due to a glitch with the ArriveCAN application: how will the government be compensating individuals who suffered damages, either financial or otherwise, as a result of being a victim of this ArriveCAN glitch and were, as a result of the error, forced to quarantine?

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in July 2022, the CBSA became aware of a notification glitch with the ArriveCAN application. Some travellers, despite having submitted all the required information and proof of vaccination using the ArriveCAN app, received automated quarantine notifications in error.

A technical solution was identified and implemented by the CBSA on July 21, 2022. CBSA provided a list to the Public Health Agency of Canada, who notified all affected travellers.

Fully vaccinated travellers who completed ArriveCAN and received quarantine notifications in error were encouraged to answer any phone calls they received from the Government of Canada, and provide factual answers and/or follow the recommendations of any Government of Canada official with whom they spoke. Travellers who believed they might not have to complete the requirements and were receiving ArriveCAN notifications were asked to contact the Government of Canada directly via the “technical and registration issues for ArriveCAN” web form and follow the instructions provided.

The CBSA has not received any formal request for compensation from travellers affected by the glitch. Such complaints will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Question No. 769—**Mr. Frank Caputo:**

With regard to the light armoured vehicles (LAV) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF): (a) what is the total number of LAV3 Kodiak that the CAF has which are (i) operational or in service, (ii) decommissioned, (iii) other, broken down by status; (b) what is the breakdown of where the LAV3 Kodiak are located; and (c) for each of the LAV3 Kodiak that have been decommissioned, (i) when was it decommissioned, (ii) where is it located?

Mr. Bryan May (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Defence conducted a search of its records and found that it does not currently have any LAV III, Kodiaks, that are operational, in service or decommissioned. The majority of the LAV III inventory was converted into LAV 6.0 by General Dynamics Land Systems—Canada, and there have been no resources applied against the remaining LAV III fleet for several years.

Of the 651 LAV III originally procured, the vast majority have been converted and/or consumed as part of armoured vehicle upgrade programs. Specifically, 550 were used for LAV upgrades, five for the air support coordination and control modernization project, and 66 for the LAV reconnaissance and surveillance systems.

The remaining 30 LAV III were to be declared surplus. These vehicles are awaiting sale or disposal and are currently housed at 25 Canadian Forces supply depot in Montreal. Their status is as follows: Three turreted LAV III are planned as artifacts and/or museum pieces. Twenty-seven LAV III have no armaments. As part of the LAV III upgrade project, turrets have been removed from these vehicles.

Question No. 770—**Mr. John Williamson:**

With regard to the \$49.2 billion in total funds approved for loans and expansion under the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA): (a) what is the (i) number, (ii) dollar amount, of CEBA loans that the government projected would have to be written off for bad debt or other reasons, such as fraud; (b) what is the (i) number, (ii) dollar amount, of CEBA loans that the government budgeted would have to be written off for bad debt or other reasons, such as fraud; (c) in what published document, if any, and on what date, was the dollar amount in (b) made public; (d) what is the (i) number, (ii) dollar value, of CEBA loans that have been written off to date; and (e) what is the (i) number, (ii) dollar value, of CEBA loans that the government projects will be written off in the future, but have not yet been written off?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to part (a) of the question, a specific number of loans was not projected. However, the dollar amount is \$2.4 billion. With respect to part (b), Export Development Canada is not responsible for the budgeting of this program. Regarding part (c), the dollar amount projected to be written off was not published.

Regarding part (d), the specific number of loans written off to date is not available. The dollar value of loans written off to date is \$1.3 million. Financial Institutions administer the program and can only write off, that is, cease collection activities and report to us, if the loan is to a borrowing customer and the financial institution is writing off some or all of its own loan. With respect to part (e), a specific number of loans was not projected. However, the dollar amount was \$2.4 billion.

Question No. 772—**Mr. Earl Dreeshen:**

With regard to the backlog at Transport Canada in processing aviation medical certifications: (a) what is the current average processing time for each of the four categories of aviation medical certification; and (b) what is the government's timeline for when the backlog will be over and the processing time will return to normal (between 30 and 40 days), broken down by each of the four categories?

Hon. Omar Alghabra (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regarding part (a) of the question, all Canadian pilots, air traffic controllers and flight engineers require valid Transport Canada aviation medical certificates in order to exercise the privileges of their licenses, permits or ratings.

Different categories of aviation medical certificates are required for different types of aviation activities: category 1, commercial pilot; category 2, air traffic controller; category 3, private pilot; and category 4, student pilot, recreational pilot or glider pilot.

Routine Proceedings

Transport Canada processes applications for category 1, category 2 and category 3 aviation medical certificates. These applications require applicants to undergo medical examinations by civil aviation medical examiners, who are physicians appointed to perform aviation medical examinations on behalf of the Minister of Transport.

Category 4 aviation medical certificates are generally submitted medical declarations directly to Transport Canada licensing for issuance of a category 4 medical certificate, without the need for a civil aviation medical examiner examination. The service delivery target for category 4 aviation medical certificates is 40 business days and there is no current backlog.

Transport Canada processes approximately 60,000 aviation medical certificate applications annually. Since March 2022, applications have increased from approximately 5,000 to 6,000 per month, due to increased aviation activity as the pandemic measures have eased.

Except for prioritizing some applications for the preservation of essential aviation services, including aviation training, the department manages category 1, 2 and 3 applications with the same service delivery target and in the same processing stream.

The service delivery target for new, uncomplicated aviation medical certificate applications is 40 business days after receipt by the department. The 40-business day service delivery target does not apply to incomplete or medically complex applications for which additional medical information is required. Applicants may be required to seek additional physician reports, tests or investigations within the provincial and territorial health care systems, where the provision of direct patient care may be prioritized over Transport Canada regulatory medicine requirements, thereby introducing delays.

With respect to part (b), throughout the pandemic, the department did not discontinue service delivery at any time and was a global aviation leader in putting measures into place to ensure the continued provision of aviation medical certificates.

However, despite the department's uninterrupted operations, a backlog of applications did develop during the pandemic. Important factors that contributed to the backlog include pre-existing process inefficiencies in a paper-based system, delays in letter mail delivery and staff losses, including key physicians and administrative staff, that were challenging to replace in a labour environment in high demand for medical professionals. It is worth noting that the backlog is not distributed uniformly across Canada, with some regions experiencing very little or no backlog, and other regions experiencing greater backlog.

Although it is not possible to provide a definitive timeline for when the backlog will be eliminated, Transport Canada is working to identify and process applications that were delayed and has hired additional physicians and administrative staff to increase file processing capacity.

Furthermore, since the start of the pandemic, the department has undertaken major modernization efforts, including successful initiatives to streamline and digitize its processes. For instance, before the pandemic, fewer than 5% of applications were received digital-

ly and, currently, more than 90% of applications are received digitally. This eliminates delays in the postal system and time-consuming paper handling by departmental staff.

With respect to the status of Transport Canada service delivery as of September 2022, for every 10 applicants, on average, seven out of 10, or 70%, receive immediate service delivery. These are medically uncomplicated renewal applicants whose existing medical certificates are renewed in-office by their civil aviation medical examiners. Two out of 10, or 20%, receive service delivery within 40 business days. These are complete and uncomplicated applications for new medical certificates, or uncomplicated renewal applications for medical certificates not eligible for civil aviation medical examiner renewal in-office. Finally, one out of 10, or 10%, receive service delivery beyond 40 business days. These include incomplete or medically complex applications for which additional medical information is required in order to complete the assessments. In some cases, these applicants may have disqualifying medical conditions, and their assessments may be delayed long term awaiting the resolution or stabilization of a medical condition, or renewal applications for medical certificates not eligible for civil aviation medical examiner renewal in-office.

Transport Canada continues to strive to provide timely aviation medical certification, with the majority of aviation medical certificate applicants currently receiving service within the 40-business day timeline.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Madam Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 766, 767, 771, 773 and 774 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Text]

Question No. 766—**Mr. Gérard Deltell**:

With regard to government measures related to the removal of unexploded explosive ordnance (UXO) in the Lac Saint-Pierre region: (a) which vendors have been awarded contracts related to the removal of UXO in the region since 2019; (b) what are the details of each contract in (a), including, for each, (i) the vendor, (ii) the value, (iii) the start and end dates, (iv) whether the contract was sole-sourced or awarded through a competitive bidding process, (v) the description of goods or services provided through contract; (c) for each contract in (b), how many UXOs in the region have actually been removed, broken down by year; (d) what are the projections related to the number of UXOs which will be removed by each vendor in (b), broken down by year between now and the end of the contract; (e) for each contract in (b), which was awarded through a competitive bidding process, how many vendors submitted bids; (f) does the government plan to award further contracts related to the UXO removal in the region, and, if so, what are the details of the plan; and (g) for each contract, what is the work schedule, broken down by month, including both work that has been completed to date and work that will be completed in the future?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 767—**Mr. Eric Duncan**:

With regard to fines issued related to violations of the government's restrictions and measures put in place in response to COVID-19 (ArriveCAN, quarantine requirements, etc.): (a) what is the total (i) number, (ii) value, of fines issued each month since January 1, 2022; (b) what is the breakdown of the fines in (a) by (i) province or territory, (ii) type of offence or violation, (iii) entity which issued the fine, (iv) amount of fine, (v) point of entry (if applicable); and (c) of the fines in (a), what is the (i) number, (ii) value, of amounts which have actually been paid or collected?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 771—**Mr. John Williamson**:

With regard to fines issued by Transport Canada to Canadian Coast Guard ships and other vessels owned by the government, since 2016: what are the details of each instance, including (i) the date, (ii) the type of vessel, (iii) the summary of the incident or infraction, (iv) the location of the incident or infraction, (v) the amount of fine, (vi) who paid the fine and whether the fine was paid out of personal or public funds?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 773—**Mr. Earl Dreeshen**:

With regard to the government's Net-Zero Challenge program: (a) what is the annual amount budgeted towards administering the program; (b) what is the breakdown of (a) by line item or type of expense; (c) what is the number of employees or full-time equivalents assigned to work on the program; and (d) what is the breakdown of (c) by employee classification level (AS-07, EX-01, etc.)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 774—**Mr. John Nater**:

With regard to spending by Canadian Heritage on Canada Day festivities on Parliament Hill and in the National Capital Region since 2010: what was the total amount (i) allocated, (ii) spent, on the festivities, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[English]

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND REVIEW COMMISSION ACT

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.) moved that Bill C-20, An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am honoured to open up the debate on second reading of Bill C-20, an act establishing the public complaints and review commission and amending certain acts and statutory instruments.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for their important review of systemic racism in the enforcement of the act.

[English]

By creating a new public complaints and review commission, the bill would provide new tools to ensure transparency and accountability of the institutions Canadians rely on to keep them safe, to keep them safe in their communities through the work of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and to keep them safe by protecting our international borders through the work of the Canada Border Services Agency. Canadians depend on these public safety organizations, but, at the same time, want assurances that these organizations will use the powers that have been entrusted to them responsibly.

Canadians have a right to consistent, fair and equal treatment when interacting with RCMP and CBSA officers. If members are not acting appropriately, Canadians naturally want and deserve assurances of a thorough review of these actions and consequences for any officer who engages in misconduct.

[Translation]

This is a fundamental principle of our democracy.

[English]

Our democracy depends on the principle of trust and confidence in our institutions, including law enforcement institutions. Independent civilian review overseeing is an essential element to that principle. This bill underscores it by creating an independent body that will strengthen transparency and autonomy through the independent review exercises of this new body.

Independence assures that Canadians can have their concerns taken seriously. The bill also underscores that principle. That is why this is stand-alone legislation rather than simply amending either the RCMP or CBSA Acts.

Government Orders

Currently, under the RCMP Act, an independent review and redress process is provided for by the RCMP through the CRCC, or Civilian Review and Complaints Commission. Current cases under the CRCC will be continued under the public complaints and review commission, or the PCRC, under the bill before us. The CBSA, on the other hand, currently has no independent review and redress process.

[*Translation*]

It is subject to review by various independent boards, tribunals and courts.

[*English*]

Without a dedicated review body, there is no avenue for independent investigation or review of public complaints against the CBSA.

The government has tried twice previously to address this shortfall by creating a review body for the CBSA. Some colleagues will recall that in 2019, our government introduced Bill C-98 and then in 2020, Bill C-3. Those pieces of proposed legislation sought to add CBSA review to the mandate of the existing CRCC, but both died on the Order Paper.

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

This issue has remained a priority for our government.

[*English*]

The 2020 Speech from the Throne included it in our agenda. The creation of a review body for the CBSA was of top priority and a component of the mandate that the Prime Minister gave to me when I took on this role in December of 2021.

[*Translation*]

It is time to give Canadians the accountability they deserve.

[*English*]

In the bill before us, the CRCC would be replaced by the new public complaints and review commission, which would continue to review the RCMP and would also become the independent review body for complaints concerning the CBSA.

The bill contains several mechanisms that would strengthen accountability beyond what has been available under the current CRCC for the RCMP. After engaging and listening to Canadians across the country, we have made significant reforms to the regimes proposed under Bill C-98 and Bill C-3 previously. We listened and we acted.

[*Translation*]

Therefore, in addition to creating a stand-alone law, other changes have been made.

[*English*]

This would subject the RCMP and CBSA to codified timelines. We heard complaints from Canadians regarding the RCMP's, at times, delayed response to reports from the CRCC. This time around, we are getting it right. The RCMP and the CBSA will have six months to respond to the PCRC's interim reports. They must al-

so respond to certain reviews and recommendations of the PCRC within 60 days.

Second, the RCMP and the CBSA will be required to report annually to this office, the Minister of Public Safety, on their progress in implementing PCRC recommendations.

The third major change responds to a mandate the Prime Minister gave to me to combat systemic racism and discrimination in the criminal justice system, and advancing reconciliation with indigenous peoples. This is a critically important priority, especially at this time in our history.

Over the past number of years, in Canada and around the world, we have had necessary conversations about the presence and existence of systemic racism in law enforcement about the disproportionate mistreatment of Black, racialized and indigenous peoples across the country. It is high time that we act.

[*Translation*]

It is vitally important that this review system shed light on how to address these issues more fully.

[*English*]

Under the bill before us, the PCRC would collect and publish de-segregated, race-based data on complainants in consultation with the RCMP and the CBSA.

I want to thank the chairperson of the CRCC, Michelaine Lahaie, and her colleagues for their advice and their vision on how the review process can become an essential tool to help not only understand systemic racism, but to eradicate it once and for all.

The fourth major change introduced in the bill would provide the PCRC with a public education and information mandate. The PCRC would implement programs to increase public knowledge and awareness of the PCRC's mandate and the right to redress.

Finally, the bill would address a gap in the current accountability and transparency regime involving how the CBSA responds to incidents of a serious nature.

[*Translation*]

These incidents can result in death or serious injury or violations of federal or provincial law.

[*English*]

The CBSA currently conducts its own internal reviews of such matters, but the bill before us would amend the CBSA Act so that the CBSA would be obligated to conduct such reviews. It would also need to notify both the PCRC and the police of appropriate jurisdiction.

The CBSA would also be required to provide the PCRC with reports and other information of serious incidents. The PCRC would have the authority to send an observer to assess the impartiality of these internal investigations. As part of its annual report to this office, the PCRC would also include the number, types and outcomes of serious incident allegations.

Taken together, these five changes represent a major step forward in the accountability and transparency mechanisms governing both the RCMP and the CBSA. The PCRC will be given the tools that it needs to help balance Canada's public safety and security priorities, as well as respect for the rights of the individuals with which they intersect.

To support the establishment of the commission, the government is investing \$112.3 million over six years and \$19.4 million ongoing. By creating an enhanced independent review body, the public complaints and review commission will help assure Canadians that they can continue to expect consistent, fair and equal treatment under the law when receiving services from the RCMP and the CBSA.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

I urge all hon. members of the House to join me in supporting this important bill.

[*English*]

This is so Canada can assuage Canadians' concerns by creating greater transparency, oversight, and trust and confidence in our law institutions.

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Minister of Public Safety's bringing forward this important bill. It is critical that we have oversight bodies to hold those who hold power in our country accountable, notably in this bill the RCMP and the CBSA.

Recently, we have been talking a lot about holding the RCMP accountable, particularly at the public safety committee. Recently in the *Globe and Mail*, certain journalists have talked about how our commissioner of the RCMP was texting the commissioner of the OPP concerning using applications on their phones that would not store deleted messages. To me, this seems like the commissioner was trying to avoid accountability for her communications on the Emergencies Act invocation.

I wonder if this bill would do anything to hold the RCMP commissioner accountable for trying to hide any evidence and if the Minister of Public Safety is concerned about the commissioner's looking to use applications that would permanently delete text messages that could be used as evidence in the Emergencies Act invocation.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her work on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. I am proud to be part of a government that believes in transparency.

The commissioner of the RCMP's testimony repeatedly before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, other committees and her upcoming appearance before the Public

Government Orders

Order Emergency Commission is a vehicle to ensure that we are shining a light so there can be accountability when it comes to not only law enforcement's role, but, indeed, to the government's role with regard to our interactions when it comes to upholding public safety.

At the same time, I want to encourage my colleague and all the members of her Conservative caucus to support the bill, if my colleague believes in transparency and accountability and she sees the work we have put into Bill C-20, which would set up enhanced rigour around civilian review so there can be accountability for which she advocates. By supporting the bill, we are taking a step in that direction, so all Canadians can have trust and confidence in their institutions, including in the RCMP.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for honouring his commitment to bring Bill C-20 before the House. This is an important debate.

My riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford is policed entirely by the RCMP. I do enjoy good relations with them, but it is no secret that the force as a whole has some major problems. This has been detailed in the public safety committee's report on systemic racism in policing.

We know, particularly, the problems indigenous people have had with the RCMP. The actions of the community-industry response group of the B.C. RCMP have been well documented with respect to the types of tactics used against indigenous protesters. Therefore, it is important that we add this layer of accountability and transparency, with legislative timelines for review.

However, while I do believe that report influenced a lot of what we see in Bill C-20, I want to know how the minister is going to work to include indigenous oversight on this review body and how he is going to include indigenous investigators and decision-makers, so they are a part of this process and truly walking that path of reconciliation to involve them in an issue that affects them more than most Canadians combined.

• (1330)

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's concerns that while we enhance civilian review for the RCMP, we are also walking the path of reconciliation. I want to assure him that, as part of my broader mandate, we are taking concrete steps to diversify through better recruitment and retention of indigenous peoples within the RCMP, within the CBSA and within all frontline agencies that work within the public safety community, so indigenous peoples see themselves reflected in the institutions that are there to keep them safe. As my colleague will know, we are also making huge strides when it comes to stabilizing and enhancing first nations and indigenous policing right across the country.

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He will know that recently we worked with our colleagues in Alberta to set the foundational framework to bring back a Siksika Nation police service. We recently have worked with our colleagues in Saskatchewan to put in place the money that is required to invest in similar steps taken for the Prince Albert, including the James Smith Cree Nation community should it choose to do that, so that we see more indigenous-led policing initiatives across the country. We have also recently created the position of a Correctional Services deputy commissioner for indigenous affairs. There is so much work that we still need to do.

I look forward to working with my colleague when it comes to reconciliation and public safety.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, two questions in a row is a rare occurrence, and I will take advantage of it.

I would like to ask the minister about another part of Bill C-20. The text of the legislation would allow provincial ministers and the federal Minister of Public Safety to initiate investigations. As parliamentarians, we are frequently made aware, not only by our constituents but also at committee, of certain transgressions that may be attributed to both the CBSA and the RCMP.

I would ask the hon. minister if he would be open to amendments at committee that would allow parliamentarians and committee bodies to ask the commission to investigate both the RCMP and CBSA because of information we may have received.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Madam Chair, as I am inclined to say whenever it comes to questions of working with committees and their independent study of bills such as this one, I will always keep an open mind. However, I want to underscore that the focus of this legislation is, of course, to give Canadians greater access when they have concerns about the conduct or potential misconduct of the RCMP and, I do want to highlight, the CBSA. This is one of the major vacuums this bill addresses.

Right now, as the law exists, there is no independent civilian review of the Canada Border Services Agency. In many conversations with communities across this country, including ethnic communities, religious communities, racialized communities and indigenous peoples, on their interactions with the CBSA, they have called for this legislation.

To the credit of the CBSA, it has also called for this legislation, and to the credit of the CBSA and the president of the CBSA, they embrace this legislation and understand that we need to continue to push forward with reforms. They understand that those reforms have to be done in conjunction with civilian review, so we can enhance transparency and accountability, as an extension of the public confidence we need to have in our institutions.

Of course, I do look forward to continuing a dialogue with my colleague on the work of the committee as well.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Madam Speaker, I think I am setting a record here in the House of Commons with three questions in a row for the minister.

I am glad the minister mentioned the CBSA, because as many people would know, there have been at least 16 deaths in CBSA custody since the year 2000. I would like the minister to clarify

how exactly we are going to hold the CBSA to account for these deaths in the past. I would also like to know if he has any words to the families, both here in Canada and abroad, who have had family members die in CBSA custody. It is critical that the minister stand in this place to underline how important it is that we hold this particular agency to account, given that very sorry and dismal track record.

Hon. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, of course, I would begin by extending my sympathies and condolences to the families who lost loved ones while they were in custody or in any interaction with law enforcement. This is one of the reasons it is so important that we put this legislation forward, because, as a result, any individual who has a concern about the conduct of the RCMP or again, for the first time, the CBSA, would have a tangible, practical vehicle through which we can ensure that there would be accountability.

The mechanisms built into this bill would also require that incidents that are of a significant nature are, first of all, being carried out through internal investigations where the public complaints and review commission could have some oversight, but in addition to that, the separate processes that would be carried out by the PCRC itself. Therefore, taken together, this is about raising the bar when it comes to transparency and accountability as a means of strengthening public confidence in our institutions, which is a hallmark of our democracy.

When we consider all the challenges we face with regards to public safety, it is important, now more than ever, that we spare no effort and are exhausting all of our efforts to ensure that we have all the mechanisms in place to maintain those pillars when it comes to our democracy.

• (1335)

Ms. Raquel Dancho (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to put some words on the record concerning Bill C-20, an act establishing the public complaints and review commission and amending certain acts and statutory instruments.

This is certainly something that the Liberals have talked about, I believe since the 2015 election. There has been about seven years where this has been in the making. It has been a very long time that they have been talking about doing this, and finally we are there. There are aspects of the bill that the Conservatives are interested in, particularly given that this bill reviews the public complaints and review commission, which of course is renaming itself from the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission.

What exactly does that do? It would ensure that there is a complaints review process for everyday Canadians should they have an issue with the RCMP, and in this case, because of this bill, with the CBSA. It is very important that we are able to hold any sort of law enforcement accountable in our democracy when we provide very large powers—

I am sorry, Madam Speaker, but perhaps the Liberal members would like to have their conversations in the lobby?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I would like to remind members that, if they want to have conversations, they should take them into the lobbies because they do disturb the proceedings of the House.

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, it is very important that we have strong mechanisms to hold those in law enforcement roles accountable. I think that everyone would agree on that. These are the individuals who we empower to enforce law and order, so we need to have an equally powerful oversight body to ensure that there are no abuses of that power.

Before I go into the rest of this, I do want to very sincerely thank all of the men and women in the country who wear a uniform to keep Canadians safe.

It is very important that, as parliamentarians, when we talk about oversight, we also talk about the incredible sacrifices that RCMP and CBSA officers make. RCMP officers, with their families, are carted around the country to various small towns, often in rural and northern Canada. We need those officers to keep those communities safe, and they make a lot of sacrifices for their families. We know that CBSA officers, as well, are often in border towns or border communities that are far away from where a CBSA officer would normally live. There is a lot of movement around and a lot of weeks away from home.

As we know, CBSA officers and our RCMP officers are consistently putting themselves in danger, again, to keep us safe, so I thank all of the officers out there who don a uniform and do that for our country.

Certainly, as I was saying, the oversight body is very important. Particularly, we have been talking a lot about CBSA in recent years and their role in preventing things such as gun violence, for example.

It has been discussed with many policing bodies the great threat of having, frankly, the largest undefended border in the world with a country that owns more firearms than they have people, which is just part of their culture and their history, and that is not up for debate in the House, but what is up for debate is how it impacts Canada and the important role that CBSA has in ensuring that none of those firearms make their way into Canada illegally.

Unfortunately, in cities such as Toronto and Montreal, we are seeing significant issues, and deaths and murders, from evil criminal elements and gangs that take advantage of our porous border and smuggle into the country firearms that are not just restricted, but prohibited. They are using them illegally, possessing them illegally and really damaging, particularly, our vulnerable communities in Montreal, Toronto and other cities across the country.

It is not just those neighbourhoods that are particularly vulnerable. We are seeing gun violence across the country in rural Canada. We are seeing it leak into suburbs, which normally feel very secure and safe from these types of elements. That is what is happening with the criminal elements in our cities, and they are being fuelled by what seems to be the ability to quite easily smuggle or drone in guns, either at our border and at our ports of entry.

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We also know that this is deeply tied to drug smuggling and drug trafficking across our border as well. CBSA has a huge role to prevent that as well. We are depending on our CBSA officers to prevent significant criminal activity that can contribute to death and mayhem in our cities. We are empowering them to do that. We need to make sure that they have the resources, equipment and training to fulfill those important duties for Canadians.

Unfortunately, we do not hear nearly enough about it from the government. It is far too focused on going after law-abiding, trained, tested and vetted Canadian firearms owners than it is on the issue of our border. Perhaps that is a debate for another time. Given that we are talking about oversight of the CBSA today, I think it is worthwhile to bring in the important work that it does and how much we need to prioritize resources to the border to ensure that we are keeping Canadians safe from the impacts of gun smuggling and drug smuggling.

We have also been talking a lot in recent weeks and, frankly, months about the RCMP. We know that the RCMP is facing a significant recruitment and retention issue. I have a lot of RCMP and Winnipeg police officers in my riding. They are incredible men and women, but they are saying morale is quite low. Where is the oversight and the responsibility from the government, and other levels of government, to ensure that RCMP and civic police officers are feeling valued in their role?

That is something that deeply concerns me. We are facing a deficit of police officers when, frankly, there has been a 32% rise in violent crimes since the Liberals formed government seven years ago, since the Prime Minister became the Prime Minister of Canada. Another stat I would like to share is that there were 124,000 more violent crimes last year than there were in 2015 when the Liberals came into power. The need for police to keep our communities safe is greater than ever, yet we are facing serious retention issues.

● (1340)

We are talking about oversight of our RCMP, but we also need to be talking about policies that ensure our RCMP members are adequately supported. What happens when we have overworked police officers and when there are not enough of them, so they are being spread thinner and thinner and their workload is going up higher and higher? We get fatigue. We get depression. We get accelerated impacts of PTSD from the things they see. If we do not have officers who can rest and take care of their mental health, then we have serious impacts on their ability to adequately do their jobs and keep themselves safe, keep their fellow officers safe and ensure they are doing their duty to keep communities safe.

Government Orders

Any time we are talking about RCMP, CBSA or armed forces members, there needs to be an equal conversation about ensuring we are adequately supporting those officers and those members so that they are feeling valued and being supported enough so that they can adequately do their jobs to the best of their mental and physical abilities. Mistakes get made when they are tired. Mistakes get made when they are demoralized, frustrated, irritated and over-worked. That is when the biggest mistakes happen. I think if we are going to talk about oversight, we have to talk about better support for our police officers and our officers at the border.

Certainly, when we are talking about the RCMP as well, there have been a lot of discussions of how we can better serve the vulnerable communities that are seeing the most impacts from violent crime. We could talk about the revolving door that also exhausts police officers. About five years ago, the Liberal government brought forward a bill, Bill C-75, that instituted bail reform. This is something I have been looking into in recent weeks and months, and I have been discussing with police officers the impacts they have seen with these bail reform changes.

It would seem that, quite significantly, Bill C-75 has contributed to the revolving door of crime. Those who are looking to break the law and perhaps harm others are in and out of jail over and over again. Police are encountering the same people, week after week, committing the same types of crimes. It is often just petty theft and petty crime, but often it could also be more significant crimes, like stabbings, shootings, rapes or other types of assault.

Can members imagine being police officers and risking their lives to arrest the same person over and over? What does that do to those police officers? What does it do to their morale and their ability to consistently keep their spirits up and do their jobs, when it is the same people over and over again? If we want to talk about oversight, we have to talk about adequately equipping our police officers with the resources they need, and that goes back to our criminal justice system and how it ensures the people they arrest in the first place stay in jail if they are a threat to society.

Then we have things like Bill C-5, which our party has really talked about a lot in terms of our belief in the threat it is going to pose, particularly to vulnerable communities. To refresh the memories of those watching, Bill C-5 would eliminate mandatory prison time for serious firearm offences, like assaulting a police officer with a weapon or drive-by shootings, so firing a gun with the intent to injure someone with a bullet would no longer mean mandatory prison time under the current Liberal government.

It would also allow that, for serious offences, rather than having a mandatory minimum sentence, there would be the option to serve house arrest. Therefore, in a vulnerable community, for example, if there are people who are criminals or part of a gang doing very bad things to those in that community, rather than going to prison, they could be serving house arrest in the community they have terrorized. I do not think that is fair to those communities. I do not think they want those criminal elements in their communities. It also would not provide any opportunity for rehabilitation, which is provided in our penitentiary system. In my opinion we should have far more rehabilitation opportunities in our penitentiaries, but that is a conversation for another time.

We also have a lot of concerns with leadership in the RCMP. I asked the minister today if this bill would provide any oversight to the RCMP commissioner, given the recent scandal and accusations, with corroborating evidence, that the RCMP commissioner politically interfered with the worst mass killing in Canadian history, notably the Nova Scotia 2020 mass killing. This is a very serious matter the Conservatives, together with the Bloc and the NDP, have been investigating for five months. Although the bill would improve the oversight of the RCMP, I do not think that would translate to the top leadership of the RCMP, unfortunately, though it is desperately needed.

In committee just the other day we were talking to the commissioner of the RCMP, and this was the second time she came to committee about the same interference scandal. She also went to the Mass Casualty Commission to discuss this as well, and it was quite a challenging experience. I was hoping for some sentiment that she was remorseful she had handled the situation the way she had or any sort of legitimate explanation that we could understand that would provide us some relief that she did not do this. Unfortunately, we did not get any of that.

● (1345)

Our only ability to hold her accountable is through the public safety committee, at least as the opposition. The government could fire the commissioner, but it has not taken those steps. We believe it should. Bill C-20 is talking about oversight; however, there is no oversight mechanism in it, that I am aware, for the RCMP commissioner in this circumstance.

Just to recap, a few years ago during the heat of the fallout, about 10 days into the tragedy that took 22 lives, including the life of a pregnant woman, we found out through the evidence we built through the MCC, that the RCMP commissioner, first and foremost, warned the government that sharing the weapons information about the evil killer in that situation, who, again, killed 22 people plus a pregnant women, would jeopardize the criminal investigation. She made it very clear that it should not be shared beyond the minister and the Prime Minister.

Unfortunately, a few days later she turned around. We now had an audio recording where she was reprimanding her Nova Scotia deputies on the ground for not sharing the information that she warned her bosses not to share. We asked her and the MCC asked her what changed her mind. She has not provided a single coherent answer about what changed her mind. We have theories, but she has not provided a single coherent response.

Government Orders

What we found out from the audio recording, and what was certainly corroborated before we got that audio recording by the Nova Scotia deputies and their meticulous notes, was that the commissioner was connecting the Liberals' forthcoming gun control policies. She did this because she wanted to help usher along the Liberal government's gun control policies.

When we have the commissioner of the RCMP, with 22 murdered Canadians and the largest criminal investigation in Canadian history in that regard, looking at this as an opportunity to further her political boss's gun control policy, we obviously have a lot of questions and concerns about that. We believe that is political interference. What really tied it back to the Liberal government were her own words saying that they requested that she do this.

The Liberal government has repeatedly denied this. We have her words in an audio recording. We have that corroborated with the Nova Scotia deputies who were in that meeting where she stated those things. They have written notes. They have testified at committee without a doubt in their minds, and given the audio we can see where they are coming from, that the commissioner of the RCMP sought to take advantage of the deaths of 22 people to further the Liberal political agenda. She also said that it was requested by the then-minister of public safety's office.

We have gone through this for five months. The evidence has trickled out and built the case. To us, it seems irrefutable that this happened, yet she still has her position. We find that disgusting and appalling. We do not understand how someone, the head of our law enforcement, could come to committee and worm her way around the facts on the ground, the audio recording that we have, that she directly connects these things. However, she said things like that was just a conversation, that was taken out of context, this is all a misunderstanding or it was just a miscommunication. That is what we were hearing. However, we have the audio recording and we have the testimony from the people who were in the room.

It is quite frustrating that we were not able to fully hold the most powerful RCMP officer in the country accountable. Perhaps that is a shortcoming of my own. Perhaps I could have done a better job. However, if we are going to talk about Bill C-20, the government also needs to talk about holding the RCMP commissioner accountable, which it has so far failed to do.

It would be one thing if it was just in this scenario that she was using that kind of slippery language to make excuses for her behaviour, which was, as we believe, on the order of the Liberal government and its ministers. She also mentioned the PMO in the audio, so perhaps it goes as far as the Prime Minister's Office. However, we were unable to get any further evidence to convince media and others that it is the case. Should any more evidence come up, rest assured, we will be revisiting that issue.

What I would say is that I think the reporters are finally experiencing a bit of what we experienced with the commissioner over the past five months.

- (1350)

Again talking about the oversight of the RCMP, recently a Globe and Mail story came out, which I think was yesterday or the day before, and now it seems that the commissioner is pulling the same

sort of behaviour with the Emergencies Act. She apparently was texting with her counterpart at the OPP, the OPP commissioner, back in the height of the convoy when the government invoked the Emergencies Act. As a refresher, the Emergencies Act allows the government to supersede charter rights, which is a very big deal. That is why there is a built-in inquiry to hold the government accountable for doing it, to ensure the very high threshold of the Emergencies Act was met. We are going through that process right now and it is quite riveting.

The commissioner is sort of pulling the same stuff with the media. There are text messages between her and the OPP. The title of the article is, "Top Mountie can't explain text messages in which she suggested federal government wanted retroactive support for Emergencies Act". Where is the oversight on this?

She said the following to the OPP commissioner, which is unbelievable, "Has Minister Blair hit you up for a letter to support the EA?" My understanding from the article is that this is after the Emergencies Act was invoked by the Liberals. We have the commissioner of the RCMP asking for a retroactive support letter for the invocation of the Emergencies Act from the OPP commissioner. Two very powerful people are talking about backdating a letter retroactively to show that they are supporting this. That is pretty peculiar. Their integrity is pretty suspect and perhaps shows how desperate, which is speculation, the political bosses in that scenario were to build their case. We know that the Minister of Public Safety said mistruths in this House when he said that the police asked for the emergency powers, when in fact they did not. This is just building on that narrative a little more.

Further, she told reporters she never requested such a letter, yet we have texts that say that she did. How can there be texts that say she requested this letter, when she tells reporters that she did not? This is what we have been going through for five months with the commissioner. We say she said something and she says that is not what that meant, over and over again. We are talking about RCMP oversight. Where is the oversight for the RCMP commissioner?

I will conclude with this, because this is the part that shocked me the most. The head of the RCMP, the commissioner, texted the head of the OPP. Commissioner Lucki's texts show that she twice asked Commissioner Carrique about using a different messaging app that does not store deleted messages. In the context of talking about the emergency powers, is it not peculiar to anyone that the head of the RCMP is texting the head of the OPP saying they need use to an app where their messages can be permanently deleted? Is no one concerned about that?

Statements by Members

The heads of law and order are talking about using an app to permanently delete records. That is insane to me and it is unbelievable that the commissioner is still the head of law and order in this country. It is appalling. She should absolutely resign or, better yet, be fired by the public safety minister.

• (1355)

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have spent the better part of the last 20 minutes listening to my colleague's intervention, hoping that we would hear more about the substance of the bill itself. I will come back to my question for my colleague across the aisle.

I will be the first person to stand up in this House and defend the incredible work that is done by law enforcement every day when it comes to keeping the public safe across the community. The investments that we have put into place, the technology, the resources and, frankly, the work of the Canadian Institute of Public Safety Research and Treatment, which is a group we met with just a couple of days ago, is proof of all of the supports that we will invest in our law enforcement so that they can carry out their work.

The purpose of today's debate is Bill C-20 and I think my colleague, if she were to be candid with this chamber, would acknowledge that there were very few comments with regard to the substance of the propositions around reporting, discipline, recommendations and all of the things that will enhance civilian review so that there can be public confidence in our institutions, including the RCMP and the CBSA. Where does the member stand on the specific merits of this bill?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Madam Speaker, the minister will have to take my apology. His government is keeping us so busy talking about oversight. I could talk for days and days about all the oversight the Liberals need.

I would say that, overall, the bill does look promising and Conservatives are open to supporting it.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's speech. She talked about police officer morale. She has probably heard about Janet Merlo, who spent 20 years in the RCMP, reported persistent bullying and is still hearing from RCMP members about persistent sexual harassment in the force. I am just wondering if she has any comments on how Bill C-20 will address those concerns and maybe even act as a morale booster.

Second, I take well my colleague's comments about the commissioner and the episodes we have had at the public safety committee. Does she have any comments on my private member's bill, Bill C-303, which seeks to add some clarity and specificity on the relationship the Minister of Public Safety has with the commissioner of the RCMP?

Ms. Raquel Dancho: Mr. Speaker, I admire that my hon. colleague looked at the past five months and went to a lot of effort and endeavoured to find a piece of legislation that could possibly fix the issue and the scandalous behaviour we have seen between the Liberal government and the RCMP commissioner. His bill looks very promising. I did a quick read. I am not convinced that it would have solved the ethical and behavioural problem that the Liberal government repeatedly faces, but we are open to supporting his bill.

As to my colleague's first question, with my remaining few seconds, I am deeply concerned about any sexual harassment in the RCMP, as well as in our armed forces. I have talked at length in this House about the resignation request we had in the last Parliament regarding the then minister of defence and his lack of action for six years to address sexual harassment and assault in our military. I do not have any confidence that the Liberal government is going to take care of this. I will work seven days a week with the NDP member to solve that issue in the RCMP.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*English*]

GURPURAB

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): [*Member spoke in Punjabi*]

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, on November 8, Sikhs in Canada and across the world will be celebrating the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first guru and the founder of Sikhism.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji emphasized the importance of hard work, *kirat karni*, sharing with those in need, *vand ke chakna*, meditating, *naam japna*, and selfless service, *seva*. He was a strong advocate for gender equality, believing that no one is high or low, and only rightness is supreme. These are the principles of Sikh values.

This week I met with Amardeep Singh and Vininder Kaur, who are showcasing a 24-episode documentary series called *Allegory*, guided by Guru Nanak Dev Ji's travel and his spiritual life, so that more people can learn about his philosophies and teachings.

Canada is home to one of the largest Sikh communities in the world. I want to thank all the organizations in Brampton and across Canada that are selflessly serving our communities. Happy *Gurpurab* to everyone.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' ArriveCAN app is a scandal of epic proportions. It was supposed to cost \$80,000. It turns out it cost a whopping \$54 million.

The government spent \$54 million on an app that did nothing to keep anyone safe. It was full of glitches, causing thousands of healthy Canadians to needlessly quarantine, and it trampled on the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

The Liberals refuse to say who was grossly overpaid for this worse than useless app, and, in a transparent cover-up attempt, they voted against our Conservative motion to audit this scam.

Canadians deserve answers. They deserve to know which Liberal friends and insiders got rich at their expense. It is time to follow the money. It is time to call in the auditors.

* * *

BLOOD DONATION BY SIKH NATION

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 23 years ago a group of dedicated volunteers held their first blood donation event in Surrey to commemorate the lives of Sikhs brutally killed in India in 1984.

Since then, the Blood Donation by Sikh Nation annual campaign has expanded to include donation events across Canada and countries worldwide, which has helped save over 165,000 Canadian lives.

The Sikh Nation is the largest contributor to the Canadian Blood Services' pledge-based partners for life program. On November 5 and 6, I urge Canadians to visit Princess Margaret Secondary School to donate blood and plasma in support of patients in need across Canada.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Blood Donation by Sikh Nation and its volunteers and donors, as they represent the very best Canada has to offer.

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[Translation]

LISETTE LEBLANC LANDRY

Mr. Yves Perron (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Lisette Leblanc Landry has dedicated her life to serving others. A member of the Filles d'Isabelle for over 60 years and of the Avellin-Dalcourt residents' committee, she regularly visits the sick and accompanies people who need support during medical appointments.

Mrs. Leblanc Landry considers herself fortunate to be in good health and to have free time, so she has dedicated herself to helping others through various organizations all her life. She was L'Écho's person of the year in 1985, won the Gaétan-Blais prize in 2014, and was profiled in Le Nouvelliste in 2018. At the age of 85, she was awarded the highest honour yet.

In today's world, being available to others and taking the time to listen is a true gift. Mrs. Leblanc Landry shows us how. She deserves our utmost respect and I want to honour her contribution and thank her on behalf of everyone whose life she has enriched.

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[English]

1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 38 years later we still remember the dark days of November 1984, when government-organized mobs took to the streets of Delhi, India, with voter lists, school registration forms and ration lists in hand so they could identify Sikh homes and businesses.

Statements by Members

Court evidence has made it clear that these mobs were paid with money and alcohol, provided weapons and instructed to loot and burn Sikh properties. They were demanded by politicians to make sure not a single Sikh survived. Thousands of men, women and children were murdered, burned alive and raped.

This is not a Sikh versus Hindu issue, as so many who seek to divide make it seem. In fact, many Hindu families risked their lives to protect their Sikh neighbours during this time, and for that they will always be grateful. This is an issue of human rights.

To quote the Delhi High Court, “[T]he mass killings of Sikhs in Delhi and elsewhere in November 1984 were in fact ‘crimes against humanity’. They will continue to shock the collective conscience of society for a long time to come.”

* * *

● (1405)

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there used to be a formula that worked here in Canada. It was simple: Job plus hard work equals paycheque, minus mortgage or rent, bills, and taxes equals money to save and put towards the future.

Under the Liberals, that formula has become fundamentally broken. Now, most people are barely getting by with the wages they earn. The prospect of owning a home, being able to raise a family or retire are all impossible dreams, out of reach for most people. Every time a small business closes, a senior gets their heating bill, a young couple looks to buy a house or a parent waits in an emergency room with their child, we are reminded of just how broken that formula has become.

The Liberals are ignoring the ever-growing gap between the few who are comfortable and profit from this broken formula and the majority who are struggling without hope for the future. Conservatives will keep fighting to turn hurt into hope, make paycheques meaningful once more and re-establish a successful formula that will work for all Canadians.

*Statements by Members***WOMEN'S CENTRE OF YORK REGION**

Ms. Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 45 years the Women's Centre of York Region has served women and children who are victims of gender-based violence.

I thank Jennifer Gibbs, chair of the board of directors, and Liora Sobel, executive director, who are at the helm of this organization, as well as Jilly Black, songwriter and philanthropist, whose son spoke so passionately at the 45th anniversary celebration, which I attended with them last week.

The government is clear that gender-based violence will not be tolerated. That is why we are working with provinces, territories and indigenous partners to implement a national action plan to end gender-based violence. We propose to invest \$540 million over five years. The priority is increased support for the most vulnerable: indigenous women and girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

With other levels of government, we can provide leadership, policies and funding, but change happens through the work of these dedicated community organizations.

I thank Jennifer, Liora and all the staff, board members and volunteers at the Women's Centre of York Region for helping women overcome obstacles, heal from trauma and begin new chapters in their lives. We will continue to work together to protect all those who suffer due to gender-based violence, and ultimately to eradicate it completely.

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WORLDSKILLS COMPETITION 2022 MEDAL WINNERS

Mr. Irek Kusmierczyk (Windsor—Tecumseh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is National Skilled Trade and Technology Week, an important initiative led by Skills/Compétences Canada to help young Canadians discover careers in skilled trades and technology.

With over 700,000 skilled trades workers expected to retire in Canada by 2028, it is critical we do everything we can to help inspire young Canadians to pursue careers in these fields, from carpentry to mechanics, construction, cooking, welding, hairdressing and more. There are countless rewarding and well-paying career opportunities ready to be filled.

I am pleased to recognize two amazing young women in skilled trades with us in Canada today: Korae Nottveit and Emma Kilgannon. Korae and Emma are recent WorldSkills Competition 2022 medal winners in the cooking and baking categories, and they are joined by Skills/Compétences Canada national board president, Dr. Patrick Rouble.

I welcome them to Ottawa and congratulate them on their great accomplishments.

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NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Warren Steinley (Regina—Lewvan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are tough times coming this winter for all Canadians. This is especially true for the hard-working people of Saskatchewan, who will see the triple increase of gas, groceries and home heating bills.

However, the leader of the NDP has the nerve to go on Twitter and complain. His hollow “demand” to remove taxes from home heating would be more believable if he and his NDP comrades had voted in favour of our leader’s motion last week, calling to axe the carbon tax on home heating.

The current NDP Leader looks more irrelevant every day. It is no wonder the Saskatchewan NDP rescinded its invitation to have him appear in person at its latest convention; even it knows how much brand damage this leader can do.

I wonder how many more failed elections the NDP will have to go through before it realizes its policies, its party and its leader are all out of touch with the real struggles Canadians are facing today.

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● (1410)

POPPY CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year, from the last Friday of October to November 11, Canadians wear a poppy to honour veterans and to remember those who sacrificed for the freedoms we enjoy.

Like every year, the K-W Poppy Fund hosted the poppy campaign launch at branch 530 of the Legion in Waterloo. I joined veterans, cadets, executive members and volunteers from the K-W Naval Association, the Royal Canadian Air Force Association K-W Wing 404, the 31 Combat Engineer Regiment, known as the Elgin's, and the Royal Canadian Legion, among others.

This year, for the first time, the Legion is distributing biodegradable poppies to reduce the environmental footprint. I encourage every Canadian to engage in Veterans Week to honour and learn of the sacrifices and efforts of veterans.

I thank all in uniform for their service and commend the Royal Canadian Legion for this now biodegradable symbol of remembrance.

We will remember them.

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[Translation]

INFLATION

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's inflationary policies are forcing Canadians to tighten their belts like never before.

We have learned that 1.5 million Canadians had to turn to food banks last month alone. That represents a dramatic 35% increase since 2019. Rising interest rates on a \$400,000 mortgage are increasing interest costs by over \$15,000 a year for a Canadian family.

Statements by Members

We call on the Liberal government to reform our tax system in order to incentivize work, eliminate taxes and tariffs on fuel and fertilizer for farmers, cap spending with legislation requiring ministers to find a dollar of savings for every new dollar spent, cut wasteful spending like ArriveCAN, and work with all levels of government to increase production efficiency and produce more of the things Canadians buy.

Those are all part of the next Conservative government's strategy.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the burden on Canadians has never been heavier. The Prime Minister's tax-and-spend policies have driven a record number of Canadians to the food banks. Recently, 1.5 million Canadians used a food bank in one month. Nearly a third, or 500,000 of them, were children. This is unacceptable, and it is an increase of 35% from 2019.

The government is raising taxes on gas, groceries and home heating, which has increased the cost of essentials that Canadians rely on. Its continued reckless spending has led to record inflation, causing it to get rich off the backs of Canadians. As a result of rising interest rates, Canadians who were already on the edge are being pushed over that edge. The Liberal government needs to stop working for itself and its friends and start working for Canadians.

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FUNDRAISING FOR UKRAINE

Mr. Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to highlight Matheson Phan, an exceptional grade 5 student in my riding of Vancouver Granville.

Inspired by the bravery and resilience of the Ukrainian people, Matheson decided to raise funds for the Canadian Red Cross Ukraine humanitarian crisis appeal by making blue and yellow ribbons adorned with a Canadian flag pin. Since February, Matheson has worked with family and friends, and his younger brother Lincoln, to cut, sew and assemble these symbols of solidarity to be worn by members of our community.

Matheson has sent me a pin for each member of the House, which I know we will all wear with pride. In his own words, Matheson said, "I hope for a future where everyone helps those in need." I know every member of the House would agree. I thank Matheson for his leadership and his belief in a better world.

Slava Ukraini.

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[Translation]

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, economists say that increased demand will result in increased supply. However, the opposite is true for public transit. We need to increase the supply for there to be a demand. In

short, we need effective and attractive public transit for people to get on board.

Public transit is essential for improving urban mobility and reducing our carbon footprint, but it is also vital for intercity travel between our regions. Our transportation companies are struggling after two years of pandemic, so it is urgent that we reinvest to get our public transit back on track.

We also need to electrify our transit systems. That will help to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and our dependence on fossil fuels. Moving in that direction will help us to create good jobs here at home with the local expertise we already have.

Frequent and reliable public transit service requires permanent and reliable federal funding. The NDP is focusing on good transit systems for everyone. We are asking the Liberal government to do the same.

● (1415)

The Speaker: Order.

I would ask members to listen and show respect for the person who is speaking. There is a lot of noise right now and it is hard to hear what is being said.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

* * *

AEROSPACE INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

Mr. Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 60th anniversary of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, or AIAC. We should be glad to have such a vibrant association dedicated to ensuring that this strategic sector receives the support it deserves.

The late Jean Lapierre said that the aerospace industry is to Quebec what the auto industry is to Ontario. Greater Montreal is one of the world's three leading aerospace hubs, alongside Seattle and Toulouse, and is one of the only regions where it is possible to find all the parts needed to assemble an entire aircraft.

The aerospace industry comprises a research cluster and a network of thriving small and medium-sized businesses. This ecosystem deserves a robust policy. We cannot allow ourselves to neglect this strategic industry. The AIAC constantly gives us this much-needed reminder.

Long live the AIAC. I wish it a happy anniversary.

*Oral Questions**[English]***ANTI-SEMITISM**

Ms. Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the diversity minister was confronted with his department's funding of a notorious anti-Semite Laith Marouf, he swore that it was a mistake and that it would never happen again, even though he covered it up for a month.

Now we know the minister's sincerest promise was nothing more than lip service to the House, his caucus and to Canadians. Yesterday we found out there is more funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage. Nearly \$30,000 was given to two news outlets that call for the elimination of Israel and perpetuate the dangerous hate against Jews. This is freely available on the Internet. Either nobody bothered to check, or more likely, nobody cared.

These are not unfortunate mistakes. They are not even incompetence. They are repeated actions by a government that is coming dangerously close to complicity with the worst anti-Semitism by spending Canadian tax dollars to proliferate it. We have a problem in this country. Canadians deserve to know about it. Conservatives are here to stop it. More members of the Liberal caucus need to stand up to it.

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ORDER OF CANADA

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to mark the accomplishment of my constituent, Morris Goodman, who has received his welcome into the Order of Canada.

Morris is being recognized for his incredible achievements in business throughout his career, as well as his dedication to transformative philanthropy. Morris has been a pioneer of the Canadian generic pharmaceutical business for decades, including co-founding Canada's largest pharmaceutical company, Pharmascience, nearly 40 years ago.

While his work in the business base has been remarkable, his dedication to giving back is also noteworthy. Charitable works are incredibly important to Morris, and through the Morris and Rosalind Goodman Family Foundation, he has made a significant difference in his home community in Montreal, and in helping countless others around the world.

It is no surprise then that his positive impact to Canada is being recognized today. Morris and his wife Lillian Vineberg are pillars in my community, and I want to congratulate them both on this incredible achievement.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***FINANCE**

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we learn if the Liberal government truly cares about Canadians. The fall economic statement is the last chance to stop tax increases and out-of-control inflationary spending.

Canadians are paying more in taxes today than ever before, and Liberal inflation has raised prices for gas, groceries and home heating to record highs. This Liberal inflation tax is levied off the growling stomachs of Canadians. Will the Prime Minister stop his inflationary spending to finally stop his inflationary tax?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my colleague opposite is interested in the fall economic statement, and we will learn what is in that plan in just two short hours, but rest assured that he can rely on the Liberal government to do what is right, which is to support Canadians by providing dental and rental supports, doubling the GST tax credit, making sure that the child care benefits are in place and making sure that we have the backs of Canadians when they need it the most.

They do not have a plan. We do. That is what Canadians have asked us to do.

● (1420)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear to see from that answer that the Liberal government's greed knows no bounds.

The government's solution to every problem is to make Canadians pay even more. Liberal inflation led to higher interest rates. A single mom who works as a youth worker reached out to me saying her variable mortgage payments just went up another \$500 because of the Liberal inflation tax, and she is barely hanging on.

Canadians are hurting, and cannot afford more spending and higher taxes. Will the Liberals just stop spending?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is asking us to do more on taxes, and we have reduced taxes on Canadians five times. How many times did the Conservatives vote against those measures? It was every single time.

On this side of the House, we are supporting Canadians. They are voting against Canadians. We will see today just how much of a plan we have to support Canadians and grow the economy.

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, only Liberals would think that they can fight their own inflation with more inflation.

Fifty-three percent of Canadians say that they are concerned with making mortgage payments when it comes time to renew. Over a third of them are already planning to cut back on spending and food. That comes at a time when grocery prices are too high and Canadians cannot afford their home heating bills anymore.

Will the Liberals stop the spending spree and stop the record taxes, or should Canadians just prepare for a long, cold, hungry winter instead?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a plan to support Canadians. It is a plan that started in 2015. It has been bolstered by our affordability plan this spring and bolstered again by the work we have been doing recently.

The other side has a plan, and it is typical Conservative austerity. They would cut employment insurance benefits, the Canadian pension plan, child care benefits and climate action cheques. They want to cut, and we want to support. That is our job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bank of Canada aims to keep inflation at 2% of the consumer price index.

The bank has failed to do that, but the Prime Minister is in no hurry to see inflation go back to its normal level because that would reduce his government's revenues. That explains why he is continuing with his inflationary spending and trying to raise taxes. Canadians are suffering because this Prime Minister is taking advantage of the inflation he created to make more money.

Today, will he commit to not increasing taxes on Canadians and to stop wasting public funds?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that argument is not only economically false, it is simply cruel.

To say that supporting the most vulnerable Canadians in our country is causing inflation to rise is false, because we are in a global inflationary cycle. Countries around the world are dealing with inflation. We are doing what we can to support the most vulnerable.

They are blaming Canadians. It is irresponsible, and it is cruel.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually, we are blaming all the measures that have been put in place by the Liberals over the last seven years. Because of those measures, we are now experiencing inflation the likes of which we have not seen in 40 years.

Mark Carney, who could potentially be the future leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, said that inflation in Canada is domestically generated. This government created the problems we have today. People are going hungry and 20% of Canadians are skipping one meal a week because of this government's actions and irresponsible spending. Will it commit to taking action that will help Canadians instead of hurting them?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the former governor of

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the Bank of Canada, Stephen Poloz, said very clearly that our investments during the pandemic prevented a period of irresponsible deflation.

We took action and supported Canadians. The Conservatives want us to make cuts because the typical Conservative plan is to chop, chop, chop. On this side, we will support Canadians. That is what we are here to do, and we are going to meet the public's expectations.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am wearing the signature bow tie that reminds us of the importance of fighting prostate cancer and losing weight.

The Prime Minister wants to increase immigration levels to 500,000 in 2025. For Quebec, that means something like 120,000 immigrants, in addition to the majority of the people who arrive via Roxham Road.

Most of these people do not speak French. Quebec does not have the means to teach them French, house them, educate them or provide them with child care or health care.

Does the government understand that Quebec cannot accommodate 150,000 immigrants—

• (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Immigration.

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada needs a lot of people, but the member knows perfectly well that it is up to the Government of Quebec to set immigration levels in Quebec.

We are working harder with the Government of Quebec and with my counterpart. This is an opportunity to grow the population and the economy and to work with our partner in Quebec.

Mr. Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government and the Prime Minister want to bring in something like 150,000 immigrants a year. Those individuals will not have the services they need in areas like French language learning, child care, education and health care, nor will there even be enough good jobs.

If we do not welcome them, Quebec's weight within the federation will shrink drastically, and if we do welcome them, we risk our language and identity. In both scenarios, the Quebec nation will be considerably weakened.

Which do the Liberals prefer, weakening Quebec through language or through numbers?

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that, for the Bloc Québécois, immigrants are reduced to numbers, statistics and percentages. We are talking about men, women and children.

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I have said it before, and I will say it again: Quebec already has full authority to welcome as many immigrants as it wants, all of them francophone, if it wants.

I have a question for the Bloc. If Quebec welcomes 70,000 people who speak French, 70,000 francophones, how many will require French language lessons?

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to a recent report, the government is letting \$30 billion a year slip through its fingers because of tax evasion. Thirty billion dollars is a huge amount of money.

While searching through the Paradise papers, the program *Enquête* found an example—

The Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member for a moment. We are having trouble hearing not only the answers but the questions too.

I would ask everyone to show some respect for the person who is speaking, whether they are asking a question or answering one.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie can begin his question again.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, according to a recent report, the government is letting \$30 billion a year slip through its fingers because of tax evasion. Thirty billion dollars is a huge amount of money.

While searching through the Paradise papers, the program *Enquête* found a shameful example of these practices. For years, the Irving empire has systematically been using shell companies in Bermuda to avoid paying what it owes the government. While ordinary Canadians are struggling to pay the rent and buy groceries, the Liberals are turning a blind eye to this legalized theft.

Is the government controlling the Irving empire, or does the Irving family own the Liberal Party of Canada?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that my colleague shares my enthusiasm for combatting tax evasion.

The Canada Revenue Agency continues to fight tax evasion both in Canada and abroad through a solid network of tax agreements and through investments. It is getting harder and harder to hide money abroad.

I have a very simple message for those who want to commit tax evasion. The CRA will find them, no matter how long it takes.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, recent reports show that in the last year Loblaw's made its biggest profits ever to the tune of an extra million dollars in profit for every day of the year. While families are turning to food banks

or skipping meals to reduce their costs, Galen Weston and his shareholders are lining their pockets.

The NDP has called on the government to make these chains pay what they owe to Canadians, so we can do things to help, like remove the GST on home heating. We want stronger consequences for price-fixing and we want a windfall profits tax. We have not seen it.

Are the Liberals finally going to get going on this and tackle “greedflation”, which is making the rich richer while everyone else pays the price?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we are doing as a government to make sure people and companies pay their fair share is limiting the ability of wealthy Canadians to use foreign shell companies to avoid taxes in Canada, examining a minimum 15% tax in Canada and around the world for multinational companies, implementing that minimum 15% tax and providing \$1.2 billion to CRA, which has a five to one ratio for the money we put in it, to find the people who are not paying their taxes. That is responsible fiscal management.

• (1430)

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have never been paying more in taxes, all because of the Prime Minister's reckless inflation spending.

While Canadians are paying more for gas, groceries and heating their homes, the Liberal government is lining its pockets on the backs of Canadians' suffering. It is collecting record high taxes because of the inflation crisis it has created.

Will the Prime Minister stop his inflationary spending and stop the inflation tax?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about what the government is spending on. We are spending on the Canada dental benefit, which is going to support hundreds of thousands of Canadian children access to dental care. We are spending on the Canada housing benefit, which is helping the lowest-income Canadians pay their rent. To suggest that is inflationary is absolutely absurd. Then we are spending on the Canada child benefit, which is helping nine out of 10 Canadian families, thousands of dollars a month, so they can pay for basic necessities.

We know what the Conservatives would cut if they were in power.

Hon. Tim Uppal (Edmonton Mill Woods, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when will the Liberals realize they cannot spend and print their way out of an inflation crisis, one that they created? The inflation tax punishes Canadians, while the Liberals collect more in taxes, and Canadian families are suffering because of it. In fact, over 1.5 million Canadian families had to visit a food bank in one month. That should not be happening in Canada.

When will the Liberals end the inflationary tax?

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Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, helping low-income Canadians pay for basic necessities is not inflationary.

We know that the Conservatives talk a big game, but they are not actually there, when the measures are on the floor, to vote in support. When it came to the Canada child benefit, what did they do? They voted against it. When it came to the income tax cut for middle-class Canadians, what did they do? They voted against it. When it came to child care for Canadians across the country, what did they do? They voted against it. What about the Canada dental benefit and the Canada housing benefit? They voted against those too.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are paying higher taxes than ever before under the Prime Minister. Inflation is at a 40-year high. People are getting further behind. People are paying more for basic necessities like food, gas and home heating. Higher taxes mean more money in the Liberal government's bank account, all on the backs of hard-working Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister stop the inflationary spending and stop the inflation tax?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the Conservative record on reducing taxes for Canadians. In 2015, when we gave a tax break to middle-class Canadians and taxed the wealthy 1% more, who voted against it? The Conservatives did. When we gave workers a tax break, who voted against it? The Conservatives did. When we put in child care benefits, who voted against it? The Conservatives did. When we decided to help businesses, who voted against it? The Conservatives did.

We have the backs of Canadians. We are supporting the most vulnerable. That is our job; we are doing our job.

Mrs. Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, it is the Liberal government that has forced Canadians to pay more taxes. It is taking money out of their bank accounts and putting it in the Liberal government's bank account. That is people on fixed incomes, it is seniors, people with disabilities, young adults trying to build a life and families that are struggling to get by. The Liberal government is lining the pockets of itself, while people are paying into it.

Again, will the Prime Minister stop the inflationary spending and stop the inflation tax?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. colleague opposite is saying is simply untrue. It was this government that increased the GIS for seniors. It was this government that increased the OAS for seniors over 75. It was this government that brought in the Canada disability benefit. It was this government that brought in the Canada child benefit, affordable day care across the country; the Canada dental benefit; the Canada housing benefit; and I could go on. We have been there every step of the way to support Canadians. What have the Conservatives done? They have voted against every single one of those measures.

• (1435)

[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is getting ready to triple the carbon tax that is going to add extra costs for all Canadians. That is the reality.

This afternoon, we are going to hear the Minister of Finance tell us that never in the history of the country have Canadians paid so much in taxes. Simply put, inflation is increasing the cost of everything. Everything costs more and therefore the government is collecting more taxes. Inflation is punishing Canadians. The Liberals are lining their pockets.

Will the Prime Minister be transparent and give workers a break this afternoon? Will he put an end to his inflationary spending on the backs of Canadians?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, we are hearing that the Conservatives have no plan to help Canadians.

In the United Kingdom, the government decided to cut services for the British people, and that was a complete failure.

Here the Conservatives are proposing to lower employment insurance benefits, Canadians' pension plans and the Canada child benefit. It is the typical Conservative austerity, once again.

We will invest in Canadians. It is our job and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everything the minister just said is pure rhetoric and completely out of touch with reality.

The Liberal government can find all kinds of excuses. It is this government that is responsible for the current economic situation that is making Canadians poorer. Their wallets are empty. Consumer debt is skyrocketing. The Prime Minister's inflationary spending is pushing up interest rates. More interest means more debt means less money in Canadians' pockets. It is that simple.

Will the Prime Minister show some compassion this afternoon and reduce—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that when the Conservatives start hurling insults at me it is because they have no plan. They are not talking about what should be done for Canadians.

On this side of the House, we are being very clear. We are investing in Canadians by providing dental care and housing assistance. We are investing in Canadians by doubling the GST credit. We are investing in Canadians with the Canada child benefit.

Oral Questions

The Conservatives want to make cuts, but we want to support Canadians. That is our agenda. That is our plan and it is the best plan.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and the NDP imposed a gag order in committee to shut down debate on modernizing the Official Languages Act.

After 50 years of inaction on their part, it seems suspicious that this is suddenly so urgent. It is so urgent that they are limiting debate on the amendments to seven hours. Clearly, they want to avoid talking about the amendments that the Bloc Québécois wants to table. Obviously, these are not our amendments; they come from the Government of Quebec. The amendments from Quebec, which represents 90% of francophones, deserve to be debated.

Why are they trying to avoid them?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is suspicious today is that the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives are playing political games to prevent the bill from being passed as soon as possible.

We introduced a bill to counter the decline of French in Canada and to meet the needs of official language minority communities.

I do not understand why the Bloc and the Conservatives do not want to see us pass a bill that will do exactly that.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we invited experts way back in February to talk to us about official languages. Together, the government and the NDP decided to cancel over 30 expert witnesses, including important groups such as the Maison de l'alphabétisation du Québec, a literacy advocacy group, and the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, a group dedicated to protecting and promoting the French language, as well as francophone school boards in Ontario, British Columbia and Acadia, the Université de Moncton and the Association des juristes d'expression française du Nouveau-Brunswick, New Brunswick's association of French-speaking jurists.

Why—

The Speaker: Order. I have to interrupt the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

I do not know what is wrong with members today. Everyone is talking at the same time. I will ask members to whisper or leave the chamber if they want to have conversations.

• (1440)

[English]

If members are going to talk to each other, please get close to each other or go in the hallway, but do not talk at a distance of four or five benches away or across from one another.

[Translation]

I will ask the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île to repeat his question so we can all hear it.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu: Mr. Speaker, we invited experts way back in February to talk to us about official languages. Together, the government and the NDP decided to cancel over 30 expert witnesses, including important groups such as the Fondation pour l'alphabétisation, a literacy foundation, and the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, a group dedicated to protecting and promoting the French language, as well as francophone school boards in Ontario, British Columbia and Acadia, the Université de Moncton and the Association des juristes d'expression française du Nouveau-Brunswick, New Brunswick's association of French-speaking jurists.

Why is the voice of these people suddenly not important enough to warrant the attention of the Liberals and the NDP?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We have been listening closely to the stakeholders, and they have told us that it is time to take the next step.

Stakeholders want to see Bill C-13 passed because they recognize that it will make a real difference in the lives of Canadians. We introduced an ambitious bill to ensure that we can do everything in our power to support our official language minority communities and reverse the decline of French. I do not understand why the Bloc Québécois and the Conservatives want to ultimately block this legislation.

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals and the NDP are invoking closure on Bill C-13. They are limiting the debate, which includes amendments proposed by the Quebec government. To limit the debate, they are also prepared to withdraw their invitation to dozens of Quebec, Acadian and other French-Canadian experts. The NDP and the Liberals have a deal to end debate on the amendments and they have a deal to cancel the appearance of witnesses.

Do they also have a deal to reject Quebec's amendments, such as applying Bill 101 to federally regulated businesses?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Official Languages and Minister responsible for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear: We are the first government to recognize the decline in French in this country. That is why we are implementing an ambitious bill.

We want to ensure that our government does everything in its power to protect our official language minority communities, and we want to ensure that we reverse the decline of the French language. Again, we have heard from many stakeholders who want the bill passed as soon as possible. I do not understand why the Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party of Canada are doing everything they can to kill this bill. It is unacceptable.

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Philip Lawrence (Northumberland—Peterborough South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals need to be honest with Canadians. They are benefiting from inflation. While record numbers of Canadians are using food banks, they are raking in record revenues. However, their greed knows no bounds. They want more and more of Canadians' dollars.

When will the cold-hearted Liberals show some compassion, give Canadians a break and pull their tax hikes off the table?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do the Conservatives want to talk about compassion? They are the ones who blocked, for a number of days, the ability to pass dental benefits for low-income children. They are the ones who voted against supporting low-income renters in paying their rent. They voted against the Canada child benefit, which supports nine out of 10 Canadian families. They voted against affordable child care. They voted against tax cuts for middle-income Canadians.

It is beyond comprehension that they would talk about compassion when they vote against supporting Canadians at every single instance.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the current Liberal government, Canadians are paying record high taxes. Liberal inflation means Canadians are also paying record high prices for gas, groceries and home heating bills. Millions of Canadians are skipping meals or using food banks because they cannot afford to buy groceries, and millions more will have to choose between heating and eating this winter. Canadians are out of money and the government is out of touch.

Why do the Liberals not stop making things worse, stop their out-of-control spending and stop the Liberal inflation taxes?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is out of touch is blaming the most vulnerable Canadians and the government supporting them for somehow increasing inflation. It is hogwash. It is poppycock. It is simply not true and it is cruel.

Our supports are one one-thousandth the size of our economy. It will not increase inflation. Misinformation and disinformation have no place in this chamber.

• (1445)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable for the government to brag about a system and policies that have 1.5 million Canadians using food banks every month and that have one in five Canadians skipping meals because they cannot buy groceries. We will take no lessons from a government whose policies are creating higher interest rates, higher inflation and out-of-control spending that is driving up the cost of living to the worst record and the worst situation in decades.

Why do the Liberals not stop making it worse, stop their out-of-control spending and stop their Liberal inflation tax?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a bit rich coming from

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the member opposite that he wants to talk about supporting Canadians when, with every single chance, he has voted against measures that support Canadians.

When they talk about the spending that we have done, that is thousands of dollars that are helping Canadian families with the high cost of living. We know what would happen if the Conservatives were in power. They would abandon those most vulnerable Canadians who need that support. When they are talking about taxes, they are talking about things that pay for EI. They are talking about things that pay for CPP. The things—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nunavut.

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HOUSING

Ms. Lori Idlout (Nunavut, NDP): *Uqaqtittiji*, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples enshrines the right to housing for indigenous peoples, yet many struggle to find an adequate home. The Liberal government has failed to recognize these rights and invest in an indigenous housing strategy for people who are compelled to leave their home communities. As a result, many indigenous peoples end up in units in disrepair or homeless.

When will the government acknowledge UNDRIP rights to safe, affordable housing across Canada?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that the gap is astronomical in terms of housing on first nations. That is why the government, in budget 2022, invested over \$4 billion to begin to close that gap. We also know that it is not the government that has the answer about what the best housing is. It is indigenous people themselves. That is why solutions are indigenous-led in design. We will continue to work with communities to make sure that people have the right to safe and affordable housing.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are failing to fix the urgent, unmet housing needs of urban, rural and northern indigenous communities. The money it allocated is not even enough to meet the needs of the Downtown Eastside, let alone for the rest of the country. It was a cruel joke when the Prime Minister said record investments are being made. Over 80% of indigenous people live away from their home communities. Indigenous peoples are dying on the street.

Will the Minister of Finance make the necessary investments in the fall economic statement to address the urgent, unmet housing crisis of indigenous peoples?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ahmed Hussen (Minister of Housing and Diversity and Inclusion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am puzzled by the hon. member's comment. We have doubled the investments to tackle homelessness, including in the hon. member's riding of Vancouver East.

Coming to the issue of urban, rural and northern indigenous housing, we are committed to working with indigenous peoples to codevelop an urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy. Budget 2022 is investing over \$4 billion in indigenous housing, including \$300 million to codevelop an urban, rural and northern indigenous housing strategy following the for indigenous, by indigenous principle.

• (1450)

The Speaker: I would ask hon. members, when they ask a question, to have the common courtesy to listen and not shout down the person answering the very question they asked.

The hon. member for Bonavista—Burin—Trinity.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding and the entire province of Newfoundland and Labrador, seal predation is an important topic for local harvesters. Can the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans inform the House what our government is doing on this important topic?

Hon. Joyce Murray (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the great work he does for his constituents.

I received a report from the Atlantic seal science task force just this spring and the government is already taking action on it.

I am happy to share with the House that, on November 8 and 9, I will be hosting a seal summit in St. John's, and we will be exploring opportunities for indigenous and rural communities.

I do look forward to working with indigenous people, industry, scientists and others on this very important goal.

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[*Translation*]

TAXATION

Mr. Richard Martel (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 20% of Canadians are skipping at least one meal a week to save money, and 1.5 million Canadians used food banks in just one month.

How did things get so bad? It is because of this government's mismanagement, which created inflationary deficits year after year. After all, it is not surprising, given that monetary policy is not part of the Prime Minister's vocabulary.

Can the Prime Minister at least assure the House that he will not increase taxes?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we have been here every day for the past seven years to support

Canadians, whether through the Canada child benefit, tax cuts for the middle class, the dental care benefit or housing assistance.

During the pandemic, our government was there and continues to be there for Canadians. It is too bad that, at every opportunity, the Conservatives vote against these important initiatives that help Canadians in need.

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[*English*]

FINANCE

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have never paid more taxes than they do now under the Prime Minister. The inflation rate is the highest in 40 years, which means that Canadians pay more for gasoline, groceries and home heating.

Some say that it is just inflation, but inflation means higher prices for Canadians and more money in the Liberal government's pocket. It is the inflation tax. It is the cruellest tax of all.

When will the Prime Minister stop the inflation tax and stop his inflationary spending?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if pandemic spending and investments in Canadians that got us through the worst pandemic in a century were inflationary, then we would be on our own in the world. We would have the highest inflation in the world. Guess what. Germany is at 10%. The U.K. is at 10.1%. The U.S. is at 8.2%. The EU is at 9.9%. Australia is at 7.3%. We are at 6.9%.

That does not make a difference to the people at home. What makes a difference are dental supports, rental supports and doubling the GST tax credit, not the proposed cuts by the Conservatives. We have the backs of Canadians. They have bluff and bluster.

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are out of money and this spend, spend, spend Liberal government is out of touch. People are losing confidence, faith and patience. Simply put, people cannot afford these record-high taxes and inflation any longer. They are sinking in debt. Families, business owners, seniors, students, all Canadians expect more from the government.

When will the Prime Minister commit to no new spending and no new taxes?

Oral Questions

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do we know what Canadians cannot afford? They cannot afford an official opposition that is proposing cuts to the things they rely upon, like employment insurance, the Canada pension plan, the Canada child benefit, affordable day care, Canada dental benefits and housing supports.

What Canadians cannot afford right now when they are feeling the economic pinch are the cruel spending cuts that the Conservatives are suggesting.

• (1455)

Mrs. Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what Canadians cannot afford are new taxes.

The Liberal government and its NDP backers have routinely made their intentions to Canadians very clear. They are going to implement a punitive tax on financially broken Canadians to pay for their higher spending agenda.

How can Canadians trust a government that has openly shown disrespect to them?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives, at every opportunity over the last seven years, have voted against measures that have supported Canadians, whether it is Canadian children, families, seniors, people who are in need of housing or Canadians with disabilities.

We have brought forward important measures that add thousands of dollars into the pockets of the most vulnerable of middle-class Canadians who are spending it on basic necessities.

What Canadians do not trust is an official opposition that is not there for them in their time of need.

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[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Governor General's unnecessary week-long trip to the Middle East cost \$1.3 million. That is the amount the Canadian Taxpayers Federation came up with by adding up the invoices sent to the Office of the Governor General and also to Global Affairs Canada, National Defence and the RCMP.

It seems the monarchy costs more than we thought.

In addition to the \$70 million it costs us every year, we have to add up the expenses paid by various departments for the King's representative and her entourage to travel first class.

Seriously, when are we going to stop paying for that?

[*English*]

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Governor General undertakes important work representing Canada at home and abroad. Costs are a product of a number of factors, including the size of delegations, destination and local fees.

As always, our government makes every effort to ensure that spending on official trips is responsible and transparent.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Julie Vignola (Beauport—Limoulu, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the monarchy is very costly, but not just financially.

I would like to go back to 2019, to the case of the two Michaels who were unjustly imprisoned in China.

Last Thursday, the Wall Street Journal revealed that, in that case, the Prime Minister was unable to negotiate with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Why? It is simple. The Chinese president refused to speak to the Prime Minister and instead demanded to speak to Canada's true head of state, Queen Elizabeth II.

Does the government not find it embarrassing that the real leader of Canada is actually a foreign monarch?

[*English*]

Mr. Maninder Sidhu (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the world is facing a more assertive China. At all times, Canada's foreign policy will be able to defend our national interests and our values. In this context, Canadians expect us to navigate strategically through this complex reality. We will do so with eyes wide open.

* * *

FINANCE

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the more the Liberals tax and spend, the more expensive life gets for struggling Canadians. The Prime Minister racked up more debt than all other premier ministers before him combined, and he claimed it was so Canadians would not have to. However, today, Canadians cannot make ends meet, while government contracts are up 74%, \$14.6 billion a year, going to insiders, former Liberal MPs, anti-Semites and foreign consultants, and hundreds of millions of dollars the Liberals will not account for at all.

When will the NDP-Liberal costly coalition stop its tax hikes and wasteful spending?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, later today, we are going to learn more about our fall economic statement. However, the Conservative economic action plan 2022 is in: cut employment insurance benefits, cut the Canadian pension plan, cut child care benefits and cut climate action cheques. That is typical Conservative austerity in the face of Canadians in need.

We have the backs of Canadians. We are investing in them. That is our plan and that is what we are going to do.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, Canadians' paycheques and savings go up in flames as the Liberals fuel the inflation fire that they set.

The Bank of Canada says that inflation is due to what is happening in Canada. BMO says that sending cheques as inflation support is inflationary. Even Liberal Mark Carney says that inflation is “a domestic story”. Canadians are using food banks at record levels, half are almost bankrupt and a million cannot afford home heating.

The Liberals are fine with spending the average Canadians' yearly rent on a single hotel room, but will they actually give Canadians a break, cut taxes and cap spending?

• (1500)

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Stephen Poloz, the former Bank of Canada governor, was very clear that our investments in Canadians during the pandemic prevented a deflation in our economy.

What do the Conservatives say on taxes? When we lowered taxes on the middle class in 2015, how did the Conservatives vote? They voted against it. When we lowered taxes on Canadians in 2019, the Conservatives voted against it. In 2021, when we lowered taxes on workers, how did the Conservatives vote? They voted against it. When we lowered taxes on small businesses this year, the Conservatives voted, once again, against it. How did they vote on dental and rental supports? Members know the answer. They voted against it.

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the real effect of Liberal economic policy. The original Trudeau spending legacy was 14 deficits in 15 years, an inflation, housing and energy crisis for Canadians at the time, and, as a result of the crippling debt, devastating cuts to health and education transfers a generation later by another Liberal government. It is the classic Liberal economic one-two punch: short-term pain and long-term pain.

Would somebody please have the courage to stand up over there and his or her Prime Minister to just stop making the problem worse?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a bit strange to hear from members opposite about economic records, because when they were in power, that prime minister, Stephen Harper, had the worst economic record since R. B. Bennett in the Great Depression. Whereas, under our government, we have had record low unemployment. We are supporting vulnerable and low-income Canadians. We are making sure we are setting up our country for success for future generations.

The history books are clear. There is one party on this side of the House that has a good economic record. I cannot say the same for my colleagues opposite.

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Brendan Hanley (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, immigration drives Canada's economy. Newcomers help businesses find the workers they need and enrich our communities, including beautiful Yukon. No matter where they come from or why they are here, Canada has always warmly welcomed newcomers.

Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship update us on our government's immigration plan?

Hon. Sean Fraser (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that Canada needs more people. We need to look at immigration as a strategy to increase Canada's workforce, reunite more families and fulfill our humanitarian commitments. That is why I have introduced Canada's next immigration levels plan. It is an ambitious plan that brings an increased focus on attracting newcomers to different regions of the country.

Canada is a country that was built on immigration. It is at the heart of who we are as Canadians.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Dave Epp (Chatham-Kent—Leamington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal-NDP coalition's policies and resulting higher interest rates have fanned the flames for this cost of living wildfire. Given the debt that the Prime Minister has accumulated, how can Canadians now trust him to control spending? After all, does one trust the arsonist to put out the fire? We cannot inflate our way out of this mess, out of debt either, because that just erodes the purchasing power of Canadians. The only positive action is to unlock investment from the private sector.

Will the Prime Minister stop his new spending, and no more taxes?

Hon. Randy Boissonnault (Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the other side rising in the House today talking about being compassionate for Canadians is a bit rich, given the history of that government. When it had a \$13-billion surplus in 2006, it frittered it away. Then, to try to get some sort of fiscal semblance of responsibility, it cut veterans services, closed embassies, raided EI, forced working Canadians to work for two more years and had a systematic destruction of social services.

That is not the future Canadians want. They want our supports. They want us to have their backs. That is what we have.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Brad Vis (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a recent survey from the CFIB indicated that 60% of small businesses would increase the paycheques of workers if the government reduced its tax burden. Instead, on January 1, this costly coalition is planning to increase payroll taxes for workers and employees.

My question is simple. Will the Liberal-NDP coalition government rescind its plan to increase payroll taxes on January 1 and give small business owners and their employees the break they need?

• (1505)

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is on this side of the House that we have supported small businesses and entrepreneurs every single day. It is those contributions that are made by both the employer and the employee that are going to provide for those very workers these small businesses employ.

It is on this side of the House that we work for small businesses. We stand for small businesses. We are the ones cutting taxes for small businesses and helping them thrive in communities from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Doug Shipley (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are struggling to pay their bills. They are lying in bed at night wondering how they are going to survive the devastating effects of the Liberal government's inflationary spending. Canadians simply cannot afford anymore of this costly coalition. Today, the Liberal government is presenting its economic update.

The Conservatives have a very clear demand. Will the Liberals commit to no wasteful spending and no new taxes?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what this side is committed to is being there for Canadians in their time of need, just as we were throughout the pandemic, where we supported nine million Canadians with the Canada emergency response benefit. We supported hundreds of thousands of Canadian businesses and organizations and ensured that we were there for them the whole time and—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I will have the minister start over. What I am getting from people way in the back is that they are having a hard time hearing because of some noises in the forefront. I will ask everyone to listen quietly, although I think everyone is quiet already so there is no need for more instruction.

The hon. minister, from the top, please.

Hon. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are committed to being there for Canadians in their time of need. Whether that was through the pandemic, when we were there with income supports and business supports for both individuals and or-

Oral Questions

ganizations that needed to get through those dark times, we were there; or whether it is for ensuring that we are there for families that are struggling with the high cost of living, be it through the Canada child benefit, the Canada dental benefit, the Canada housing benefit for low-income renters as well as affordable housing.

We are going to continue to do that and we are not going to take lessons from the Conservatives, whose whole objective right now is to cut and cut important social services and supports for Canadians.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a Scarborough—Agincourt constituent recently emailed me because he was distressed after reading about alleged illegal Chinese police stations in Scarborough and Markham. These alleged police stations or administrative centres are used to exert pressure on Chinese nationals located in Canada. How can we reassure Canadians who feel intimidated or coerced?

Could the Minister of Public Safety provide an update on what actions are being taken?

Hon. Marco Mendicino (Minister of Public Safety, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting the public from the threat of foreign interference is precisely what Canadians have mandated our government to do. I want to assure her and all members of this chamber that the RCMP are actively investigating these alleged so-called Chinese police stations. I also want to assure members that any harassment, intimidation or coercion by a foreign power will be investigated and appropriate charges will be pressed independently by police.

Finally, Canadians can rest assured that we will continue to make investments in our national security apparatus, which the Conservatives cut the last time, because we have—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

* * *

PASSPORTS

Mr. Taylor Bachrach (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 300,000 people live in northern B.C., yet there is not a single passport office. Residents are having to drive up to 17 hours to pick up their passports in Vancouver. One person had to spend \$2,000 to fly all the way to Victoria to pick up his family's passports. It is not acceptable.

The government has added passport pickup services at 13 locations across the country, yet nothing in our region. Therefore, my question for the minister is a simple one. When will the government finally add a passport office in northern B.C.?

Government Orders

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the fact that over the summer we added 13 passport pickup locations across the country, including, for the very first time, in Canada's north, in Whitehorse in Yukon, which is really important.

We are continuing to ensure that we are delivering passport services for Canadians in a timely manner. I can assure my colleague that we are looking across the country to make sure those services are available and accessible to all Canadians.

* * *

• (1510)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, an independent analysis of the Liberals' second carbon tax, the clean fuel standard, has found that it will actually increase net international greenhouse gas emissions. Canadians are struggling to make ends meet and are trying to heat their homes and put food on the table. Why does the government want to add \$1,277 to annual household energy costs?

What is being cleaned here are the pocketbooks of Canadians, without any environmental benefit. If the government insists on proceeding with this high-cost hypocrisy, will it at least delay the clean fuel standard by six months?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working on many fronts to reduce oil and gas emissions. We, of course, are going to be capping emissions from the oil and gas sector. We are going to be investing in carbon capture. Yes, we are going to be implementing a clean fuel standard. We are also going to be phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by 2023, two years ahead of schedule. We have already got a good start. We are phasing out eight.

The Speaker: That is all the time we have for Oral Questions today.

The hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, there have been discussions among the parties and, if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent to adopt the following motion: That, given that billionaire companies like Irving have been using captive insurance scams for almost 50 years; the CRA recently identified more than \$76 billion in unpaid taxes in the Panama and paradise papers, including from Irving; out-of-control inflation is making it hard for Canadians to afford basic—

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt. We have a whole side here who is saying that they were not consulted and will not be giving unanimous consent, so I am going to have to stop it there. I am sorry.

• (1515)

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

ALLEGED UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE FROM A MEMBER—
SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The Chair would like to address the point of order raised yesterday by the member for La Prairie concerning alleged unparliamentary language heard from the sidelines during Oral Questions yesterday.

Since the alleged events, the Chair has confirmed what was said. The Chair is of the view that these were indeed disrespectful comments.

[English]

Exchanges between members of the House are sometimes heated and intense, but the Chair expects everyone to conduct themselves in a dignified manner and to choose their words carefully.

[Translation]

As I explained in my decision of March 29, 2022, found on page 3739 of the Debates, and I quote: “We are all here as elected representatives and each of us is entitled to respect. Personal inflammatory language has no place in our debates.”

We have been duly elected to fulfill our mandate and represent our constituents. Our presence in this chamber is legitimate and appropriate.

I thank the members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

**STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
FOR A HEALTHIER CANADA ACT**

The House resumed from November 2 consideration of the motion that Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to make related amendments to the Food and Drugs Act and to repeal the Perfluorooctane Sulfonate Virtual Elimination Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill S-5.

[Translation]

Call in the members.

• (1525)

[English]

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

(Division No. 210)

YEAS

Members

Abouttaif	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste
Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Dalton
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Ferreri
Fillmore	Findlay
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gaheer
Gallant	Garneau
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Goodridge
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hajdu	Hallan
Hanley	Hardie

Government Orders

Hepfner	Hoback
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Kelly
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kmiec
Koutrakis	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lake
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lantsman	Lapointe
Larouche	Lattanzio
Lauzon	Lawrence
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lehoux	Lemire
Lewis (Essex)	Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Liepert	Lightbound
Lloyd	Lobb
Long	Longfield
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)	MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacGregor	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Martel	Martinez Ferrada
Masse	Mathysen
May (Cambridge)	May (Saainich—Gulf Islands)
Mazier	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McDonald (Avalon)	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLean	McLeod
McPherson	Melillo
Mendès	Mendicino
Miao	Michaud
Miller	Moore
Morantz	Morrice
Morrison	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Muys	Naqvi
Nater	Ng
Noormohamed	Normandin
O'Connell	O'Regan
O'Toole	Patzer
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Perkins	Perron
Petitpas Taylor	Plamondon
Poilievre	Powlowski
Qualtrough	Rayes
Redekopp	Reid
Rempel Garner	Richards
Roberts	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rood
Ruff	Sahota
Sajjan	Saks
Samson	Sarai
Savard-Tremblay	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schiefke
Schmale	Seeback
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shields	Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton East)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simard	Sinclair-Desgagné
Singh	Small
Sorbara	Soroka
Steinley	Ste-Marie
Stewart	St-Onge
Strahl	Stubbs

Routine Proceedings

Sudds	Tassi
Taylor Roy	Thériault
Therrien	Thompson
Tochor	Tolmie
Trudeau	Trudel
Turnbull	Uppal
Van Bynen	van Koeverden
Van Popta	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vecchio
Vidal	Viersen
Vignola	Villemure
Virani	Vis
Vuong	Wagantall
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weiler
Wilkinson	Williams
Williamson	Yip
Zahid	Zarrillo
Zimmer	Zuberi— 320

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

- (1530)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

VETERANS AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 23, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the first report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs.

- (1540)

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

(*Division No. 211*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultouf	Aitchison
Albas	Aldag
Alghabra	Ali
Allison	Anand
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Atwin	Bachrach
Badawey	Bains
Baker	Baldinelli
Barrett	Barron
Barsalou-Duval	Battiste

Beaulieu	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Benzen	Bergen
Bergeron	Berthold
Bérubé	Bezan
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blanchet
Blanchette-Joncas	Blaney
Block	Blois
Boissonnault	Boulerice
Bradford	Bragdon
Brassard	Brière
Brock	Brunelle-Duceppe
Calkins	Cannings
Caputo	Carr
Carrie	Casey
Chabot	Chagger
Chahal	Chambers
Champagne	Champoux
Chatel	Chen
Chiang	Collins (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek)
Collins (Victoria)	Cooper
Cormier	Coteau
Dabrusin	Dalton
Damoff	Dancho
Davidson	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Deltell
d'Entremont	Desbiens
Desilets	Desjarlais
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diab	Doherty
Dong	Dowdall
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Epp
Erskine-Smith	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fergus	Ferreri
Fillmore	Findlay
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser
Fry	Gaheer
Gallant	Garneau
Garon	Garrison
Gaudreau	Gazan
Généreux	Genuis
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Goodridge
Gould	Gourde
Gray	Green
Hajdu	Hallan
Hanley	Hardie
Hepfner	Hoback
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Idlout
Ien	Jaczek
Jones	Jowhari
Julian	Kayabaga
Kelloway	Kelly
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kmiec
Koutrakis	Kram
Kramp-Neuman	Kurek
Kusie	Kusmierczyk
Kwan	Lake
Lalonde	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lantsman	Lapointe

Larouche
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lehoux
Lewis (Essex)
Liepert
Lloyd
Long
Louis (Kitchener—Conestoga)
MacGregor
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Martel
Masse
May (Cambridge)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod
Melillo
Mendicino
Michaud
Moore
Morrice
Morrisey
Murray
Naqvi
Ng
Normandin
O'Regan
Patzner
Pauzé
Perron
Plamondon
Powlowski
Rayes
Reid
Richards
Robillard
Rogers
Rood
Sahota
Saks
Sarai
Scarpaleggia
Schmale
Serré
Shanahan
Shields
Sidhu (Brampton East)
Simard
Singh
Sorbara
Steinley
Stewart
Strahl
Sudds
Taylor Roy
Therrien
Tochor
Trudeau
Turnbull
Van Bynen
Van Popta
Vandenbeld
Vidal
Vignola
Virani
Vuong
Warkentin
Webber
Wilkinson
Williamson
Zahid

Lattanzio
Lawrence
Lebouthillier
Lemire
Lewis (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Lightbound
Lobb
Longfield
MacDonald (Malpeque)
MacKenzie
Maloney
Martinez Ferrada
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McDonald (Avalon)
McKay
McLean
McPherson
Mendés
Miao
Miller
Morantz
Morrison
Motz
Muys
Nater
Noormohamed
O'Connell
O'Toole
Paul-Hus
Perkins
Petipas Taylor
Poilievre
Qualtrough
Redekopp
Rempel Garner
Roberts
Rodriguez
Romanado
Ruff
Sajjan
Samson
Savard-Tremblay
Scheer
Seeback
Sgro
Sheehan
Shipley
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sinclair-Desgagné
Small
Soroka
Ste-Marie
St-Onge
Stubbs
Tassi
Thériault
Thompson
Tolmie
Trudel
Uppal
van Koevorden
Vandal
Vecchio
Viersen
Villemure
Vis
Wagantall
Waugh
Weiler
Williams
Yip
Zarrillo

Zimmer

Zuberi— 318

Business of the House

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for your ruling on the point of order I raised yesterday regarding unparliamentary language uttered by the member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation.

However, I had also asked for an apology from the member who made the unparliamentary comments. I would like to take this opportunity to ask him to withdraw his remarks and apologize to Parliament.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation have anything to say? He has nothing to say.

The hon. member for La Prairie.

Mr. Alain Therrien: Mr. Speaker, we heard comments that were clearly unparliamentary. You agreed that his remarks were unparliamentary. If he were a gentleman, the member would stand up in the House and apologize for making those unparliamentary remarks.

The Speaker: I cannot force him to do so.

The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask the government the traditional Thursday question.

We are all preparing to return to our ridings for this very important week, when most of our colleagues will be marking Remembrance Day to honour the veterans who have served our country, and especially to honour the memory of those who have given their lives for the freedom we enjoy in Canada today.

We still have one day tomorrow, prior to that week, as well as the week following Veterans' Week. I would like to ask the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader to give us the details of the upcoming schedule.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons (Senate), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed, we will all be returning to our ridings next week to pay tribute to those who fought for our freedoms and the values we hold so dear in Canada.

Before that, today we will be hearing the fall economic statement shortly. Tomorrow, the first order of business will be a vote on the ways and means motion regarding the fall economic statement. We will then return to second reading of Bill C-27, the digital charter act.

Government Orders

When we come back after the break, our intention will be to immediately return to the fall economic update. We want to give the Conservatives as many opportunities as possible to speak to it so that hopefully we can vote on it in the fall and not the spring, which we did last year.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND REVIEW COMMISSION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-20, An Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission and amending certain Acts and statutory instruments, be read a second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Kristina Michaud (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to debate Bill C-20. We could call this take three, because the government has wanted to pass legislation for this matter for some years, but neither Bill C-3, which was introduced in the 43rd Parliament, nor Bill C-98, which was introduced in the 42nd Parliament, were prioritized.

Those two bills unfortunately died on the Order Paper. However, what is encouraging is that all parties seemed to agree. They supported the principle of these two bills, which is relatively the same as what we find today in Bill C-20. All things come in threes, as they say. I hope the bill will pass this time.

However, it is unfortunate that it was not made a priority earlier. It was more than 18 years ago that Justice O'Connor recommended the creation of an independent process to handle public complaints against the Canada Border Services Agency, or the CBSA. That decision was handed down in 2004, but it was not until 2022 that the government finally decided to act.

As the Minister of Public Safety explained earlier, Bill C-20 seeks to amend the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act and the Canada Border Services Agency Act to change the public complaints process.

This bill would establish the public complaints and review commission, which would replace the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It would make it possible to investigate complaints concerning the conduct and level of service of RCMP and CBSA personnel and review specified activities of these two organizations.

It is true that we currently have an independent oversight mechanism, but its mandate covers only matters affecting national security. It is therefore rather surprising that the CBSA is the only public safety agency in Canada that does not have a body that gives citizens recourse against an organization that can sometimes abuse its authority—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order.

I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but a lot of people in the House are talking. Do they not realize that there is a debate happening right now?

I would ask them, out of respect for the person who is speaking, to continue their conversations in the lobby.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia.

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that.

I was saying that it is rather surprising that the CBSA is the only public safety agency in Canada that does not have a body that gives citizens recourse against an organization that can sometimes abuse its authority. That is unfortunate. My goal here is not to put CBSA officers on trial, but the fact is that, as in many organizations, sometimes abuse happens. The people who experience that abuse need a space to speak out against it and to have the results of the investigations reviewed if the results are unsatisfactory.

At the same time, we all know that allowing an organization to investigate itself never produces great results. Therefore, it is very important to have an external oversight body. The fact that complaints are currently handled internally means that if a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of an investigation, there is nowhere for them to turn to have those findings reviewed. This has been the case since the CBSA was created.

Also, when complaints are dealt with internally, access to information requests must be made to obtain more details. We know what happens with access to information requests. As my colleague from Trois-Rivières said, the government is so transparent that we can see right through the pages it provides. He was referring to the 225 blank pages sent by Health Canada in response to an access to information request.

I was talking about Justice O'Connor earlier, but the Privacy Commissioner of Canada also found major deficiencies in January 2020, particularly when it comes to searches of travellers' electronic devices.

I am pleased that the government finally introduced Bill C-20, and it can count on the Bloc Québécois's support for the bill to be studied quickly. I want to emphasize the importance of hearing from the different groups concerned, groups such as the Customs and Immigration Union, whose president has already expressed some reservations about the bill. Obviously we know that the CBSA is dealing with a major staff shortage. According to the president, this may contribute to causing delays and creating tension between officers and travellers.

The government needs to ensure that customs officers have enough resources to do their job properly. There is no excuse for abuse, I just want that to be clear, but I also want to ensure that the border officers' union is involved in the process leading up to the passage of this bill.

Government Orders

• (1550)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Maybe members did not understand me when I spoke in French, so I will speak in English. There is quite a buzz of discussion in the House right now. I would ask members to please take their discussions to the lobbies out of respect for the member of Parliament recognized to speak at the moment.

The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia has the floor.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Kristina Michaud: Madam Speaker, I thank you once again for your intervention. I really appreciate it.

As I was saying, there is a serious labour shortage at the Canada Border Services Agency right now. I am sure everyone will agree that this is true pretty much everywhere. According to the union president, this could be contributing to some of the problems that exist at the moment. The president would like the new body that deals with complaints, the infamous commission we are talking about, to also deal with misconduct on the part of managers, not just employees. He noted that if a complaint points to a systemic problem in the organization, the commission should address that problem rather than directing everything to the one person with whom the traveller interacted. He also noted that CBSA staff are often forced to work mandatory overtime and sometimes deal with hundreds of people a day, which can also contribute to the tension.

The bill amends the Canada Border Services Agency Act to provide for the investigation of serious accidents that involve not only employees but also CBSA officers. I think this is positive enough to address the concerns of Mr. Weber, the union president, about systemic problems that may exist within the agency.

Bill C-20 would also allow the new commission to recommend disciplinary processes or the imposition of disciplinary measures in relation to individuals who have been the subject of complaints. In my opinion, this is a clear step forward that can help restore the CBSA's image and public confidence in the agency. It also provides for the investigation of serious accidents involving officers and employees of the CBSA.

One thing that seems particularly important to me is the opportunity to review the activities of the Canada Border Services Agency in general. The commission will be able to present its findings and make recommendations to which the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency must respond in writing. This commission will be made up of civilians, not former members of the CBSA or the RCMP, which will ensure that the commission's decisions are not tainted or biased.

The bill also requires the RCMP commissioner and the president of the Canada Border Services Agency to submit an annual report to the Minister of Public Safety about what their organizations have done that year to implement the new review commission's recommendations. The minister must table the report in the House of Commons and the Senate within 15 days.

The bill would also provide for an awareness campaign to inform travellers of their rights, which I think is great. I think that the best way to inform people of their rights is through this type of campaign. I applaud the fact that this is in the bill.

It is important to implement a clear process because, unfortunately, there has been a lot of abuse in the past. However, the process also needs to be accessible and easy to use. Bill C-20 proposes a process that seems a bit long and complicated. There is a good chance that most people would drop it before reaching the end of the process. Take for example an officer who makes a sexist or racist remark to a traveller. For most travellers, it might be more complicated to file a complaint with the Canada Border Services Agency, wait for a response and refer the complaint to the review board than to simply let it go.

We will have to see in committee whether the approach set out in Bill C-20 is appropriate or whether changes need to be made. However, we agree that the process itself is necessary. In 2019, Mary Foster, from Solidarity Across Borders said, and I quote, "We have enough experience to know that making a complaint to the CBSA about the CBSA doesn't really lead anywhere". Having the option of challenging the findings of an investigation is therefore essential to maintaining public trust.

It is important to remember that the CBSA has a lot of power, including the power to detain Canadians, search them and even to deport people. In its legislative summary of the bill, the Library of Parliament mentions the case of Maher Arar, a dual Syrian Canadian citizen who was detained by American authorities in 2002 during a layover in New York as he was returning to Canada from a trip to Tunisia. They deported him, and he was then detained and even tortured in a Syrian prison for nearly a year.

He was questioned by the FBI and the New York police without being allowed to contact a lawyer or even make a telephone call. That is what led Justice O'Connor, who I mentioned earlier, to propose the creation of a new civilian agency to oversee the activities of both the RCMP and the CBSA.

• (1555)

Some will say that it is a rather extreme case, but the number of investigations of misconduct by border officers increased significantly in 2020 despite the dramatic reduction in international travel due to the pandemic.

A Radio-Canada article reported the following:

The misconduct consisted mainly of preferential treatment...or lack of respect for clients, among other things.

The Canada Border Services Agency says it conducted 215 "founded" investigations of its officers in 2020, compared to 171 in 2019...The 200-plus investigations pursued last year resulted in 170 officers being reprimanded, largely with temporary suspensions. Just eight officers have been fired since 2018.

One officer [for example] was let go for interfering in the immigration process. The internal investigation found that the officer tried to help an immigration lawyer by illegally removing flags from a client's file and issuing a temporary residency permit.

Routine Proceedings

These are rather serious allegations.

Other officers were dismissed for belittling clients, making inappropriate comments toward co-workers, abusing their authority or sharing private CBSA information.

Complaints with allegations of harassment and sexual assault have also been filed. Again, these are rather serious complaints made to the CBSA. This shows once again the importance of having an independent and external oversight body for the CBSA.

I spoke earlier about searching travellers' electronic devices. There have also been cases where some travellers have had their privacy invaded. Customs officials obviously have the right to search the content on digital devices, but they must put the devices in airplane mode.

On this point, Commissioner Daniel Therrien said, "The agency and its customs officers did not follow acceptable practices for handling the personal information of Canadian citizens re-entering the country". According to the commissioner, "Officials must provide written reasons for searching devices." In one reported case, an officer shredded handwritten notes three days after the commissioner's investigator called. In another case, a customs officer allegedly photographed the contents of a digital device, which is prohibited, while another looked at a traveller's bank statements, after she was forced to open her banking institution's app.

I could go on and on, but I think I am running out of time. I am pleased that the Minister of Public Safety heard me say that he will be able to count on the Bloc Québécois's support to move this bill forward. I look forward to studying it in parliamentary committee.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia will have seven minutes remaining when the House resumes debate on this matter.

It being 4 p.m., pursuant to order made Friday, October 28, I now invite the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to make a statement.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1600)

[*English*]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I would like to table, in both official languages, a notice of a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the fall economic statement tabled in Parliament on November 3, and certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on April 7.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I would ask that an order of the day be designated for the consideration of this motion.

FALL ECONOMIC STATEMENT

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the fall economic statement 2022.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, for the past several months, I have been travelling across Canada—to more than two dozen cities and towns—to meet with Canadian workers and Canadian businesses.

I visited an auto parts manufacturer in Etobicoke, a potash mine outside Saskatoon, and the women and men in Sherbrooke who make the boots our armed forces wear around the world.

[*English*]

I visited the port of Saint John in New Brunswick, and a family farm in Olds, Alberta, and in Dartmouth, Brampton and Calgary, I spent time with some of the truckers who keep our economy humming. The Canadians I spoke to were all so proud of our country. They were proud of the hard work they do every day to feed Canada and the world, build our cars, send our goods to global markets and raise their children, but they were also anxious about whether our future will be as prosperous as our past, and anxious about paying the bills today.

That is where I want to start, with the high cost of living so many of us, along with so many Canadians, are concerned about.

I know it has felt like just one thing after another since COVID first reached our shores. We turned the economy off, and then we turned it back on again. Vladimir Putin illegally invaded Ukraine, and now we are dealing with inflation. These are related, of course. Global inflation is not created by the decisions of any one government alone, but by the combined aftershocks of two and a half years of historic turmoil.

[*Translation*]

Inflation was 6.9% in September, after falling for the third month in a row. That is lower than in the U.S., the U.K., and the eurozone.

For Canadians feeling the pinch at the checkout counter, or when they fill their tanks with gas, it is still too high. This is a challenging time for so many of us—for our friends, for our families, for our neighbours.

[*English*]

It is important, as both the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, that I am honest with Canadians about the challenges that still lie ahead.

Interest rates are rising as the Bank of Canada steps in to tackle inflation, and that means our economy is slowing down. It means there are people whose mortgage payments are rising. It means business is no longer booming in the same way it was since we left our homes after the COVID lockdowns and went back out into the world. That is the case in Canada. That is the case in the United States, and that is the case in economies, big and small, around the world.

Canada cannot avoid the global slowdown any more than we could have avoided COVID once it had begun infecting the world, but we will be ready. Indeed, we are ready. That is because, for the past seven years, our government has been reinforcing Canada's social safety net. We have improved many important programs and added some new ones too.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

These investments in Canadians are like a well-built house with a solid roof—needed in all seasons and in all weather, but most essential when the temperature drops.

That is why, as fall turns to winter, we will continue to stand up to those who would cut the EI and the pensions Canadians have been contributing to for their entire working lives, and need today more than ever. It is why we created the Canada child benefit and why we are making child care more affordable. It is why we enhanced the benefits that those who served with our flag on their shoulder depend on. It is why we doubled the Canada student grant, to make it a little easier for all young people to go to college or university or to pursue an apprenticeship. It is why we enhanced the Canada workers benefit, and why we increased both old age security and the guaranteed income supplement.

[*English*]

That is why it is so important that the Canada pension plan and our most important benefits are all indexed to inflation. In today's fall economic statement, that is why we are delivering on a plan that millions of Canadians voted for just over a year ago and why we are delivering new measures to enhance the social safety net that is there to support all Canadians.

We are working to deliver lower credit card fees, so that small businesses do not have to choose between cutting into their already narrow margins and passing fees on to their customers. We are taxing share buybacks to make sure large corporations pay their fair share and to encourage them to reinvest their profits in Canadian workers and in Canada.

We are delivering a multi-generational home renovation tax credit, which will help families across Canada afford to have a grandparent or a family member with a disability move back in if they want to. We are tackling housing speculation and making sure that homes are for Canadians to live in, not a frequently flipped investment asset.

We are delivering on our commitment to make home ownership more affordable for young people and new Canadians with a new tax-free first home savings account that will make it so much easier to save for a down payment. We are also delivering with a doubling

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of the first-time homebuyers' tax credit, to help cover the closing costs that come with buying that first home of one's own.

We are permanently eliminating interest on the federal portion of Canada student loans and Canada apprentice loans.

We are working to make sure families do not need to choose between taking their child to the dentist and putting food on the table. We are creating a new quarterly Canada workers benefit to deliver advance payments and put more money, sooner, into the pockets of our lowest-paid and often most essential workers. This means the Canada workers benefit will now support 4.2 million Canadians.

We are providing hundreds of dollars in new targeted support to low-income renters. For the Canadians who need it the most, we are doubling the GST credit for the next six months.

I have some very good news about that. For the 11 million Canadian households who need help the most, those GST cheques will start arriving in bank accounts and mailboxes tomorrow.

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

We are providing targeted inflation relief, because that is the right thing to do.

As the Bank of Canada fights inflation, we will not make its job harder. We are compassionate and we are also responsible.

[*English*]

Canada has the lowest deficit and the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. In our April budget, with inflation in Canada and around the world elevated and still rising, we knew we had to chart a fiscally responsible course, and we did. In April we committed to bringing the deficit down to just 2% of GDP this year. Today, we forecast it will be just 1.3% of our \$2.8-trillion economy.

We can bring the deficit down today because our pandemic spending worked. Thanks to the historic support we provided and thanks to the incredible resilience of Canadians, Canada is entering this time of a slowing global economy from a position of fundamental economic strength.

Routine Proceedings

There are 400,000 more Canadians working today than before the pandemic. Our economy is now 103% the size it was before COVID hit. So far this year, Canada's economic growth has been the strongest in the G7, stronger than in the United States, stronger than in the United Kingdom, stronger than in Germany, stronger than in France and stronger than in Italy or Japan.

Thanks to that enviable economic performance, we are able to provide targeted support to the most vulnerable while still shrinking our deficit. In the months to come we will be able to invest in the Canadian economy and to be there for the Canadians who need it the most, because we were responsible in April and because we are keeping our powder dry today.

Canadians are tough, and the Canadian economy is resilient. That is why we can all be confident we will get through this, just as we have gotten through so much over the past two and a half years. In fact, there is no country in the world better placed than Canada to get through the coming global slowdown.

• (1615)

[Translation]

When we do, with our fundamental economic strengths preserved, and the pandemic recession behind us, there is no country in the world better placed than Canada to thrive in a post-COVID global economy.

We grow food to feed the world, and we mine the potash that farmers here and elsewhere need to grow their own. We have the critical minerals and metals that are essential for everything from cellphones to batteries to appliances to electric cars.

We have the natural resources to power the global net-zero transition and to support our allies with their energy security as that transition continues to pick up speed.

Critically, Canada is the democracy that has all of these resources in abundance.

[English]

The global economy is at a turning point. We are entering an era of friend-shoring, a time when our democratic partners and their most important companies are seeking to shift their dependence from dictatorships to democracies. That is why the Prime Minister and Chancellor Scholz signed an agreement in Newfoundland for Germany to buy Canadian hydrogen. That is why the United States has moved from a buy America to a buy North America policy on critical minerals and electric vehicles.

[Translation]

That is why our Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry has been signing agreements with global car manufacturers and battery makers—a new one almost every day, it seems to me.

[English]

That is why our Minister of Natural Resources is pitching Canada's critical minerals to the world and working hard with provinces and territories to get them out of the ground and to global markets. The world knows that Canada can build the electric vehicles of today and tomorrow. Canadians can mine and process the critical minerals that those vehicles, our phones and our computers

are all made of, and Canadian energy workers, the very best in the world, can make Canada the leading provider of energy as the global economy moves to net zero.

Our allies are counting on us, and our government believes that this ongoing shift is the most significant opportunity for Canadian workers and Canadian businesses in a generation.

[Translation]

Seizing this opportunity is what our April budget invested in, and it is what this fall economic statement invests in, too.

With major investment tax credits for clean technology and clean hydrogen, we will make it more attractive for businesses to invest in Canada to produce the energy that will power a net-zero global economy.

[English]

We are launching a new Canada growth fund that will help attract the billions of dollars in new private capital required to fight climate change and to create good jobs in Canada at the same time. From critical minerals to ports to energy, we will continue to make it easier for businesses to invest in major projects in Canada, projects with meaningful indigenous participation, projects that meet the highest environmental standards, projects that will create good jobs and projects that will allow Canadian workers to drive our economy forward.

We will continue to invest in tackling the productivity challenge that is Canada's economic Achilles heel. We will continue to invest in making sure Canadians have the skills they need to get good-paying jobs, and we will continue to bring to Canada more of the skilled workers that our growing economy requires. However, we know these investments represent only a down payment on the work that lies ahead, so, in the months to come, we will continue to work hard to ensure that Canada is the best place in the world for businesses to invest and create good-paying jobs from coast to coast.

Now, the investments we are making today and the ones we will continue to make will be crucial to the future of the Canadian economy. They will help make Canada a leader in the industries of tomorrow, and they will help to build an economy that is more sustainable and more prosperous for generations to come. However, what matters most is what these investments mean for Canadians. For energy workers in Alberta, investments in clean energy mean there will continue to be good-paying jobs for them and their children. For a young couple in Vancouver, more workers in the building trades mean more affordable homes for their new family. For auto workers in Windsor, Canadian leadership on electric vehicles means they will build the next generation of cars that have powered our economy for more than a century.

Canadian workers know how important our social safety net is, and that is why our government will never deplete the contributions that keep Canada's employment insurance and pensions strong.

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Canadians know how important training is to equip them for valuable, good-paying jobs, so we are investing in that, too.

Canadian workers also know that the single most important thing—the difference between managing to pay their mortgage and fearing they could lose their home; the difference between paying the bills at the end of the month and falling behind—is a well-paid, stable job, doing work they are proud of with people who respect them and their skills.

That is why our overriding economic objective during COVID was to preserve Canadians' jobs, and that is why today, what Canadian workers need is a government with a real, robust industrial policy, a government committed to investing in the net-zero transition, to bringing in new private investment, and to helping create good-paying jobs from coast to coast to coast. That is what we have been doing, and that is what we are continuing to do today.

[*English*]

In 1903, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier stood in this House and said:

No, this is not a time for deliberation, this is a time for action.... We cannot wait because time does not wait; we cannot wait, because in these days of wonderful development, time lost is doubly lost; we cannot wait, because at this moment there is a transformation going on in the conditions of our national life which it would be folly to ignore and a crime to overlook;...

He was speaking then about the transcontinental railway, one that connected Canada and the Canadian economy from east to west, and which helped usher in a new era of prosperity for the people of our growing country. That project, like Laurier himself, was imperfect. The prosperity and opportunity it brought were not shared equally with indigenous peoples, with women, with new Canadians, but his message then is one we should heed today, that we must heed today.

At the turn of the last century, Laurier and a generation of Canadian statesmen understood that Canada was at a turning point and that we could seize it or risk being swept aside by the manifest destiny of more ambitious leaders. Today, we are likewise at a pivotal moment.

Routine Proceedings

The global green transition calls for an industrial transformation comparable in scale only to the Industrial Revolution itself, and Canada is blessed with the talented people, the natural resources and the manufacturing base needed to drive that transformation. At the same time, Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine has upended geopolitics, reinforcing for our allies the value of turning to each other, to us, for the critical elements of their supply chains and for their energy security.

Together, these two great shifts represent a generational opportunity to build a thriving and sustainable Canadian economy. We can lead the world in a way that far exceeds our footprint as a country of just 39 million people.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

We can lead the fight against climate change, and we can do it in a way that creates good jobs and new businesses for Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We can build affordable homes and deliver affordable child care, helping our economy grow and making life more affordable for middle-class Canadian families. We can ensure that everyone in this country can enjoy the prosperity we are investing in together.

That is the future that we can create for ourselves and for our children. However, we cannot wait, because time truly does not wait. We cannot wait, because in these days of wonderful development, time lost is doubly lost.

I know that times feel tough right now, and they are, but we have a well-built house with a solid roof, and we have survived far colder winters before. Just as fall turns to winter, so, too, does winter turn to spring.

[*English*]

There are warmer days ahead. We will reach them together by building a country where everyone can earn a good living for a hard day's work, by building an economy that works for everyone, by investing in the Canada we are all so proud of today so that we can be even prouder of our amazing country tomorrow because, of all the countries in the world, the 21st century will surely belong to Canada.

• (1630)

Mr. Jasraj Singh Hallan (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's policies have caused 40-year highs in inflation, leading to massive interest rate hikes on Canadians, which will cost Canadian families \$3,000 a year.

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Today the Prime Minister had a chance to give Canadians some relief by cancelling the carbon tax on home heating, but he refused. The Liberals refused despite the fact that home heating bills will increase by 50% to 100% this winter. They refused despite billions in new tax revenue on the growling stomachs of Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister stop punishing Canadians and cancel the plan to triple, triple, triple the carbon tax on home heating?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely understand that times are tough for so many Canadians today. That is why I was so glad to share some great news, which is that the GST credit will start arriving in the bank accounts and in the mailboxes of 11 million Canadian households tomorrow. That is much-needed support. It is going to provide such valuable inflation relief to the Canadians who need it the most.

That is not all. We are moving forward with \$500 to support Canadians who are struggling to pay their rent. Again, it is much-needed support for the people who need it the most.

That is not all. We are moving forward to ensure that never again in Canada will a mother have to choose between buying groceries and taking her kid to the dentist. That is not right in Canada, and we are going to change that.

There is a lot more we are going to do and we will talk about it in a minute.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her speech.

Her speech sounded nice enough, but take a look at the concrete measures in the economic statement and try to see what is new compared to last spring's budget. It is disappointing. The minister just gave two examples of measures that were adopted before this statement was presented.

What I liked about her speech is that she recognized that there is an inflationary crisis at the moment, and she acknowledged the risk of an imminent recession. However, I find it unfortunate that there are no new concrete measures that would show Canadians how this crisis will be dealt with, how they will be helped and supported.

For example, we know the employment insurance system is not working. It is broken. Now is the time to fix it, before the country goes into recession. However, that was not announced in the speech.

As prices go up, we worry about seniors, especially those from 65 to 75 years of age whose payments did not go up. There are no new measures for these people, who can no longer make ends meet and whose incomes are really limited, nor are there any fiscal measures that would give them an incentive to work if they want to work a few days a week. I think that would have been easy to do, and we expected to see something like that here.

My last comment is about health care. We know that health care systems in all the provinces and Quebec are underfunded and in crisis. There are problems. Provincial health ministers will be meeting with the government in a few days. What will they talk about? We expected the government to solve the problem by transferring

the \$28 billion and committing to increasing health transfers by 6% per year. With the ministers' meeting just days away, there is no money on the table. What is going on?

If the government knows there are problems, why did it announce so few measures—really, hardly any new measures—in this statement?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that what I just presented was the fall economic statement, not a budget. It is a continuation of the work that we began in April and will continue in the spring.

I have a great deal of respect for the member opposite, but I want to point out that we have announced and brought in support measures that will make a big difference in the lives of Canadians. We have doubled the GST credit, and that is real support. Rental assistance is real support. Dental care assistance is real support.

I have announced other important measures. Support for students comes to mind. We all understand that life today is particularly difficult for our young people, which is why our government will be there with help for our students. There is also help for the most essential but lowest-paid workers. I think this is an important and well-targeted measure. This measure will help the people who need it the most.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are certainly some items that the finance minister has mentioned that are very familiar to us New Democrats because they are the things we have been pressuring the government into doing, whether it is dental care, the Canada housing benefit, child care or many other things we could go on about, including the GST rebate that is coming to Canadians tomorrow. However, today was an opportunity to go above and beyond those things, to address the real challenges that people are facing as we come into the fall, as they are worried about home heating costs and the cost of groceries, and as we learn that Loblaw's is making a million dollars a day more in profit above their latest banner year.

What we thought we might have seen in addition to things that the NDP has required of the government to move on were things like more serious consequences for price fixing in the grocery industry. We wanted to see a windfall profit tax, so that companies that are making extraordinary profits in the pandemic context are required to pay more in order for there to be assistance for Canadians. We want to see the GST on home heating removed, a measure that would apply across the country and not just in provinces that are subject to the federal carbon tax.

Routine Proceedings

The government is now starting to indicate there may be a recession coming, except that it just reverted to the prepandemic, broken EI system just as people are starting to worry about looking for work. Where is the promised EI modernization reform the government has been talking about forever?

I also want to say I was very disappointed to note that the only reference to health care in this document is about dental care. That is a good thing and we should be moving forward on that, but at a time when most Canadians do not trust that if they go to the emergency room they are going to be seen and helped, we need way more investment in health care, working collaboratively, of course, with the provinces. We need to see that the federal government is willing to come to the table with those dollars.

On all of these many things that this was an opportunity to take action on, why have we not seen any action on those important issues?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have answered a question from the member for Elmwood—Transcona since the death of his father, who served honourably here, so I want to start by paying tribute to him. He was a very important person for Canadians, for his constituents and for progressive causes in Canada.

I believe this fall economic statement will make a difference in the lives of Canadians. It will make a difference in the lives of the Canadians who need help the most.

One of the themes in this fall economic statement is support for hard-working Canadians. We see that in the Canada workers benefit. We are moving this to an advance payment, because people who work really hard for really low pay cannot wait until the fiscal year is over to get a top-up; they need it while they are working. I think they deserve it. We should be rewarding them for doing those hard jobs and should be encouraging them.

This is an important measure and I am really glad it is here. I want to say how much I thank all of those hard-working people who get the Canada workers benefit and how much I respect them.

There is another element in this fall economic statement that is directly about supporting hard-working Canadians and making sure there are great jobs for them. It is our green tax credits. In the hydrogen credit and the clean-tech tax credit, we have included provisions for good, high-wage jobs and apprenticeships. It is the first time we have done that and it will make a big difference.

• (1640)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we learned that the costly coalition would be introducing this economic update today, we had two demands: no new taxes on workers and seniors and no new spending unless matched by equal savings. Today, this inflationary scheme triples the tax on home heating, gas and groceries, and adds \$20 billion of inflationary spending that will drive up the cost of living.

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives will stand up for Canadians, their paycheques, their homes and their savings, and we will vote against this inflationary scheme.

[*English*]

How did we get here? Well, the cost of government is driving up the cost of living. Half a 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, farmers and workers to produce those very same goods.

The Liberals will pretend that they had no choice but to double the debt. The Prime Minister will claim that it is not his fault that he added more debt than all previous prime ministers combined.

Let us start with the fact that he added \$100 billion of debt before the very first COVID case was ever discovered here in Canada. He cannot blame COVID for that. In fact, he blew through his promise that the deficit would never exceed \$10 billion. It was already \$100 billion in total before the first case of COVID.

Then when COVID came, 40% of all the new spending measures had nothing to do with COVID, according to the Prime Minister's own named Parliamentary Budget Officer. There was \$200 billion of spending unrelated to COVID, and even among the COVID spending, there was an "all you can eat" buffet of waste and mismanagement.

The Liberals sent CERB cheques to prisoners. They sent them to public servants who were simultaneously drawing public salaries. They gave wage subsidies to wealthy corporations that were rich enough to pay out dividends and bonuses to their executives, even after I warned that they should ban that hideous practice. They tried to give half a billion dollars to the WE Charity, an organization that had given half a million dollars to the Prime Minister's own family.

The Liberals then spent \$54 million on an app we did not need, that did not work and that could have been designed in a weekend for \$250,000. The previous Conservative government had successfully delivered apps that were necessary, useful and of a similar complexity for \$200,000 to \$300,000, but somehow this one went up to \$54 million.

Many of the recipients of the money admit they did not do any work. They just hired other people to do work. The Liberals gave the money to people who did not do anything other than delegate the work to someone else. Do we not have public servants getting paid within the government to deliver that type of contracting? The government will not even tell us the identities of all the recipients of that money.

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Do not tell me the government had to double the size of the national debt. Do not tell me that every dollar of inflationary spending was necessary. The Liberals were irresponsible and unnecessarily profligate with the dollars of Canadians, and now people are paying the price.

The Prime Minister will now say that Russia caused the inflation in Canada. Of course, we do less than 0.3% of our trade with Russia and Ukraine combined, beyond which the stuff they make is the stuff we have here already. They have energy and food. We have energy and food. If only the Prime Minister would get out of the way of our farmers and energy workers and let them produce those things.

Beyond that, under the previous Conservative government, there were wars. There was a massive war in Afghanistan, and there were others in Iraq and Syria, but we never had inflation anywhere over 4%. In fact, we were able to successfully contribute to defeating terrorists and tyrants in those conflicts while keeping the inflation level low here in Canada. We were able to get our spending under control and our budget back into balance.

By contrast, the government's spending today is 30% higher than in the pre-COVID year 2019. Why? The Liberals said all the deficits were the result of COVID. COVID is now behind us and spending is still 30% higher because we know it is not COVID that has caused the costs to rise. It is a costly coalition and an irresponsible Prime Minister who put these burdens on Canadians' shoulders.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

This is a Prime Minister who has no control and no respect for Canadians' money. Canadians are the ones paying the bills here in Canada. The more the government spends, the more Canadians pay. That is why we have the highest inflation rate in 40 years. It is "justinflation".

[*English*]

The Prime Minister also loves to blame all the cost of living rises on other people. Why is it, then, that house prices in this country are the second most inflated anywhere on planet earth? Why is it that land costs have gone through the roof? Land is not imported from Ukraine or Russia; land is right beneath our feet. We have the second biggest supply of it anywhere on earth, yet Vancouver is the third most overpriced housing market on planet earth and Toronto is the 10th.

Can members imagine that? Two of our biggest cities have more inflated housing prices than New York City; London, England; and countless other big metropolises that have more people, more money and less land. In fact, Vancouver's house prices are more inflated than Singapore's. Singapore is an island. It is out of land. Canada has more land where there is no one than it has land where there is anyone, so why is it that we cannot find a place to house everyone?

The first reason is that local government gatekeepers prevent housing construction by piling on massive delays that drive up costs and drive down the supply of housing. The Prime Minister has had seven years to stand up to the municipal and provincial

gatekeepers who stand in the way of housing construction, but he would never do that because he does not want to confront the Liberal and NDP radical left in city halls across the country that has made this problem worse. What he has done instead is continue to shovel money into their local bureaucracies to reward them for blocking the poor, our immigrants and our working-class kids from ever owning a home.

When I am prime minister, we will impose conditions so that if cities want more federal infrastructure money, they will have to remove the gatekeepers. We will connect their infrastructure dollars to the number of houses that actually get built so that young people can find a place to live. We will also sell off 15% of the 37,000 federal buildings we have so they can be converted into housing and our young people can have affordable homes.

The second reason we have such expensive housing and such expensive everything is the Prime Minister has engaged in a massive orgy of money printing over the last two years. He said money printing would not cause inflation, even though that is exactly what it has done every single time it has been tried over the last roughly 3,000 years.

Here is how it worked. The Prime Minister wanted to be able to claim that he was borrowing all this money on the cheap. He loved to stand in the House and say his debt was not costing any money, because interest rates were so low.

• (1650)

The only reason he could borrow for next to nothing was that his central bank was creating the cash out of thin air. If it had been a real lender, it would have demanded a real rate of return on the loans. What happened was that they created something called "quantitative easing". Whenever they invent new, incomprehensible terminology, we can be sure that there is something sinister behind it.

Here is how it works. It is very simple. The government sells bonds to lenders. The Bank of Canada buys back those bonds at a higher price. The lenders love it. That is why the banks thoroughly endorse this strategy, because they made the money on the difference. It is simple arbitrage. The government sells them something on a Monday and buys it back from them at a higher price on a Wednesday. Who would not go for that deal?

Unfortunately, only about 100 financial institutions are eligible to participate in it. The rest of the ordinary, hard-working Canadians who pay for it are not, but the banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions profited off of this transaction.

The Bank of Canada pays for those bonds by depositing money in the accounts of those large financial institutions held on reserve at the Bank of Canada. Those reserves skyrocketed over the last two years as the bank bought up to \$400 billion of new debt.

What happened? That exploded the money supply, and more dollars chasing fewer goods caused higher prices. Much of the money then funnelled into the financial system and was lent out in mortgages to wealthy investors, who saw a massive expansion in the number of real estate holdings they could accumulate. Thus, housing prices went up 50% in two years, creating the biggest housing bubble in Canadian history.

Now that the central bank is forced to raise interest rates, it risks bursting that bubble. All of the people who got on the balloon when it was on the ground floor and went up into the sky now risk coming crashing down as that balloon is bursting.

Worse than that, the Bank of Canada now has hundreds of billions of dollars of deposits that it made into the accounts of those large financial institutions that it has on its reserves. What has happened to those deposits? They now bear more interest, because interest rates have gone up. The wealthy bankers who participated in this arbitrage transaction at the beginning and were paid for it by having more money deposited into their accounts at the Bank of Canada now collect 3.75%, because that is the policy rate that the bank pays.

What does that mean? It means that the central bank is now losing money for the first time in its history and Canadian taxpayers are forced to bail them out to a tune of \$4 billion every year. This entire wretched scheme, of which I warned two years ago, will, maybe in the end, amount to the single biggest wealth transfer from working-class people to ultrawealthy insiders, from the have-nots to the have-yachts, at any time in our history.

Now we see the painful consequences. It is not just about numbers on a ledger. It is about 1.5 million people forced to go to a food bank in a single month. It is about one in five people skipping meals or cutting portions because they cannot afford their food. It is about the forthcoming winter, of which the minister spoke in metaphorical terms. People are now not going to be able to heat their homes, as the cost of home heating is expected to double or even more for those people who are on home heating oil.

It is about the 35-year-old living in his parents' basement, despite the fact that he did everything we asked him to do. He got a job. He got an education. He worked hard every day, and now he cannot afford a home, which means he cannot build up collateral, cannot build a credit history, cannot build savings for his future and, therefore, cannot start a family. In Canada, a country with among the most abundant supply of land on earth, we cannot find places for people to live.

These are the real-world consequences of irresponsible decisions. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister sits and smirks at the fact that he took a \$6,000-a-night vacation to sleep in the fanciest hotel on planet Earth, staying up in opulent hotel lobbies and jazzing it up with his friends while people back home cannot pay the rent. Canadians are out of money and the Prime Minister is out of touch.

• (1655)

We are going to inherit this mess, all of us, and we are going to have to fix the problem. We have a big job ahead of us; do we not? We have a very big job ahead of us. He will leave a big mess just like his dad left. He will be off on a beach somewhere surfing, and

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the rest of us will be busy working to clean up the mess he left behind. The sooner that happens, the better it is. Only then he will have to pay for his own hotels. We will not be paying for them anymore. He will have to pay his own way like Canadians are today.

How are we going to clean up this mess? For one, we are going to bring in a pay-as-you-go law so that every time we bring in a new dollar of spending, we will find the savings to pay for it. Do members know who does that? Everybody in the real world.

[*Translation*]

That is how single mothers pay their bills. When they want to send their children on vacation, they find a way to save money in other areas. The same goes for small businesses. When they want to increase their advertising spending, they find ways to save money in other areas of the business. It is normal. It is the reality of every person living in the real world.

[*English*]

In fact, scarcity is the condition that faces every creature in the universe as there is only so much to go around, everyone except for the Prime Minister, who just takes everyone else's money to pay for his own wants and desires. In the real world, if a family wants a new deck, they might pass up on their vacation, or find a deal on the vacation and maybe pick up some used lumber at a local construction yard to save some money so that they can do it all within the same budget. Imagine if instead of just piling on new spending all the time, the government actually had to find savings to pay for it. That would force the same real-world trade-offs—

The Speaker: I am going to interrupt the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

I thought everything was going very smoothly and very nicely. We were respecting each other. Let us keep that up, and we will let the hon. Leader of the Opposition continue.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I am not allowed to mention the presence or absence of the Prime Minister, but I will just say that some people bring happiness wherever they go and others bring happiness whenever they go.

Conservatives are going to cap government spending. We are going to get the Bank of Canada back to its core mandate. For 25 years, the Bank of Canada had a very simple mandate of 2% inflation, brought in by the Mulroney government. It was to stick to 2%. Interest rates and money supply were all governed to that purpose, and it worked. It worked until the current Prime Minister came along and pushed the bank to print cash to pay for his spending. We are going to have no more of that.

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Conservatives will fund our programs with real money, rather than printed cash, because we know that there are no freebies in this world and we know that, ultimately, the taxpayer and the consumer pay for everything. We will reinstate that mandate and we will audit the central bank through the Auditor General to make sure that never again is there such a horrendous abuse of our money as we have seen over the last couple of years.

Instead of creating more cash, we are going to create more of what cash buys. We are going to grow more food, build more houses and produce more resources right here in Canada, and here is how we will do it. We will incentivize our municipalities to remove their gatekeepers so that we can build more houses. We will remove the gatekeepers off the backs of our farmers by cancelling the tariffs and taxes on their fertilizers and fuel so they can produce more in this country. We will remove the government gatekeepers that stand in the way of our resource sector.

Do members know that Canada today has the second-slowest time for building permits of any country in the OECD? The only other country that is worse is the Slovak Republic. In Canada, if we take all the types of building permits that exist, everything from a renovation permit on a house all the way up to a full uranium mine, and we average it out, the average permit time is 250 days. In South Korea, it is 28 days.

We wonder why investors are taking their money to places like South Korea, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Switzerland and Ireland. It is because they can actually get things built in those countries. That is what Conservatives are going to do in this country. We are going to compress the timelines and speed up approvals. We are going to challenge all levels of government to meet the goal of Canada being the fastest place to deliver a building permit anywhere in the developed world.

The minister said today she is going to pitch the world on our critical minerals. The problem is that she cannot get them out of the ground. She is going to tell everyone that they exist. Out there in that field there is some lithium, copper and nickel, but companies have to wait seven years for us to give a permit for anyone to dig that mine. She says she is going to give out a bunch of corporate welfare to mining companies, which can fill their bank accounts with taxpayers' cash. If they cannot get a permit to dig the mine, they will not be able to turn it into anything other than big, fat boondoggles for taxpayers.

Conservatives will repeal the anti-energy law, Bill C-69, so that we can build Canadian pipelines with Canadian steel to take Canadian energy to Canadian marketplaces and around the world. We are going to eliminate the anti-investment taxes that pile on the backs of our entrepreneurs so that it is actually rewarding to build things in this country. We are going to axe the carbon tax so that it is possible for our industries to compete and for our people to afford energy in this country.

As for energy, there are two very different approaches. Across the aisle, they believe that we should tackle climate change by making traditional energy that Canadians rely on more expensive. Conservatives believe in tackling climate change by making new alternatives more affordable. We will do that by incentivizing and speeding up permits to mine lithium, copper, cobalt, graphite and

other necessary minerals that will eventually go into Canadian-made electric cars and other forms of renewable energy. We will incentivize the production of these energies here in Canada. We will incentivize nuclear energy here on Canadian soil so that we can power our economy emissions-free.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

We will also get rid of the red tape to get dams built in Quebec. We know that in Quebec, there will not be enough electricity in the future to charge electric cars and to meet all the needs of a green future.

Their solution is to build dams. However, the Prime Minister wants to prevent or delay the construction of those dams with duplicate processes.

We agree with the Government of Quebec. It is not necessary to add three or four years to the time frame for these projects since the Government of Quebec already has processes in place to protect the environment. Quebeckers are capable of protecting the environment, and we are going to help them by approving the construction of hydroelectric dams.

[*English*]

Finally, we will make this a country where work pays again. It does not pay to work for a lot of people. Let us look at someone on disability who recovers to a point or arrives at a point in their life where they realize they can work 10 or 15 hours and they want to get out into the world and contribute. The clawbacks right now mean many people on disability lose more than a dollar for every extra dollar they earn.

The government published a report showing that if a single mother with three kids who earns \$55,000 a year earns another dollar, she loses 80¢ of that dollar. She earns about \$25 an hour. She loses in clawbacks of her benefits and taxes on her income 20 of those dollars, so her real wage on that extra hour of work is five dollars an hour. Nobody in Canada should be expected to work for five dollars an hour. That is an outrage. That is why my government will reform the tax and benefit system to ensure that whenever somebody works an extra hour, takes an extra shift, or earns an extra bonus, they are always better off and they always keep more of that dollar.

We will do this to restore the Canadian promise. I look around this chamber and I see many inspiring stories, like my finance critic, who rose today to ask the first question. He is the son of immigrants. He grew up in a tough neighbourhood and had a difficult childhood, but he was able to get a diploma in accounting, which he is putting to very good use in this House. He started a business, built homes and was elected to serve in a G7 Parliament.

I, myself, am the son of a 16-year-old unwed mother who had to put me up for adoption to two school teachers. They always taught me it did not matter where I came from, that it mattered where I was going, and it did not matter who I knew, that it mattered what I could do. That is the country I want my children to inherit, and that is the country we will fight for every single day in this House.

• (1705)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was honest with Canadians, the Canadians he is not going to be supporting through this fall economic statement. He told them right away. He told students, for example, that he is not going to support the permanent elimination of interest on student loans. He told the lowest-income workers that he is not going to support the continuation of the Canada workers benefit and making sure they get that in advance. He talked about incentivizing companies to invest in Canada, but actually, in the fall economic statement, there are really important measures that are going to help us build the economy of the future.

This is very consistent with his actions to date. Whether it is the Canada child benefit, the Canada dental benefit, the Canada housing benefit or whether it is supporting low-income workers and those most vulnerable in our country, he has consistently refused to stand up for them and to support them. He talks a big game, but when there is actual action to do, he does not deliver.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Conservative government created what the Liberal government now changed the name of to the workers benefit. We created that benefit in the first place, because we wanted to allow, along with increasing the personal exemption, more and more Canadians to be off the tax rolls altogether and keep a bigger share of their paycheques.

Furthermore, on the child benefit, the Liberals wanted to take the money from parents and give it to bureaucrats. We were the ones who put the money directly in parents' pockets. There is something very simple to realize. The government cannot give people anything without taking it away. The government does not have any money. First they try taxing it, which makes people worse off. Then they try borrowing it, which means that future generations are worse off. Then when they ran out of those two options, because they ran out of other people's money, they tried printing the money and now we have 40-year highs in inflation.

Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result is the definition of insanity. Stop the insanity. Stop the inflation.

[Translation]

Ms. Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Joliette said, the economic statement mentions a number of problems. It talks about supply chain issues, in-

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flation and the possibility of a looming recession. Unfortunately, it did not take us long to realize that the economic statement lacks tangible measures.

Unlike the Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois proposed many progressive measures to help Quebecers and Canadians in the coming years, which will likely be difficult ones. The government is not only turning a deaf ear to the tangible, constructive measures proposed by the opposition, but it also really seems to be working in silos. Allow me to give two examples.

First, the government has been promising EI reform for months, but unfortunately, we are not seeing anything about that. According to the economic statement, there are no plans to carry out this reform in the next six months. Second, the Minister of Industry has been promising to reform the Competition Bureau, but once again, there is absolutely nothing about that in the economic statement.

The Liberal government seems to be completely out of touch and, more importantly, it does not really seem to be working as a team. Would the member for Carleton care to comment on that?

• (1710)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, yes, the government is out of touch, but we should not be surprised.

The Prime Minister spent \$6,000 of taxpayers' money for each night he spent in London. At a time when Canadians cannot pay their bills and are skipping meals, he forced them to pay for a hotel room that costs \$6,000 a night. Yesterday, he admitted that he was the one who stayed in the infamous \$6,000-a-night room. He told the truth by accident. It happened by chance. That is the only way to get the truth from the Prime Minister.

It is an important fact, not because a \$6,000 expense will bankrupt the Government of Canada, but because it shows that this Prime Minister is completely out of touch with the day-to-day reality of Canadians who work hard but cannot pay their bills.

We, the Conservatives, will stand up for the common people, their paycheques, their savings, their homes and their country.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the brief time that I have, there are two aspects of the Conservative leader's speech that I would like to address.

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The first is his comments about home heating and the Conservatives' desire to remove the carbon tax on heating. Of course, he will know that New Democrats are prepared to work with people here across party lines to get things done. He and I, in fact, did that at the finance committee before he was leader in order to ensure that an iteration of the Canada emergency wage subsidy program would not allow for the payment of dividends to companies while they were on the take in respect of the wage subsidy.

We have extended our hand here a number of times in the House to say that while we support carbon pricing, we want to see an elimination of the GST on home heating. We have seen Conservatives refuse NDP amendments to that effect. I wonder if today we might get a commitment from the leader of the official opposition that he will work with New Democrats in order to take the GST off of home heating.

If I have a little bit more time, I would love to get into that second issue which of course is his comments about building permits. Building permits are a municipal issue. I am glad he is taking an interest. I think that is important in order to address the housing issue, but I know that when it comes to workers' rights and the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause, he is claiming that because it is in another jurisdiction, he will not comment. Seeing as he is willing to comment on other jurisdictional matters today, will he get up and condemn the pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to offer the hon. member my condolences on the loss of his father, who was indeed a wonderful gentleman.

Second, the member is right. We worked together to try and stop the government from giving tax money to companies so they could spend it on bonuses and dividends for their wealthy executives.

Third, on the issue of building permits, it is not true that building permits are exclusively municipal. We have federal permitting for large-scale resource projects. They require federal permits. In fact, there are far too many projects that require federal permits. One of the reasons we cannot get pipelines and many other resource projects built is the immense delays imposed by the federal government on local projects.

When we were in government, we made a rule during the economic action plan of one project, one approval. Prior to that, oftentimes the same consulting firm was hired to do three separate environmental assessments, delaying the project and driving up the costs, so we said it would be one project, one permit. That is what we are going to do when I am the prime minister. That is why we are going to get more dams built in Quebec. We are going to deliver more Canadian clean, low-carbon, upstream oil and gas projects. We are going to deliver civilian grade uranium and we are going to have more nuclear energy. Other major projects are going to happen quickly and effectively.

Finally, yes, I will attach conditions to federal tax dollars that go to municipal governments. These woke left-wing mayors keep telling us they are out of money for housing, yet they are the ones who are driving up the cost of housing. If they want me to burden taxpayers by sending more money to their municipal governments,

they need to get out of the way, remove their gatekeepers and build more homes.

• (1715)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would say to the hon. opposition leader that comic timing is definitely his forte.

He suggested that the Liberals have invented a complicated term called “quantitative easing”. Does he really believe the Liberals invented it? If so, I would urge him to ask Dr. Google about the quantitative easing quotes by Jim Flaherty.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I do not have to google that, because Jim Flaherty was against quantitative easing. We specifically said we would not do it, and we did not do it, and we proved this nonsense today that the Liberal government had to do quantitative easing because the Americans did it. That is the excuse. The Americans did it in 2008, 2009 and 2010. They printed money like crazy and ballooned income and wealth inequality as a result.

Here in Canada we said no. We banned our Bank of Canada from doing that. As a result, we did not have an inflation crisis. We kept our debts low and we kept income inequality lower than it would have been.

We can have an independent monetary policy. Our mothers taught us that just because all of our friends are jumping off a bridge does not mean we have to.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by saying how excited my colleagues and I were this morning to get a look at this important economic statement behind closed doors. As we read through the opening pages, we felt hopeful. We thought the government understood the problems we are dealing with, the global inflationary crisis that is having a real impact on ordinary people. People are having to make do with less because prices are going up. Food, energy and gas prices, not to mention housing prices, have all gone up. People are facing major challenges, and the government says that we are in the middle of an inflationary crisis. A few days ago, even the Minister of Finance said she would be making an economic statement today because we are looking at an inflationary crisis.

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It is the same thing with the risk of a recession. Once again, it is a global issue. Most economists and analysts are saying that there is reason for concern and that we could enter a recession in 2023. We know that the Bank of Canada and the central banks decided to fight inflation to bring price increases back into the range of 1% to 3%, thus the 2% target. In order to do that, they are implementing a monetary policy that involves increasing interest rates. Higher interest rates mean an economic slowdown because of softening demand, which is why there is a risk of a global recession. The country's economy is facing a recession in the coming year, and the minister recognizes that in the economic statement. We commend her for that.

The further we read in the document, the more we examine it from every angle, the more we do the math and compare the tables, statistics and figures in this statement with what was in last spring's budget, the more we realize that it is all very slick rhetoric. The document recognizes the economic problems that we face, but when it comes to proposing any solutions, it leaves much to be desired. There are actually very few new measures announced in this economic statement. It reiterates what has been adopted since the beginning of the fall. It reiterates the commitments made in the last budget. It announces that there could be additional measures in 2024, but there is not much new for now.

There is actually some assistance for student loans. My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I, as the member for Joliette, can say that this does not affect us very much, given that the loans and bursaries system is under the purview of Quebec. I guess it is good for students in the rest of Canada, but this measure does not directly affect Quebecers.

Next the government says it will spend more to hire more public servants to improve service delivery. That is great. We saw what happened with passports in the summer. There are countless examples. There are many problems related to wait times. Nevertheless, this is a fairly minor expenditure. There is nothing major here. The statement also reiterates the funding announced for the people in the Maritimes and eastern Quebec who suffered through hurricane Fiona. We applaud that commitment as well. However, all of this is very minor and very marginal.

The statement uses the word "inflation" over a hundred times, but the solutions it offers are the same ones that were presented in the spring budget, which made hardly any reference to inflation. There is an inflationary crisis going on, but what is being done about it? The government uses the word "inflation", then rehashes the same proposals it served up in the spring, when it was not talking about inflation.

One of Quebec's national dishes is shepherd's pie. People generally say that it tastes better when it is reheated. The same cannot be said of the measures we have here. What we are being served in this update, in this economic statement, is reheated leftovers. Most of the measures in the update are reheated leftovers.

The significance of the current inflationary crisis and the risks of recession should not be minimized.

• (1720)

The Bloc Québécois called on the government to take that into account and propose concrete solutions. For example, if workers lose their jobs because of the recession, we will need an employment insurance system that works. Everyone, including the government, knows that the EI system is broken. It is so badly broken that for every 10 people who lose their job, barely four have access to EI.

Since 2015, the government has been telling us to wait. It has been telling us that change is coming, that the system will be reformed. We have been listening to the same broken record for seven years. We expected it to happen last September, as the special measures for the pandemic were ending, but no, back we went to the old Axworthy system that does not work at all.

The government is telling us that we are headed for a recession, so the time has come to take action. It is urgent that we fix the EI system. There has been plenty of consultation. We know exactly what needs to be done to improve the system, but no. This is yet another missed opportunity. According to this economic statement, the EI system will not be fixed. The government is going to leave it broken.

The government is saying that it is presenting an economic statement because we may be headed for a recession, but at the same time, it is saying that it will not fix the EI system. I completely agree with my colleague from Terrebonne when she said that the government seems to be working in silos. Did the minister responsible for EI talk to the Minister of Finance? Do these people talk to each other? This would have been a good opportunity to do so.

We are in the midst of an inflationary crisis. Prices are going up, and the primary victims are obviously those whose incomes are not indexed to inflation. I am talking about seniors. As we know, the government decided to help people aged 75 and up, but not those aged 65 to 75. This government created two classes of seniors.

Today, faced with a significant increase in the price of housing, gas and groceries, low-income seniors aged 65 to 75 do not have enough money to eat properly. They must turn to food banks and make some agonizing and very humiliating choices.

Given that today's statement acknowledged the problem of the current inflationary crisis, now would have been the time to announce measures for these people. The Bloc Québécois believes that the government must not create two classes of seniors and that it must increase old age security for seniors 65 and up to cover inflation and deliver a modicum of social justice. This government willfully refused.

Why is the government refusing to help those aged 65 to 75? I believe it is because the Liberals want these payments to be insufficient for low-income people in the first class of seniors that it created, those aged 65 to 75, so they will no longer have enough public support to make it to the end of the month. That way, those seniors will be forced to return to work.

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In 2015, this government was boasting about rescinding the Conservative law that raised the retirement age to 67. However, when we look at what is happening to seniors aged 65 to 75 as a result of inflation, we see a government that is trying to bring in a similar policy through the back door, a government that is ensuring that seniors aged 65 to 75 do not have sufficient income from public pension funds to make ends meet. As a result, they are going to be forced to return to the labour market.

If that is the goal, it is very hypocritical. If that is not the goal, then I do not know what this government's problem is. It could be gross incompetence, but I think it is more likely utter hypocrisy. This is not right. It is unfair. When low-income people retire, they have often worked hard their whole lives. They are often single women. In many cases, they were caregivers. They do not have a pension because they stayed at home to take care of their family. This government claims to be feminist, but it does not recognize their contribution, and it is failing them.

● (1725)

In its statement, the government acknowledged that there is an inflationary crisis, but it is not doing anything for those hit hardest by this crisis. That is deplorable. We expected to see something like that in the statement, but it is not there, and that is deplorable.

There is an inflation crisis, prices are going up, and there might be a recession. Communities in Quebec and the other provinces are also experiencing another major crisis, the health care crisis. People no longer have access to doctors. The health care system is broken. It was strained during the pandemic. Workers and nurses are all exhausted. They are burned out. Plus, the system is underfunded. The fact is, these problems started in the 1990s when the federal government in Ottawa decided to deal with deficit and debt problems by reducing health transfers. That is when things started to go wrong.

In the aftermath of the pandemic, as infection rates begin to fall, we are starting to see how much was put off during that time. We thought that screening, care and surgery could wait a little while, but now we realize that the system is no longer working at all. The provinces and Quebec know what to do, and the specialists and the expertise are there. They know what to do, but they lack resources because Ottawa has been neglecting its role for quite some time now.

The provincial and Quebec governments are telling Ottawa that it is time for the federal level to play its role by providing as much funding for health care as possible. These figures are calculated year after year by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. According to him, health transfers should amount to \$28 billion, and there should be a 6% increase every year to cover the rising costs and the existing needs. There is a desperate need.

In response to this public health crisis, the government had the role and the duty to address this issue today in this statement, especially since the government just announced that in a few days it is inviting all the provincial health ministers to a nice meeting with the federal government to discuss health systems and funding. What is the government going to tell those ministers just a few days after saying that it would not invest a penny more in the system when the need is there?

When he was health minister in Quebec City, the very Liberal and very colourful Gaétan Barrette accused this government of practising predatory federalism, because the government was imposing conditions without providing the necessary funding to go with it. It was a Liberal health minister who accused this government of practising predatory federalism. That kind of infighting among the Liberals sends a clear message that things are not going well, not at all.

Today, the government and the Minister of Finance had a unique opportunity to announce that they were going to address this issue and set the stage for the ministers' meeting. Again, they have been promising to fix this situation since 2015. Every time a Bloc Québécois member stands up in the House and asks the government if it is going to do its job, the government says that something is coming down the pike and not to worry. We may have believed that promise once or twice, but after hearing it for seven years, enough is enough.

What message are we sending to the provincial health ministers who are trying to figure this out? They are the ones holding together the health care system, which is crumbling because of the considerable strain it was under during the pandemic. Now they are being invited for talks, but the numbers that have just been released show that there is not a penny more for them. It is contemptuous. This government stands up at every opportunity to lecture every other level of government. It even stands up to lecture the Pope and people around the world. However, when it comes to dealing with its own files, it is nowhere to be found, it is not up to the task.

That is what we saw with passports and immigration too. Everything this government touches turns into a fiasco. There are cost overruns and service is not up to par. Now it is trying to tell the provinces what they should do, but it is not even investing any money.

● (1730)

I mentioned immigration. A few days ago, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship announced new immigration levels. Canada will aim to bring in 25% more immigrants by 2025. That means 500,000 newcomers per year, as reiterated in today's statement.

The Bloc Québécois is concerned about that for a number of reasons. Let me start with the practical, pragmatic reasons. We believe those targets are unrealistic. Our riding offices have been inundated with requests for urgent intervention because departmental employees cannot handle applications that are already in the queue. Wait times are atrocious, documents get lost, and mistakes are constantly being made. From a purely practical, technical perspective, maybe the government should show that it is capable of doing its job properly—and it is not—before it changes the target. Then we can talk.

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The government did not include one line about housing capacity. We have a housing shortage. In Quebec and across Canada, there is a shortage of housing. The Liberal government in Ottawa withdrew from funding social housing in the 1990s, and nothing has been done since. Of course, a bit of funding was announced recently, but it does not go far enough to meet the current needs. There is not enough housing. The private sector does not have the capacity to build enough homes, condos, apartments to meet the current needs. The government is planning to grow the population very quickly. Where are we going to put all these people?

Condos and houses are no longer affordable. What do we tell young people? They want the American dream, which is to be part of the middle class and have a union job that allows them to buy a house and pay for it during their working life. Now that dream is shattered. Young people can no longer hope to be able to afford a home or become a homeowner in their lifetime. The housing shortage is exacerbated by the imbalance between supply and demand and the fact that the population is growing. Prices are skyrocketing, and housing is no longer affordable. These young people are being told that we are going to increase the population very quickly without restoring any balance to the housing market. This does not make sense.

I used housing as an example, but the same is true for schools. There are not enough spaces. There is no coordination in that area either, nor in the area of health care. This is irresponsible.

The situation is tough for us in Quebec, since we are not yet a country. Earlier, the leader of the Conservative Party talked about what he will do when he is prime minister. I want to talk about what Quebec will do when it is a country. I think this will happen within 10 years, because we will work hard. Seeing how this government and this nation ignore us, we will have all the cards to take control of our destiny.

If we were to accept our share of the target that has been announced, which is prorated to our population, how could we properly accommodate and integrate such large numbers? That is impossible. It is impossible to guarantee that the French language would be preserved and respected. Even in Quebec, we see that the French language is in decline. Bill C-13 is currently being studied in committee, and the government wants to reject the Bloc's amendments, which seek to better protect French in Quebec. I am not even talking about French outside Quebec, because the figures have plummeted and that is so very sad. With the complicity of the fourth party in the House, the government will continue to erode the weight of the French language even within Quebec.

We are not equipped to properly welcome all these newcomers in the language of Molière, the official language of Quebec. That is a serious problem. It is an impossible situation because if we welcome fewer immigrants in order to integrate them well, Quebec's weight as a proportion of Canada's population will quickly diminish. Either way, we could be marginalized, and it is the very survival of our culture that is at stake.

• (1735)

Let me be clear. Immigration is a great asset. Welcoming newcomers is wonderful, except that Quebec culture does not support the policy of multiculturalism, which basically consists of telling

immigrants to come live here as though they were still living in their own country and not to integrate because their grandchildren will.

That is not what immigration is for us. We want to be able to say hello to a newcomer, to talk with them. We want to benefit from their rich cultural heritage, and we want them to be one of the gang, someone we can interact with. That is not going to work if the immigration levels are quickly increased as announced. That is very worrisome.

I am sorry that I spent a little longer than expected on that aside, but it is still very important.

Let me come back to the economic statement. With regard to EI, as my colleague from Terrebonne said, the Minister of Employment and Workforce Development likely did not talk to the Minister of Finance.

As she also said, it sounds like the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry did not talk to the Minister of Finance either. It sounds like the Liberal government is using the Apple method of developing policies and projects piecemeal without any communication. It looks like that is what is happening here. Everything that the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry has said, in the House and in the media, is missing from the economic statement. I do not get it. That is problematic.

In times of economic uncertainty, discipline is called for, but not austerity. That is why we want the most vulnerable, like seniors aged 65 to 75, to have support measures they can count on during this inflationary period. That is very important. We do not want austerity. We have asked the government to focus on its basic roles, on the federal government's primary functions, to try to concentrate on those and do them well for a change. Health funding is one example.

We were really surprised by the last budget, in the spring. The government announced 15 or so new policies, new ways of doing things, mostly in health. These were all encroachments on provincial jurisdictions. Instead of focusing on doing its job well, the government wanted to work on the ground in Quebec and the provinces and encroach on their jurisdictions.

Here we have another example. The government is announcing the creation of a jobs secretariat. That is something Quebec is taking care of, and it is going quite well. Ottawa wants to use us as a model. One of our fears is an encroachment in a few years' time. Sooner or later, it is going to impose conditions on us. It is going to steal our model and then tell us that it has its own program now and that we have to follow suit. Then we will no longer have the freedom to implement our model, which is based on the labour market in Germany. We drew inspiration from Germany. Again, these are encroachments. Instead of doing its job well and focusing on its role, the government continues to stray.

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The media reported a new tax on share buybacks. It is an interesting measure. We look forward to studying it, but the update states it will be implemented in 2024. It is now 2022. Today, the government was either rehashing old measures or announcing measures that will not be implemented in the next little while, or next year, but the year after that. Once that time comes, we can talk about it then and see if the government has made the same announcement about the same measure six times by then or if it changed its mind.

Evidently, this is not an economic update that will go down in history. The minister's speech earlier was full of fine rhetoric, fine principles, and a fine acknowledgement of the problems affecting the economy. However, this government was either rehashing old measures, approaches and actions it wants to take or putting off new measures to the distant future. The rest is inconsequential. The government had a golden opportunity to solve problems and consider the seriousness of the current crisis, but it did not do so. That is extremely unfortunate.

● (1740)

Obviously, I encourage the minister to talk to her colleagues, to come to the Standing Committee on Finance more often, and to communicate more with representatives from all sectors of the country's economy, without ever forgetting Quebec. That will only do her a lot of good and may even inspire her to implement concrete measures.

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and his thoughts on the economic statement. I obviously disagree with his conclusions. I do not even agree with his analysis.

The fall economic statement offers a good example of a government that is ready to help Canadian workers in need, to help Canadian families and vulnerable individuals, including Quebec families and vulnerable Quebecers. Is my hon. colleague against doubling the GST credit for Quebecers?

He spoke about the fact that the student loan program does not apply to Quebec. I would like to know whether my colleague is prepared to encourage the Government of Quebec to follow the federal government's lead and eliminate interest on student loans. In fact, I insist that he do so. Does my colleague agree that the Canadian government provided a lot of funding for the Quebec system?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. As I often remind him, he is the member who represents me because my second home is in his riding, so shout out to him.

I want to remind him that doubling the GST credit is a measure the Bloc Québécois called for prior to last spring's budget. It is a very good measure. It was passed unanimously in the House, actually. In committee, the clause-by-clause study took just one meeting. Never have we seen a bill pass so quickly. If the government cares to take notice, I would like to point out that, if it draws inspiration from measures proposed by the Bloc Québécois more often, things will go more smoothly and be better managed.

This is not rocket science. It is because we are in touch with people and organizations. We are in touch with reality and what is pos-

sible, and we share that information with the government. When the government uses that to inform its decisions, everybody is happy.

Let me point out that education is under provincial authority. I am glad Quebec has not let go of that power. As I said, these measures are perfect for people in other provinces, but they have nothing to do with Quebec.

● (1745)

[*English*]

Mr. Scot Davidson (York—Simcoe, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague touched on the lack of action on basic services. When I travel through York—Simcoe, people are talking about the lack of children's Tylenol. They are talking about lineups at airports. They are talking about passports. They are talking about a public service that has increased employees by 30% for worse outcomes.

The government is failing us with basic services, and in my riding, when I go around, people are talking about 15- or 18-month waits to see a specialist. They are saying they do not have doctors. Now we have a dental plan, which the government has come out with, and people are truly saying that, before we spend a billion dollars on that, they would love a doctor.

Why are the Liberals going around the provinces, when there are already provincial plans there? Could the member touch on the failure of the federal government on basic services?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention and his question.

I believe that people are experiencing the same thing in each of our ridings. This government has demonstrated that it is incapable of providing the basic services it is supposed to provide. I do not know anymore how many times I have cited the example of passports. That is a striking example.

As my colleague mentioned, everyone everywhere is being impacted by the health crisis. There is a direct link to be made to the disengagement of this government, which does not want to fund public health care based on the capacity to pay established by the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That is clearly unacceptable and it must change.

With regard to dental care insurance, we already have a dental plan in Quebec, and this government did not even deign to try to harmonize the plans or in some way amend the bill in committee. That is shameful.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I am going to talk a bit about housing. Earlier we heard the official opposition leader say that government spending contributed to the housing crisis. I think it is plausible that it threw fuel on the fire that was already burning, even before the pandemic.

However, we know that there are a lot of people who have a lot of money and who will continue buying properties to rent them out to Canadians who have enough money to pay rent, regardless of whether the government continues to spend or not.

Today the government is presenting some targeted measures to respond to the problems in the housing market. However, they all presuppose that housing is a commodity and that we should be using market tools to fix this problem. Housing is considered solely in the context of the market and there is no mention of the investments that we need.

Could my colleague say a few words about that?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Elmwood—Transcona for his question. I am fortunate to serve with him on the Standing Committee on Finance. I can say that we often work very collaboratively together, and it is a pleasure to work with him.

On the housing issue, the fundamental problem is supply. There is not enough housing, that is, not enough houses and condos to meet the needs of the population. We need to build more. However, there is not enough capacity in the construction sector to meet the needs and to ensure acceptable equilibrium prices. Obviously, the solution to ensure that the price remains affordable is to have properly funded social housing. The cost of rent should not exceed 30% of people's income.

Yes, there are some exceptions, but this government is basically just funding affordable housing, which is a catch-all concept. It needs to start funding social housing again. Under Bill C-31, most people living in social housing in Quebec will not receive any assistance. This is unacceptable and should have been changed in committee, but this government refused to do so.

• (1750)

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, we are in the midst of a climate emergency, yet big oil and gas companies are making record profits. In light of that fact, I am sure the member for Joliette was as relieved as I was that, at the very least, the governing party did not introduce new fossil fuel subsidies in this economic update.

Then again, the government did not introduce a windfall tax on the profits of oil and gas companies, it did not completely end fossil fuel subsidies and it did not invest in major energy retrofits with those funds. Is the member concerned about that?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question. The short answer is “yes”.

I would also like to point out that he asked his question entirely in French. I congratulate him and thank him for that.

As Radio-Canada reminded us this week, Canada provides the second-highest oil subsidies in the G20. That is unacceptable. I have been in the House since 2015, and this government has been saying since that time that it will end subsidies to oil companies. As with so many other issues, this government talks the talk but does not walk the walk.

In the economic statement, the government refers to a measure it introduced last spring concerning a deduction for green energy.

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However, this measure is aimed at the private sector, not the public sector. In addition, small modular reactors are considered green energy. These are small nuclear power plants on wheels that extract oil from the oil sands. The government will be using taxpayers' money to support that. These are its environmental policies, and I am very concerned about them.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to talk a little about respect and what it means, because I think we are living in a time when people are finding it hard to be respected.

People are working hard at full-time jobs while interest rates are going up. If the conversation they are having around their table is whether they are going to continue to be able to afford their home, whether that is because of mortgage payments or rent that continues to climb much faster than any possible justification for it, I think they would feel like they cannot get respect.

Young people who are working four or five different jobs in the gig economy, trying to make a go, are giving up on the dream of home ownership. They are wondering if they are going to be able to afford to buy their food as they try to figure out a time to eat between the different jobs and the places they have to get to in order to work them, and they do not feel the effort they are putting in is respected right now.

People facing layoffs know there is not a decent employment insurance system to count on, because some of the improvements that were there for the last couple of years during the pandemic were taken away by the government in September, even as it begins to talk about the possibility of recession. They are feeling like they are not getting any respect, that the government is not there to put in place the kinds of things they need in order to weather the storm.

There are people living with disabilities, who cannot work at all or who can work only part-time, and I think there are many people who, due to COVID, either have had the experience of not being able to work for reasons beyond their control or have not been able to get enough work. A lot of Canadians now know that pain, and it is one that people living with disabilities in Canada have known for far too long. They cannot get respect. When they see that the meagre disability pensions various levels of government offer, which have been legislating people living with disabilities into poverty for years, even before the pandemic, are not going up in the context of inflation, it is hard for them to feel respected.

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Seniors have worked their whole lives and are now trying to make it on a fixed income that does not really grow and certainly does not grow at the pace of the extraordinary level of inflation we have seen in essentials. They do not feel like the career they had, to fight for and earn that pension over time, is being respected when it gets burned up so companies like Loblaws can make another million dollars a day of profit.

Indigenous people in Canada are part of generations of people who have not been able to access good economic opportunities and services at home. When they move to the city and find that systemic racism and jurisdictional disputes get in the way of their ability to access those opportunities and services, that is not respect, and that is a long and ongoing disrespect that Canada has paid far too often to indigenous people.

For sick Canadians right now, who just need to go to the hospital or need to get their kid or parent to the hospital, it is hard to feel respected when they walk in and see the incredible need that is there and the fact that governments have not risen to the occasion to invest in the training, employees and infrastructure we need in order to be able to deliver good health services.

Therefore, on top of all the real financial distress that people are experiencing, I think there is also this tremendous feeling of disrespect, of working really hard doing the things people can in order to make it, and of more and more not being enough. There is a feeling that the people who should be there to have their back, to try to create structures and systems that allow people who are working hard in their own way to succeed, are not doing that job.

Respect requires a few things. I do not pretend to have a comprehensive list today, but I want to offer up some of the things I think are particularly pertinent to debate in this place and some of the policies that we could adopt here in order to make life a little easier for Canadians.

Certainly one thing that respect requires is civility. We have to treat each other well. Respect also requires that we be honest with each other, and there is certainly a lack of that in this place, far too often. The third thing it requires, which speaks to some of the problems I opened this speech with, is results. We can talk at people all we like, but if at the end of the day things do not actually get better, if there is not actual material improvement that they can feel in their household budget, then it does not matter what we say in this place.

● (1755)

At the end of the day, we are not respecting people if we are not coming to the table and working together to implement real solutions that are going to make a difference in their lives.

I want to talk about civility, which is something we have talked a lot about this year, unfortunately, because there is such a pronounced lack of it. Even though we have some strong disagreements in this place, that is okay, because that is what this place is for. However, we need to do that in a way that respects other people with a different opinion and we need to understand that it does not make them demons, monsters, traitors, treasonous or whatever other word people want to substitute in. Just because somebody disagrees with us does not mean we should adopt a conspiracy theory

that they are part of some kind of world movement to undermine everybody. Just because somebody disagrees with us does not mean it is okay to promote the use of violence or attack them physically.

That is not okay. We have seen too much of that in Canada. We have seen too much of it encouraged, frankly, in the kind of irresponsible rhetoric that too often finds its way to the floor of the House of Commons.

I am going to disagree with some people today, and I am going to be harsh in my criticism. That is okay. It is when it gets taken to the next level that it is a real problem, and it is a problem that is too present and is undermining Canadian democracy.

Unfortunately, we are living in a time when that is not an alarmist thing to say. It is a truth that needs to be spoken. It is in that spirit that I am going to engage in what I hope is some meaningful and constructive criticism here today.

We have to be honest with each other if we want to show respect to ourselves and to each other in this place, but also to Canadians. I want to highlight some issues on which I think there is a pronounced lack of honesty about what is really going on. That is important, not just from the point of view of respect, but in the sense of being honest for its own sake. It is important because, if we want to get to that other part, the results, we have to be honest about what the problems are. If we cannot be honest about what the problems are and where they come from, or if certain political agendas are allowed to obscure what the real causes of the problems are, then we will not get to the solutions and we will not get the results we need.

We talk a lot about inflation in this place, and inflation is a real problem. That much is true. That is honest, and we will hear that from all sides. If we want to tackle the problem of inflation, then I think some of the narratives around here are quite unhelpful.

As much as I think it is true that the liquidity that was offered to banks right at the beginning of the pandemic, just as it was under the previous Conservative government when the great recession of 2008 hit, poured more gasoline on the fire in our housing market, I do not think it is plausible to try to pretend that moment in 2020 caused the housing crisis in Canada.

How do we know that is true? Anyone with a memory that extends back past 2020, which I hope is anyone serving in this place, will know that housing was getting more and more unaffordable then. It was breaking household budgets then. We have been on a trajectory for the last 20 years that has seen housing prices skyrocket.

In the case of inflation in the housing market alone, it is simply not true to say this is a new problem since 2020 and it has all been fuelled by government dollars. In fact, the people buying up these properties are private actors in the housing market, and they were sitting on tons of cash before the pandemic.

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They are finding ways to buy properties in the housing market and make housing more unaffordable for people who do not have a lot of means, so they can rent those same places out to renters. One of the places this started was when the Harper government refused to renew the operating grants of affordable housing that was built in the sixties and seventies.

That was not even the starting place; it was just another place. We can go back to 2015 and a bit earlier to see when real estate investment trusts started slobbering all over formerly affordable buildings that they could pay for with the money they already had in hand, mostly due to corporate tax cuts that were initiated in 2000 by the Chrétien Liberals and continued by the Harper Conservatives. Jim Flaherty himself complained that businesses were not spending and reinvesting in real capital that enhanced Canadian productivity. Those piles of cash were being used to get into real estate.

• (1800)

Let us not pretend somehow that public spending alone manufactured a housing crisis in Canada. It is not true. We will not fix the problem until everybody in this place, including the leader of the Conservatives, acknowledges that. Let us have a little honesty about the root causes of that.

Let us also have some honesty and recognize that we are in a time of serious global supply chain shortage. That is driving a lot of inflation when it comes to the price of many things. People who have been fortunate in this time to purchase automobiles have complained about the long wait. It is because they cannot get the chips from China, because China has a zero tolerance COVID policy so they often do not have workers in the factories that make the chips.

It is partly because of the free trade agenda of Liberals and Conservatives alike that outsourced that work at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s instead of building that stuff here. It is a little rich to hear Conservatives these days talking about restoring and free trade out of both sides of their mouths at the same time.

Let us talk a little about the role that corporate greed is playing in inflation. We have seen reports that say as much as 25% of the current inflation that we are experiencing comes from price increases that go above and beyond the cost increases that companies are experiencing. That is a real thing.

When we look at the report about Loblaws today, and we see that mad money is being made by a number of companies, when we see that profit happening in the oil and gas sector, and we saw it with big box stores in the pandemic, we know that these price increases are being charged on the very market principles that Conservatives and Liberals alike love to defend, which is charge what the market can bear. It is why the government does not want to implement a windfall profit tax, because it thinks if someone is in the right place at the right time and they own something that they can charge a lot for, that that is good and that is what they should be doing. It does not matter if it is food. It does not matter if it is socks. It does not matter if it is rent. It does not matter if it is a Nintendo. To them, it is all the same.

What New Democrats have been trying to say in this place for a long time is that not all goods in the market are the same. There are

goods that people cannot do without. They are not just goods. They are not wants. They are not desires. They are needs. We should have a government that structures our economy to make sure that people can access the things they need and leave to the market the things they simply want. That is a meaningful difference.

We need a little honesty in this place when it comes to what it means to defend the rights of workers. We have a Leader of the Opposition who gets up all the time and pretends that he is defending workers. I remember that he was part of the government with Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 that were a direct attack on workers' ability to organize. I have noticed his pathetic silence when it comes to the Conservative government in Ontario right now pre-emptively using the notwithstanding clause in order to deny the collective bargaining rights of workers.

I find it difficult to see the Prime Minister pretend to be a champion for those same rights when I watched in this place as his government introduced and railroaded through, with the help of the Conservatives, back-to-work legislation for Canada Post workers and workers at the port of Montreal.

If he is upset at the Ford government pre-emptively using the notwithstanding clause, we can be sure he does not have an objection to taking away collective bargaining rights by legislating people back to work. Let us have some honesty about that in this place as well.

One of the ways we could help people is by removing the GST on home heating. That is a long-standing NDP position. I thought maybe we would find some help from the Conservatives, but they are obsessed with the carbon tax. Let us have a little honesty about the facts.

First of all, the carbon tax does not apply everywhere in the country. B.C., Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Northwest Territories all have their own carbon pricing system. Removing the federal carbon tax from home heating would not do a whit for people who are concerned about the cost of home heating in those provinces. Maybe the provincial or territorial government would do that, but it sure as heck is not going to happen here.

What would help everyone across the country is if we removed the GST on home heating, because that does apply all across the country. That is why it is a better solution. That is why we proposed it in an amendment to a Conservative opposition day motion that presumably was about affordability and helping people, and they said no. Why? I am not going to take that as their permanent answer, because I believe, and we have to believe here, that people can come to their senses and make better decisions.

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● (1805)

It is why I asked the leader of the Conservative Party earlier today after his remarks on the fall economic statement if he would join with us to work to get rid of the GST on home heating. He dodged the question. He never once mentioned the GST in his answer. I found that passing strange. The Liberals are inadequate on this. They should have done something about this in the fall economic statement. It was a clear opportunity to get something done.

Yes, they have done some things to help. I am going to give them that. What have they done to help? Well, they talk about dental care, so that children can get access to dental services. For some of them, it will be the first time in their life. They talk about the Canada housing benefit, another \$500 a month for low-income renters. They talk about the doubling of the GST rebate that is going to be rolling out tomorrow for the next six months. They talk about investments in child care.

Those are all good things. I remember those things. I remember when we first raised those things and got laughed at by the Liberals, whether it was on the GST rebate, because, “Oh, we did not need that. The economy is roaring. Everything is fine. This inflation is just transitory.”

I remember running in 2015 on a national child care strategy. I remember the Liberals running against it. We kept up the pressure. We kept talking about it. We went out and talked to Canadians who need child care in order to be able to go to work. We knew we were not going to drop the file. We kept pushing it until the Liberals came to their senses.

I remember just about 18 months ago when the Liberals stood up with the Conservatives in this place in a previous Parliament to vote against dental care. It was through the power of our 25 votes in this Parliament that we held them over the barrel and are getting them to actually get it done.

Yes, I am quite aware of some of the things that the Liberal government is doing in order to bring help to Canadians. I am also quite aware of the extent to which those things would not be happening if Canadians, in their wisdom, had not elected a minority Parliament and given New Democrats the opportunity to fight for the things that we have always said we would fight for. That is exactly why we are fighting for those things.

One of the things that is in the fall economic statement, which again is something that is in the supply and confidence agreement, is a pandemic dividend. What is that? This time it is actually a dividend that comes back to Canadians, instead of Canadians paying for the dividends that go to shareholders. It is on banks and insurance companies that made record profits during the pandemic. It is a one-time payment of some of those enormous profits going back into the coffers of the Canadian government, not so that it is in the pocket of the government, but so that it goes out in the form of the GST rebate and the dental benefit and the Canada housing benefit. That is something that we fought for, including a permanent 1.5% hike on the corporate tax rate for those very same financial institutions.

I was glad to see the elimination of student loan interest permanently in this economic statement. That is something that I have

watched New Democrat MPs get up for the last seven years that I have been here and talk about and, again, get laughed at by folks on the government benches. It is because we are here and it is because we are pushing that we see things like that in the fall economic statement.

I want to talk a little about housing again. There are a few initiatives here. There is an anti-flipping tax. There is a doubling of the first-time homebuyers' tax credit, which is something that New Democrats have advocated for. I will say that these measures are still part of that market-based approach to housing that I believe we really need to move past if we are going to find a solution to the crisis in housing.

We have to invest a lot more in non-market housing. That has to be the priority if the government is not going to challenge the culture of housing as a commodity, which it could do by moving on real estate investment trusts and which it could do by buttressing the position of non-profits that want to build non-market housing.

Unfortunately, one of the needs there now is just to cover the difference that interest rates have made for projects that are on the books that now cannot go ahead because interest rates have changed the math. If the government would come to the table to help them acquire buildings and lands quickly when they are having to compete with these rates, that would be helpful. If it would come to the table to say that it is going to cover the difference in their business plan for their non-profit housing, that they are suffering because of higher interest rates, that would be something that would help.

● (1810)

They also need to get serious on urban indigenous housing as a part of that. I want to give a shout-out to my colleague from Vancouver East. In question period earlier today, she was talking about the need for a meaningful and well-funded urban indigenous housing strategy. The government talks a big game. It wants to say that a \$300-million investment is a record investment. I think that if that is true, what a shameful testament to Canadian history that indigenous peoples living in urban centres have not been able to access more funding for affordable housing far sooner.

That is the kind of thing that we need, but that again is outside the market framework that largely dominates Liberal thinking about the housing space. If we cannot break out of that, we are never going to make the difference that we need to make for Canadians in these challenging times.

I have talked a little bit about some of what is in the fall economic statement, but I want to spend some time talking about what is not in it.

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As I said earlier, we are in a very challenging moment as a country. There are all of the things that New Democrats have fought for, some of which the government is doing and some extra things the government is doing. There is the 2% tax on share buybacks, which I think is a positive measure. I am glad to see it, but I do not think it is going to make all the difference. It has to be a part of a bigger package. In addition to those things, there are many other things that really ought to have been here and that an NDP government would have been keen to put in our own fall economic statement.

Consider the question of employment insurance. The government just today is starting to talk about a recession in the offing. Just a couple of months ago, we had an employment insurance system that had been made better, not perfect but better, during the pandemic as it was easier to qualify for benefits. There was actually a benefit floor. For a part-time worker or somebody working a couple of part-time jobs who is having a hard time getting all their hours and 55% of their income from those jobs that have been cobbled together is not enough to live on, we actually had an income floor so that when they were laid off, they could hope to be able to pay the rent. All of that went by the wayside on September 24. It is just gone.

We have been saying for years during the pandemic that when those rules expired, when the government was ready to let them expire, they had to be replaced with meaningful structural reform to the employment insurance system and that in no way should the government let the new rules lapse because those rules were a lot more on the way to a functional employment insurance system than anything that we had before. At the very least, the Liberals could have kept that in place until they came up with a new fix.

We still have not seen what that new fix will be. There are rumours about maybe them acting on it this fall. I sure as heck hope so, because if the rumours about a recession in early 2023 are true, people are going to need that employment insurance to be there for them.

Only about four in 10 working Canadians before the pandemic qualified for employment insurance. That is why it was such a broken system. We have to find fixes to that. I had hoped at least there might have been a reference or a hint as to what the government has in mind on how to fix that system.

I was also disappointed to see that the only reference to health care in the fall economic statement was dental care. I am glad that dental care is there but, man, is there ever a lot more that we need to do.

The provinces need more funding for health care and I believe, as New Democrats do, that the federal government can play a positive role in convening provinces to talk about best practices to develop a human resources strategy that is not based on some provinces poaching people that other provinces train, but to have a truly national training strategy where the provinces participate on their own terms. However, somebody has to bring them together in order to have those conversations and make that happen. There is a role for the federal government to play there.

We need to acknowledge that a big problem in our health care system right now is that just not enough trained people are avail-

able to do the job. That is a national problem right now and it requires a response with every part of the country working together, arm in arm, to figure out how we meet that challenge. It is going to require federal funding, to be sure.

• (1815)

There was not a word about that. However, that is the reality that so many Canadians are living when they go to the hospital. This includes the 350 people who are dying from COVID every week in Canada, who are going to the hospital before their death to seek help and find they have to wait for hours if they are lucky, and days if they are not, to get service.

How do we pay for many of these things? I talked earlier about a windfall profit tax. We know there are companies that can afford to pay more and ought to be paying more. This is not a time when we should be tolerating exceptional profits, which are well above prepandemic levels, without asking those same companies to pay a bit more on that extra profit. It does not make sense because that is some of the money that Canadians are giving up due to higher prices, and we need that money in order to bring the cost of those essential things down.

I would like to think, and I hope others will agree, that mine was a pretty honest talk about some of the problems we are facing. I do not expect that everyone is going to agree on some of the solutions the New Democrats are putting on the table, which is fair enough, but that is what we are here to do, to put ideas out there and debate them. I hope we are here to find common ground as best we can in the course of debates like this to be able to move ahead on important measures, such as removing the GST from home heating, for instance, as we prepare to go into another cold Canadian winter.

Therefore, I offer what I hope is an honest analysis of the problems we face. I have tried to offer some solutions that I think would behoove the government to take up. We stand ready to work with anyone in the House who wants to talk about these solutions, or propose other good ones that we have not thought of yet, to make life better for Canadians as they stare down a very difficult fall and beyond.

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Winnipeg for his speech. I would also like to thank him for telling Canadians what parts of the fall economic statement resonate with him. That is different.

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It is important that all parties have the chance to explain to what extent they agree and whether there is any common ground between their party and mine.

I would like to ask my colleague a very short and straightforward question. Does he think that the Minister of Finance's economic statement is sufficient for him to vote in favour of it?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, something that is always important to consider when we are talking about a confidence vote is whether Canadians would be best served by a costly election right now, and the answer is no.

We will vote in favour of the motion tomorrow so that we can continue to do the work that we should all do to implement real policies that will really help Canadians in these difficult times.

We need to participate and not see an election as another solution.

[*English*]

Mr. Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I used to fly airplanes, but I do know a bit about sailing, and one of the things one wants to do is keep the water out of the boat. However, it seems that the Liberal government's policy right now is to throw water into the boat and drown Canadians.

Therefore, I ask my colleague, who has just spent a bit of time speaking to this fall economic update, if he is willing to vote against this budget, campaign on his party's own terms and compare its budget to this one.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, when an election comes, we will be campaigning on our own terms, just as we work here on our own terms every day to advance in this place the things we committed to advance for the people who voted for us. We are doing that to the best of our ability, and rather effectively on a number of items, I would say.

When it comes to inflationary spending, we should look at the GST rebate. It is targeted at the people who have the least amount of money in the country and who have seen extraordinary increases in the price of groceries and rent. That money is not going to chase more goods. That money is going to try to keep their boat afloat to buy the things they used to buy. Therefore, the idea that somehow doubling the GST rebate is inflationary is simply false. The poor are not driving inflation in Canada, and if the goal of government policy is to help them get through these difficult and trying times, it will not be contributing to inflation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Villemure (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Elmwood—Transcona on his whole speech. I would like to pick up on the first part of his speech, in which he talked about respect.

That is an important concept because we are here to debate ideas. We all have our convictions. We are moved by an ideology, but we have convictions. The thing about convictions, raw convictions, is that they do not bother to consider the consequences. The resulting debate tends to be fruitless.

The next level up is responsibility, which is concerned with the consequences of convictions.

What the member did earlier was take the next step and engage in discourse ethics, which means laying down arms, demonstrating mutual respect and advocating for our ideas in a civilized manner. That is what I heard in the first part of his speech.

Here is my question for him. What are the risks of failing to promote respect and veering increasingly toward incivility?

● (1825)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I think we are seeing those consequences here in Canada to some extent. We see them elsewhere too, especially in the United States, where there was an attack on the capital itself and on their national legislature. It is a very serious problem.

I think democracy is a real achievement. It is something that we must always work on ourselves. It is not like a box or a pencil you can have, an object that will remain the same over time. It is something one must do for oneself.

If we abandon our democratic culture, which emphasizes respect when we come across a difference of opinion, we will lose our democracy. Public figures who are very successful in undemocratic conditions will have more and more power.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by thanking the member for Elmwood—Transcona for showing members in this place that it is possible to vigorously and passionately disagree while still being respectful of other people. If we had more of that here, Canadians would be better served by members in this place, so I thank him for his contribution in that way.

He was able to also point out both areas where money can be saved and revenue could be generated for government if we were to properly tax real estate investment trust, for example. He also spoke to the important needs Canadians have. For example, there are the needs of Canadians with disabilities, who are crying out for emergency supports while living in legislated poverty.

Can he speak more about the important connection between the dollars that need to be raised to fund the investments required to meet these important needs?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I am certainly happy to do that. In this time when we are seeing companies making extraordinary profits well beyond what they were making prepandemic, in a time of massive need, that is a lost opportunity to ensure people who are struggling, and who do not have the extra money in their bank accounts, can continue to do well. That is important from a moral point of view, but it is also important from a financial point of view.

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Allowing large corporations to accrue larger and larger surpluses to pay out to their already rich shareholders means that people do not get the help and support they need. They are the people who end up homeless or who do not get access to health care, so they end up in emergency rooms, on the streets, in the justice system and in difficult circumstances that are themselves very costly to remediate. Everyone ends up worse off. That is why having a fairer tax system with proper investments in people who need that investment is a smarter way financially over the long-term too.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member raised the issue of housing. He is exactly right, in the sense that housing costs went up over 70% under the Harper government and by another \$300,000 under the Liberals.

With respect to urban indigenous housing in my own riding, we are the third-largest urban indigenous community in the country. The \$300 million that has been committed will not even address the housing crisis in my own riding. The PBO actually said that we are short over \$600 million to meet that gap.

How could it possibly be that the Liberals refuse to see reality? Why are indigenous people's lives always put on the back burner?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, the member for Vancouver East makes an excellent point. I cannot speak to why this continues to be such a blind spot of the government, and “blind spot” is putting it too lightly, because it is a desperate need. It is an issue of justice for indigenous people in Canada that they should have the right, just as everyone in Canada should have, to a decent home. That is going to require investment. We can tell that \$300 million, if we do some quick math, is not going to build enough units to get the job done.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank all my colleagues in the House. I thank the Liberals, the Conservatives, the Bloc members and the New Democrats for giving the Green Party of Canada the opportunity to make some comments. I appreciate that.

We have reviewed the 2022 fall economic statement. It is not a budget. We have yet to see the 2023 budget and the decisions that will be made in the spring.

Still, the Minister of Finance has made a few decisions. She has taken a certain approach and given some indication of where the government is heading.

[*English*]

What we see here is an honest assessment, more honest than that of many finance ministers, in saying that things are not going to be great very soon.

[*Translation*]

It is important to be honest, to face the economic reality. Canadians are not the only ones facing it. We are faced with a global problem, the increase in the cost of almost everything we use on a daily basis. In my opinion, that is not inflation.

[*English*]

The Minister of Finance was honest about what we are facing, as was the Department of Finance, in saying that we are not looking at economic growth in the next couple of quarters. We are looking at a slowdown. Yes, the minister has said we have a good house and we have a good roof, which are good things, but we are facing unprecedented global challenges. In looking at this statement, I am going to be as non-partisan as I can possibly be in saying that we have some new indications that suggest a growing awareness of something that I am going to say probably more boldly or baldly than other politicians will say.

First, let me say there are some good-news pieces to this budget and some missed opportunities. I really hoped to see a tax on the windfall profits of enormous oil and gas and other fossil fuel enterprises, which have been clearing billions of dollars every quarter. It has been described by others, not just the Secretary-General of the United Nations, that these windfall profits are not due to the economic wisdom or the genius of those in the fossil fuel industry who know how to ready their industry for great success. Let us be clear that this is because of Putin's war in Ukraine. This is war profiteering. No sector or CEO should be proud to return profits to shareholders because of war profiteering. They should not be proud to do that when they are raking in unprecedented levels of profit and Canadians are suffering. That is something of which no business's CEO should be proud.

I am from the Maritimes and I am friends with the Irving family, so forgive me if I mention the Irvings. They own the only refinery in Canada that imports Saudi Arabian oil and has also experienced windfall profits. However, it turns out from today's news, they also figured out a way to avoid paying taxes in Canada through a bit of a shell game with its own insurance company offshore. Canadian corporate leadership needs to look themselves in the mirror and ask what they are doing for Canadians, all of them.

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The Minister of Finance missed the opportunity today to set a course for companies that are experiencing windfall profits, be they in the fossil fuel sector, banking or insurance. Banking and insurance have had some increase, but not sufficient to really deal with the excess profit problem. If a handful of Canadian families hold a great percentage of Canadians' wealth, should we not be looking at a wealth tax? When a government says it sees that rough weather is ahead, it sees that Canadians are going to be facing increasing costs for many things, should we not, right now, be saying we need additional revenue to be able to ensure that those who are suffering the most from this can pay their rent, can cover their mortgages and can take their kids to the grocery store and not the food bank?

How do we make that possible? It is not from trickle-down economics that the economy is going to do so well in a year or two or three that it is going to lift everybody up. We know that story. The rising tide, it was said, will lift all boats and trick-down economics will work. We know how it works. The rising tide lifts all yachts. It does not lift all boats, and we know that people are going to need help with their own little boats very soon.

Another way to have more revenue is to stop spending money hand over fist, handing billions of dollars over to a sector that we know is responsible for our having to spend hand over fist other billions of dollars in a climate crisis. We have promised in this country since Stephen Harper was prime minister in 2009, at a G20 summit—

• (1835)

Mr. Fraser Tolmie: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would point out that there is not a quorum.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We do not have a quorum. We are going to ring the bells to get a quorum into the House.

And the bells having rung:

• (1840)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We now have quorum, and I would ask the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands to continue with her speech.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank all my hon. colleagues for their keen interest in ensuring we have quorum. I want to particularly thank the hon. member for Whitby, who I know had to interrupt a very important meeting on climate finance.

I want to recognize that one of the pieces of this fall economic statement will be much improved when we move ahead with climate finance reforms. I particularly want to mention that, from the other place, we will eventually, I hope, be seeing Bill S-243, which would ensure that the climate and the financial sector line up and align with climate goals.

I will go back to what I was saying before. When we look at the situation in which we find ourselves, Canadians do need help in the short term. The source for that help must be going after the excess profits of large sectors, such as the fossil fuels sector, the financial sector, the banking and insurance sectors, and the grocery store chains, if it can be established that those are indeed excess profits, as has been alleged so very effectively by colleagues in the New Democratic Party.

We do know that there are things we can do to weather storms by taking care of each other. Looking at this financial update, it is very notable.

[*Translation*]

I believe this is the first time I have read a document prepared by Finance Canada that does not treat the climate crisis as an environmental issue that we must spend money on.

For the first time, in this fall economic statement, in the government's explanation of the current problems, crises and challenges, it is clear that the climate crisis is not just one of the problems, it is one of the causes of our economic situation.

[*English*]

For the first time, in reading this fall economic statement, it appears that, increasingly, Finance Canada recognizes a threat to our economic health, and a cause of the instability globally that we face, is the climate crisis. References in this fall economic statement are not just for having a fund, but I am pleased to see investment tax credits to more clean-tech development. I will flag that small modular reactors should not be on that list, but rather for solar, wind, low-flow hydro, geothermal and other technologies that allow us to avoid waste of energy, all of this is really good stuff, but that is not what I am talking about.

I am talking about where Finance Canada notes that the disruption of supply chains are caused, at least in part, by climate crisis events, such as the disruption of supply chains when goods could not get to market when the water was so low in the Mississippi River that Canadian bitumen could not reach refineries in the U.S. There were interruptions to supply chains created by things such as atmospheric rivers that wiped out the roads to the Lower Mainland of Vancouver, and we are still paying.

This fall economic statement points to the costs that will continue to be experienced, and the need to help Atlantic Canada and eastern Quebec, which have ongoing costs and need help to recover from hurricane Fiona. We still have billions of dollars from last year's fall economic statement to help British Columbia recover. After that set of atmospheric river events we had last fall, members should recall that every single land connection route to Vancouver, the largest city in western Canada, was disabled for a period of time, and that had an effect on supply chains.

Supply chains are affected by the climate crisis, and so too are the large economic events created by the climate crisis. In real terms, droughts in other countries around the world drive up food prices for what Canadians pay in the stores. The climate crisis is not a separate environmental issue that requires spending, but it has actually become, and has begun to be seen in Finance Canada, as part of the fabric of the economic situation in which we find ourselves.

• (1845)

I will go further. I said earlier that this is not our classic demand-driven inflation. Largely, what we are experiencing now is a supply-driven increase in costs because of Putin's invasion of Ukraine and the climate crisis events, which are, in real terms, making things cost more. When things really cost more, the tools we have in monetary policy and the Bank of Canada raising the rates will not have the same salutary effect as when we were dealing with an inflation crisis in the early seventies and then prime minister Pierre Trudeau brought in emergency wage and price controls. That is not what we are experiencing now. We have real cost increases because of a real war and because of a climate emergency. The costs and prices are uneven and all over the map.

Therefore, when we look at the threats to our economy of the climate emergency, we have to realize we need to do much more. This is clear from the way this document is prepared, whether or not it is being said out loud yet in Finance Canada. I have never read a document from Finance Canada, ever, that had so many references to the multiple ways in which the climate crisis is impacting our economy, all of them negative.

I look to one point, though, and I think we are ignoring an opportunity we need to seize. The hon. Minister of Finance's introductory remarks point to a moment back in 1903 when then prime minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier told the House we could not wait and it was the time for action. He was referring to the challenge of building a transcontinental railway. For the moment, I will skip over the cost in human lives and the impact of seizing indigenous lands in building that railway, but let us just say right now that we have a similar challenge, and we are ignoring it: How do we link our electricity grids together?

The essence is a 100% carbon-free, not carbon-neutral but carbon-free, electricity grid, with electricity moving through it from, for example, solar power. Alberta will be the big winner in solar power. Cheaper electricity can be produced by solar in Alberta than anywhere else in the country. There is our existing hydro in B.C., and I wish to goodness we were not talking about Site C, but we can do much more with renewable energy across Canada, and the storage system we mostly need is that our grid should work. It should work east to west and north to south.

We are not talking about that in this fall economic statement. We are not really addressing it anywhere, because we run up against the perennial problem of federation. We cannot ship beer across Canada, and we cannot ship electricity. We cannot get electricity from Manitoba Hydro across from eastern Manitoba to western Ontario, because we do not have interties, and that area, I happen to know well, is important boreal forest. We should have interties, but that is indigenous land. If we honour UNDRIP, which we must, it

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requires free, prior and informed consent before we even start drawing lines on the map for the electricity grid.

We know there are private sector entrepreneurs already who see the way they can get electricity from Hydro-Québec to Nunavut. We have to think big, and we have to recognize that, just as in 1903 the challenge was building a trans-Canadian railway, we need, as a modern industrialized country, to have a trans-Canadian electricity grid, because the grid is the battery.

I will just give one short example. In Europe, with separate nation states within the European Union, they actually coordinate and work better together than our provinces and territories work with the federal government. It is appalling, but true. Denmark produces so much excess wind energy that it sells its excess wind energy to Norway. Norway buys the cheap, green wind energy from Denmark, and if Norway does not need the energy that day, it pumps that energy up into existing reservoirs, which is called pump storage and is one of the technologies mentioned here. It stays there until Norway needs it. They open up the sluices; the water follows gravity and it drives the turbines, and then, when the cheap wind energy comes over from Denmark they pump it back up.

• (1850)

It is elegant. It is simple. It is an international exchange of electricity that we cannot do in Canada because we do not have the interties, and it is a big project. It needs to be mentioned and it needs to be thought through.

I will close on these points. This increase in costs that Canadians are feeling is not from our normal inflation. It is not demand-driven. It is not normal inflation in the sense that it is not demand-driven primarily, although it is partly. It is largely being driven by a war in Ukraine.

We Canadians support Ukraine. We believe that President Zelenskyy's bravery and that of the Ukrainian people must be reflected in our solidarity with them. However, in that solidarity, we must do much, much more to achieve peace and push for it. This is relevant to the fall economic statement because so much of the increased prices we are experiencing here are because of Putin's brutal, illegal, immoral war on Ukraine.

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We must use every lever as a soft power to push for peace talks and push for ceasefires. It is not good enough to say, “We stand with Ukraine” and “*Slava Ukraini*”. We have to do more for peace because we are a country that can do that. We may have to say to our NATO allies that if belonging to NATO means we really cannot help Ukraine, maybe we do not belong in NATO. If NATO cannot work for peace and work for nuclear disarmament, maybe it is time to ask our NATO allies this: What good is an alliance that cannot protect Ukraine because of nuclear weapons inside NATO and inside Russia that threaten us all?

We have to face the real costs that are going up. We have to face multiple crises at the same time to avoid a global food crisis and avoid a global water crisis. We must do more in this country as global leaders on climate change.

That means stopping the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and converting that Crown corporation into other uses that are actually beneficial for Canadians, such as building resiliency across this country and building the infrastructure we need. We do not need the Trans Mountain expansion. In the words of António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, it represents “moral and economic madness”. So too does expanding the drilling off the coast of Newfoundland in Bay du Nord. So too does continuing fracking across Canada while pretending that Canadian liquefied natural gas is somehow better than coal.

[Translation]

We must face the economic reality, the reality of the war and the reality of climate change. We must face all these realities.

• (1855)

[English]

We can actually avoid the worst of climate change by changing course quickly. We can follow the indicators that the Minister of Finance has given us in this budget and say that by spring 2023, let the budget stand for Canada laying down the marker that we move according to science. Let us move off fossil fuels, protect the workers in that sector and make sure that Canadians are in a house that can stand the coming storms.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before the pandemic, one of our big concerns was the gig economy. A lot of people were looking at two or maybe even three very low-paying jobs to make a go of it. Now that sector seems to be short of people, as the people who used to be in the gig economy moved up to take the place of guys my age who retired. Some of us have not gotten the memo yet, but we have a lot of older Canadians who have backed out of the labour market.

We have an immigration plan that will bring more people into the country to fill those jobs. I wonder if the hon. member could reflect on whether we should make an extra effort to avoid a new class and new generation of low-paid gig workers in Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, a couple of years ago, the Canadian Labour Congress published a piece on the new world of work.

What does our economy look like for workers when we look at artificial intelligence? We have a gig economy that has already

made many people insecure in the jobs they have. I completely agree with my hon. friend. What we are seeing is that as people retire, we have a demographic bubble of boomers who are leaving the workforce and we do not have enough people coming up behind us. That is why we are looking in this fall economic statement at increases in immigration and hoping that those people are trained professionals in the workforce. Construction workers particularly are mentioned in the statement.

We could do far more to prepare for artificial intelligence by moving to a guaranteed livable income as quickly as possible to protect our economy from the coming shocks. Then people could choose, knowing that they have just enough income to be above the poverty line, to maybe work a bit in the gig economy, maybe have a garden at home and maybe spend more time volunteering in the community. We would be a healthier society and better able to withstand any shocks that are coming once we adopt a guaranteed livable income.

[Translation]

Hon. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every time I listen to my hon. colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands, I learn a lot. I would like to thank her for her excellent speech and her analysis of the fall economic statement.

The member mentioned that inflation was not typical this time. The Minister of Finance and her department also recognized that fact.

I listen to my colleague quite often, and I have a very honest question for her. We know that even if we stop all economic activity, there is a time lag between our activities and the greenhouse gas emissions. That means there will be some modifications and changes in our climate regardless of what we do now.

Is my colleague also telling us that she believes that there will always be inflationary pressure from now on because of climate change and that it will persist until we resolve the climate crisis?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hull—Aylmer for his excellent question.

We are now in a long emergency, as a book title called it.

• (1900)

[English]

Madam Speaker, about a decade ago, there was a book by James Kunstler called *The Long Emergency*, which predicted that we were going to see our economy significantly rocked by what will happen as fossil fuels become more expensive as we move away from fossil fuels. *The Long Emergency* was about where we are now: real costs are increasing, a real dislocation.

That does not mean ongoing inflationary trends. It does mean thinking about how a society flourishes despite these very unusual headwinds. They are unusual now because they are new, but they are not going away. We have to think about that and make sure that we design our economy and our economic signals of what makes us better off. The GDP is not a good measurement to help us chart a course through an ongoing climate emergency. We need to chart our course.

I think this is a global challenge. At the end of the Second World War nations met at Bretton Woods to figure out what are the global and shared financial institutions to help us get through that. We need new institutions and a review, a new Bretton Woods, that would help us with both the post-COVID impacts on our economies and the current climate impacts on our economies.

We cannot rewrite the laws of atmospheric physics and chemistry. We can easily rewrite the way we want our economy to work if all the economies and central banks of the world get together and say, “This is what we are looking at. How do we protect the citizens and the communities of all, and, I would hope, the non-human species of Mother Earth?”

Mr. Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, GP): Madam Speaker, in a previous question, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands spoke about a guaranteed basic income. In the House, there is legislation put forward, Bill C-22, that would provide that for Canadians with disabilities who are living in legislated poverty. However, in this fall economic statement, we did not see anything with respect to funding the benefit, nor did we see anything with respect to emergency supports, like what was done with CERB, to address the conditions of those living in poverty and those living with disabilities across the country.

Can she speak more about this opportunity? If it is not in this fall economic statement, how can all parliamentarians work together to continue to advocate to ensure that, if not now, then perhaps by budget 2023 these critical supports can be put in place?

Routine Proceedings

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, this is one of the big disappointments in the fall economic statement. With work being done on Bill C-22 in this place and with the unanimous support that Bill C-22 received at second reading, I would have hoped to see something of an emergency short-term fund to ensure that no Canadian in the disability community is living below the poverty line. We know that all too often people living with disabilities are, in fact, disproportionately part of the community of the lowest-income Canadians.

Yes, we need an emergency short-term support. We do not have to wait for the next budget. It can be brought forward at any time. We know we are going to see a budget implementation act at some point. A budget implementation act would be a good place to see an emergency short-term payment for people living with disabilities until Bill C-22 can come through, be enacted and be fully funded.

Mr. Mike Morrice: Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to follow up with another item. What is mentioned in words in the fall economic statement, but not so much in actions, is addressing the housing crisis that we find ourselves in. It is in the preamble, but when it comes to actual measures, there is only one mention of moving forward on a flipping measure on assignment sales for homes, but nothing when it comes to, for example, ensuring homes should be places for people to live and not simply a commodity for investors to trade.

Can she comment on the measures she would have wanted to see that would have more directly addressed the housing crisis, not just the rhetoric but actual measures?

• (1905)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, the minister, in her speech, talked about “tackling housing speculation”, but the flipping piece, which is the only measure in there, was already announced. We need to do much more.

I would recommend addressing how much of our housing is not accessible for people to live in as dwellings and has become part of an Airbnb market that is global, unaccountable and pays very little tax in Canada.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 7:05 p.m., pursuant to an order made Friday, October 28, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:05 p.m.)

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